

Docket Item # 10
BAR CASE # 2007-0031

BAR Meeting
April 18, 2007

ISSUE: Signage
APPLICANT: Virgilio Rubini
LOCATION: 632 North Washington Street
ZONE: OC Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the chocolate store sign on the North Washington Street elevation be located above the door lintel rather than covering the transom; and,
2. That the bay window lettering for the jewelry store be eliminated.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of signage for the new chocolate store at 632 North Washington Street. At the time of application, the existing signage on the building for Rubini Jewelers exceeded the maximum allowed by the zoning ordinance. The applicant has worked with staff to bring the existing signage into compliance. The “I Love Chocolat” store will occupy the upper level while Rubini Jewelers is in the lower level.

I Love Chocolat signage

The applicant is proposing a 3’ by 2’ oval shaped sign made out of mdo above the store entrance. The sign reads “I Love Chocolat, Belgium Chocolates” and has a brown background with cream lettering and border. A second sign is proposed on the Wythe Street side of the building. This sign is proposed to be a 2’ by 1’ oval shaped sign also constructed of mdo. This sign will match the overall design of the sign on North Washington Street except the text “Belgium Chocolates” will be eliminated. Below the sign is a small rectangular sign reading “2nd Floor”.

Rubini Jewelers signage

The existing signage for the Rubini Jewelers includes two wall signs, “Rubini” at the top and “Jewelers” at the bottom of the bay window. There is also a window sign on the store entrance at the lower level reading “Rubini Jewelers” in white lettering.

A window sign is proposed to be located in the center of the bay window measuring approximately 5 square feet. The window sign reads “Diamonds, Design, Repair, Engraving” in white lettering. A 2’ by 1’ rectangular sign with notched corners is proposed on the Wythe Street elevation of the building.

II. HISTORY:

The two-story, brick, former dwelling at 632 North Washington Street is one of a series of nine or ten rowhouses constructed on the west side of the 600 block ca. 1910. Nearly all, if not all, of the houses in the row have been converted from residential use to commercial or office use. The building at 624 North Washington Street was converted to commercial space around 1967.

The Board has approved a number of signs and alterations to the building at 632 North Washington Street. However, all of these approvals are from 1983 or earlier. Staff was unable to locate any previous Board approval for the existing Rubini Jewelers signs.

III. ANALYSIS:

According to the applicant the subject building width facing Washington Street is 22 feet and the building width facing Wythe Street is 54 feet. Therefore, the maximum signage allowed is 22 and 54 square feet respectively. The proposed signs comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

The Board is particularly concerned with the maintenance of the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway which passes through Alexandria as Washington Street. Therefore requests for certificates of appropriateness for signs on Washington Street must be compatible with the memorial nature of the Parkway (Signs – Page 4).

According to the *Design Guidelines*, signs should not obscure architectural features of historic buildings (Signs – page 3). Therefore staff recommends that the proposed chocolate store sign on North Washington Street be raised above the transom and lintel. Staff believes that the sign would be more appropriate aligned with the Rubini sign as well as the wall sign for 630 North Washington Street.

According to the *Design Guidelines*, window signs should not obscure the interior view of a retail establishment. Staff does not support the window signage for Rubini Jewelers for a number of reasons. Staff believes that the list of services is not appropriate and is overly large. In addition staff believes that is inappropriate since the jewelry store is actually located in the lower level of the building.

Staff believes that the rest of the signs are appropriate and meet the recommendations of the *Design Guidelines*.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the chocolate store sign on the North Washington Street elevation be located above the door lintel rather than covering the transom; and,
2. That the bay window lettering for the jewelry store be eliminated.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

C-2 Wall letters / signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111]. Please indicate the method to be used for anchoring the letters to the wall.

C-3 A Building Permit is required for this project.

Historic Alexandria:

Request seems appropriate.