

Docket Item #14
BAR CASE# 2004-0138

BAR Meeting
August 18, 2004

ISSUE: Sign and alterations

APPLICANT: A La Lelia, LLC

LOCATION: 917 King Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the alterations to the fascia panel as submitted and approval of the sign and building paint color with the following conditions:

1. That a more appropriate color be selected for the building with the selection to be approved by Staff; and,
2. That the size of the lettering on the sign be reduced to no higher than 1' in height and the overall size of the sign be reduced proportionally with the revised design to be approved by Staff.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the commercial building at 917 King Street. The alterations include painting the building purple, and installing a new fascia panel and sign. The brick building is currently painted a deep blue.

The existing cornice above the first floor storefront will be raised approximately 2 feet to create a larger fascia panel. The new fascia panel is designed to accommodate a new sign for the retail business "A La Lelia."

The applicant is also requesting approval of a new sign to be located on the fascia panel, centered above the entrance. The proposed sign reading, "A La Lelia," measures 12' long by 2' high and will be constructed of painted acrylic. The lettering and flanking pocketbook motifs will be in purple while the background will be white and lavender.

II. HISTORY:

According to Ethelyn Cox's *Historic Alexandria: Street By Street*, the 3½-story, brick, former residence at 917 King Street was constructed as a pair with 915 King Street by William Myers between 1798 and 1802. In November 1803, the widow Maria H.H. Rozier purchased the house. Mrs. Rozier was then the owner of Notley Hall in Maryland. She married Dr. William A. Daingerfield of Belvidera, near Fredericksburg, in 1807 (p. 70).

BAR records indicate that the front of the building was altered in 1976 and 1977. More recently, in 1998, the Board approved awnings with signage at 917 King Street for "Reincarnations Furnishings" (BAR Case #98-160, 10/7/1998).

III. ANALYSIS:

The subject property has a building width of 25'; therefore the maximum signage allowed is 25 square feet. The proposed 24 square foot sign and alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff believes that the relatively minor alterations to the non historic fascia panel are acceptable.

Staff does not believe purple, as proposed by the applicant, is an appropriate color for this circa 1800 building. While the Board prefers not to review paint colors for existing buildings, it also seeks to discourage painting a building or its trim a "clearly inappropriate" color. Purple is

specifically mentioned as “clearly inappropriate” in the *Design Guidelines* (Paint Colors - Page 1). Staff recommends that the applicant select a color more appropriate to the building’s period of construction.

Staff is also unable to recommend approval of the sign as proposed. The *Design Guidelines* note that in the historic districts signs are often smaller than allowed under the zoning and that lettering heights should not exceed 8" to 12" (Signs - Pages 2 & 4). The sign is just under the allowable square footage and includes letters that are at least 18" in height. Staff recommends reducing the lettering to no higher than 1' and reducing the overall size of the sign proportionally.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the alterations to the fascia board as submitted and approval of the sign and building paint color with the following conditions:

1. That a more appropriate color be selected for the building with the selection to be approved by Staff; and,
2. That the size of the lettering on the sign be reduced to no higher than 1' in height and the overall size of the sign be reduced proportionally with the revised design to be approved by Staff.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“My preference would be a color more normally used as evidenced in the palette of 19th century colors in use in Alexandria at this time.”