

Docket Item #17
BAR CASE# 2004-0132

BAR Meeting
July 21, 2004

ISSUE: Awning & signage

APPLICANT: Monique Bergin

LOCATION: 1223 King Street

ZONE: CD Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends denial of the application.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new awning with signage at 1223 King Street for the existing retail business “Banana Tree”. The proposed awning measures 24' by 3' by 5' and will be covered with a green colored canvas fabric. The awning includes the business logo, an image of a banana tree measuring 2.1' by 3.5' as well as the business name measuring 5.9' by .83'. The proposed logo and lettering will be white.

Staff notes that the existing window lettering will remain.

II. HISTORY:

The three story commercial building at 1221-1223 King Street was built in 1920. A third story mansard/skylight addition was added in 1987 (BAR Case #87-137). In 1993, the Board approved signage for the retail business “Banana Tree.” The signs approved by the Board included two window signs and a hanging sign (BAR Case #93-151, 9/1/93).

The existing storefront appears to be the original storefront dating from 1920. The storefront employs metal window frames, structural glass and a recessed entrance typical of commercial storefronts in the period 1900-1930. (See "Keeping Up Appearances, Storefront Guidelines," Main Street, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1983, p.2) Additionally, Staff research on building permits for this building indicates that no building permit for alterations was issued for work on the storefront, lending credence to the conclusion that the storefront is original to the building.

III. ANALYSIS:

The recessed storefront type with metal window frames and structural glass was a very common feature of retail storefronts up and down King Street in the 1920s and 1930s. An almost identical storefront with metal window frames, structural glass, recessed entryway and green marble panels is found at the building at 1015 King Street, built in 1919, just one year before the building at 1223 King Street [Building Permit #409, March 13, 1919, S.D. DeVaughan, Architect].

Despite the popularity of the of the recessed storefront, few exist today in the Old and Historic Alexandria District. In addition to the property under consideration, Staff has been able to identify only three other examples of this type of recessed storefront in the King Street retail corridor at 1015, 1125 and 1129. The storefront at 1223 King Street, then, is a rare surviving example of a type of a once common 20th century retail storefront.

The *Design Guidelines* state that “awnings should not overwhelm or obscure the architecture and decorative features of historic buildings” (Awnings - Page 3). Staff believes the applicant's proposal for an awning that obscures portions of the original storefront is inappropriate.

Staff further believes that the proposed awning at 5' in height is overly large. Recently the Board

approved awnings measuring 2'10" high at 1212 King Street (BAR Case #2004-0024, 4/7/04), 4.3' high at 1019 King Street (BAR Case #2003-0145, 11/5/03), and 4' high at 722 King Street (BAR Case #2003-0237, 10/15/03). Staff feels strongly that even an awning reduced in size would detract from the storefront by calling attention away from the architectural details.

Staff believes that the proposed awning does not meet the recommendations of the *Design Guidelines*.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends denial of the application.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Fixed awnings must be designed and constructed to withstand wind or other lateral loads and live loads required by the USBC. Structural members must be protected to prevent deterioration (USBC 3105.2).

- C-2 Fixed awnings must have a minimum 7 foot clearance form a sidewalk to the lowest part of the framework or any fixed portion of nay retractable awning is required. The bottom of the valance of canvas awnings must have a minimum clearance of 6'-9" above the sidewalk.

- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“Not sure I would like to see the use of awnings on this street face.”