

Docket Item #14
BAR CASE #2004-0175

BAR Meeting
September 1, 2004

ISSUE: Sign

APPLICANT: Jim McCabe

LOCATION: 113 S Columbus Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the sign is aligned horizontally with the existing “Gallery” sign.

I. Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new sign, “Video Vault, Your Alternative Video Store”, to be installed at the building at 113 S Columbus Street. The wood sign measures 2.6' by 3', and will be located to the north of the building entrance. The sign will be attached to a new metal scroll bracket to match the existing “Gallery” bracket. The double sided sign includes red copy with a blue and green “stained glass” background and a black and white filmstrip border.

II. History

The office building at 113 South Columbus Street was constructed in 1948. Conceived by the architect Joseph Saunders, the building design was approved by the Board of Architectural Review on 8/21/1947. During the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s Saunders was one of the most active architects in the city, with work ranging from residential additions to large scale projects that included the seven story office building at 900 North Washington Street, the Old Colony Motor Inn, T.C. Williams High School, and a number of ecclesiastical structures.

The westernmost section of the building is an addition that was constructed in 1954 as part of a major remodeling of the Hopkins furniture store on King Street. This addition was designed by Robert A. Wilgoos. Wilgoos was an active architect in Alexandria during the 1940s, producing a wide range of projects. He was responsible for the design of the bank building at 119-121 North Washington Street, Cora Kelly Elementary School, the education building for the Washington Street Methodist Church in the 100 block of South Washington Street and the office building at 300 Montgomery Street. Notably, during the 1940s and 50s, Wilgoos was an architect member of the Board of Architectural Review.

In 1998 the Board approved alterations to the building including new lighting, a decorative rail at the roof and awnings (BAR Case# 98-075, 6/3/98). The approved plans were later revised to represent a more sympathetic design for the modernist building (BAR Case# 99-021, 3/3/99). In 2002, the Board approved the existing hanging sign for the Miller Fine Art Gallery (BAR Case #2002-0250, 10/16/02).

In 1993, the Board approved a hanging sign for Video Vault at the previous business location of 323 S Washington Street (BAR Case #93-126, 7/21/93).

III. Analysis

According to the applicant the building width is approximately 38'. The proposed sign along with the two existing signs is well under the maximum sign area allowed of 38 square feet. The proposed hanging sign complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff believes that the proposed sign is acceptable. The sign is similar in size and material to the majority of signs approved in the historic district.

Staff does, however, have concerns with the placement of the sign. The *Design Guidelines* state that “Efforts should be made to align a hanging sign with the placement of other hanging signs on the street.” (Signs - Page 4). Staff believes that the new bracket should be aligned with the existing bracket for the first floor tenant.

IV. Staff Recommendation

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the sign is aligned horizontally with the existing “Gallery” sign.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Projecting, hanging signs must comply with USBC [H103-H107, H112] for type of materials, maximum projection, vertical clearance below all parts of the sign, and additional loads.

- C-2 A building permit and final inspection are required for installing the signs. Installation must be performed by a licensed contractor. (See Code Enforcement Memo to owners and contractors *Permits for Wood Signs* dated March 24, 2004.)

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”