

Docket Item # 8
BAR CASE #2005-0281

BAR Meeting
January 4, 2006

ISSUE: Signs and alterations

APPLICANT: La Tasca Inc. By M. Catherine Puskar

LOCATION: 605-607 King Street

ZONE: KR/King Street Retail Zone

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the menu item signage at the bottom of the windows be eliminated;
2. That the 2 upper lines of window signage be located toward the top of the window rather than at the middle; and,
3. That the new light fixtures be limited to the locations of the four existing fixtures.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations for a new restaurant at the location formerly housing Founders Restaurant. The new restaurant, a Spanish tapas bar and restaurant, will be known as is La Tasca. The restaurant frontage spans two buildings, 605 & 607 King Street. The applicant is requesting approval of signage and new exterior light fixtures. In addition, the existing double leaf door will be replaced with a single leaf door and sidelight. The storefront will woodwork will not be altered and will be repainted in a palette of cream, tan and brown.

Signage

The proposed signage is composed of one hanging sign and multiple window signs. The hanging sign is a double sided oval redwood panel stained a burgundy color with a gold leaf border. The sign will have sandblasted lettering reading, "La Tasca" in large gold letters and "Spanish Tapas Bar & Restaurant," below in smaller white letters. A gold scroll is located under the lettering. The sign measures 1' 5 3/4" high and 3' wide. It will be suspended on chains from a black iron triangular scroll bracket with rectangular black metal backplate. There will be two small light fixtures on tubular poles approximately 1' long extending out from the sign bracket and pointing in toward the sign. The light fixtures will have a black finish. The fixtures will be lit with a 30 watt bulb.

The applicant is proposing window lettering on each of the four large storefront windows and on the new wood and glass door. All the window lettering will be white vinyl applied to the interior of the glass. The drawings prepared by the sign contractor shows the restaurant name, "La Tasca" in 6.5" high lettering above a line of 4" high lettering reading: "Spanish Tapas Bar & Restaurant" located near the top of each window. At the bottom of each window in 5" high lettering are one of the following two pairs of menu items: "Paella" and "Vino" or "Tapas" and "Sangria." The name, "La Tasca" is also repeated in 4" high lettering on the glass of the door.

The existing menu box, located in the middle of the storefront, will remain but with a new frame and glass to match the existing.

Lighting

There are currently four coach style lamps on the storefront facade; two on the pilasters on either side of the entrance and two along the storefront. The applicant proposes to install a torch style light fixture at each of the seven pilasters in the storefront facade. The fixture will be manufactured by Nulco Lighting and will have a decorative twisted wrought iron base with a flat black finish and flame globe of frosted glass. The total length of the fixture is 30". The torch will be attached to the wall at a slight slant and anchored at top and bottom.

Door

The applicant is proposing to replace the existing double leaf wood panel and glass door with a new single leaf wood panel and glass door with a glass sidelight. The transom will remain. According to the architect, the door must be altered to meet code requirements.

II. HISTORY:

605 King Street is a four story brick Italianate building while 607 King Street is a two story frame building. Both have been joined at the first floor level with a faux Victorian storefront. The first floor of the combined buildings has been used as a restaurant for some time, including Henry Africa, the Virginia Beverage Company and Founders Restaurant and Brewing Company. On June 7, 1995, the Board approved ADA alterations and window signage for the Virginia Beverage Company (BAR Case #95-62). The restaurant changed ownership in 2003, but Staff could not locate any approvals for the change in signage to Founders.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations and signs comply with zoning ordinance requirements. The building width facing King Street is 38 feet +/-, allowing a maximum sign area of 38 square feet. Section 9-202(B)(1) of the zoning ordinance states all signs displayed below 20 feet height on any building wall ... shall not exceed one square foot for each foot of building width facing such street... Section 9-202(B)(4) of the zoning ordinance states a building wall or at an angle...so long as the sign does not project more than four feet from the building wall...at least eight feet above a sidewalk. Section 9-202(B)(3) of the zoning ordinance states the total area of window signs shall not exceed 20 percent of any window and shall be included in the total sign area erected. Based on the submitted plans, the window signs, menu board and hanging sign totals 16 square feet; 38 square feet is allowed.

Staff believes the signage is compatible with the building and historic district in design, but finds the amount of signage excessive. According to the *Design Guidelines*, “generally, only one sign per business is appropriate.” (Signs - Page 3) The objective is to avoid a cluttered appearance and unnecessary repetition. Staff believes the window signage should be reduced in some way and recommends at least eliminating the bottom lines listing menu items. In addition, Staff believes the upper lines of window signage should be at the top of window, as shown in the sign contractor’s drawing, rather than in the middle of the window, as in the architect’s drawing.

Similarly, Staff does not object to the design of the torch-like exterior light fixtures, but does recommend that the number of fixtures be reduced so as not to overwhelm the facade. Staff would prefer just two fixtures on either side of the entrance, but is willing to accept the replacement of the two existing fixtures on the storefront pilasters, for a total of four fixtures.

Staff has no objection to the proposed door replacement, as required to meet code requirements.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the menu item signage at the bottom of the windows be eliminated;
2. That the 2 upper lines of window signage be located toward the top of the window rather

than at the middle; and,

3. That the new light fixtures be limited to the locations of the four existing fixtures.

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.
- C-4 Required exits, parking, and accessibility for persons with disabilities must be provided to the building.
- C-5 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.

Historic Alexandria

“No comment.”