

Docket Item # 11
BAR CASE # 2007-0120

BAR Meeting
July 18, 2007

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Roger Fons
LOCATION: 815 ½ King Street
ZONE: KR/King Street Urban Retail

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

- 1) That in lieu of using the actual brick removed on the front façade, a replacement brick must be used that closely matches the existing brick in size, color, and texture to repair the hole;
- 2) That the applicant provide brick samples for staff approval prior to use;
- 3) That a historically appropriate material be used for the repair on the underside of the marquee;
- 4) That the applicant shall obtain a building permit due to the brick removed having come from a bearing wall; and
- 5) That the following alterations are completed within 3 months of approval.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations as follows to the Old Town Theater at 815 ½ King Street:

- 1) repair the unapproved demolition and removal of brick on the front of the Old Town Theater at 815 ½ King Street.
- 2) repair the removal of material on the underside of the marquee.

According to the applicant, the original historic brick removed is no longer in his possession and available to be used to correct the unapproved demolition and repair the hole on the front façade, eastern side, which is approximately 1½' x 3 ½' in size. The applicant has two proposals for repair the hole: 1) removing brick underneath the flashing to use to repair the hole, or 2) to use like new brick to closely match the existing brick of the façade.

In respect to the material on the underside of the marquee, the applicant originally agreed to replace the removed material with a historically appropriate material. Staff approved administratively the use of a wall board material as a replacement for the underside of the marquee. However, the applicant is requesting the use of a composite, pvc material, Azek, as the replacement material for the underside of the marquee. The applicant provided a sample of the material.

II. HISTORY:

While previous research had indicated that 815 ½ King Street, the Old Town Theater, was constructed in 1922, the applicant provided a condition assessment document from December 14, 2006, that includes a history section that states that the building opened in 1914 as a theater for live performances. In the 1940's, the building began operating as a movie theater.

Whether constructed in 1914 or 1922, this early 20th-century building is a good example of a building constructed for entertainment uses. With a red brick exterior, classical inspired brick arches over the second floor windows, and a large marquee, the building also demonstrates some design elements that borrow from Art Deco or Art Moderne, such as the detailing under the second floor window sills and the linear feel of the building. The Old Town Theater may be viewed as a transitional building from the more classically inspired Federal and Colonial Revival building to the clearly Art Deco influenced buildings found in the Old and Historic District, such as the building immediately adjacent to the east.

In July of 2006, the current owner made alterations to the building without Board approval, including removing the material on the underside of the marquee and installing water misters. A building permit was rejected by BAR staff, who informed the owner that the underside of the marquee needed to be repaired in-kind.

Subsequent to these discussions, the applicant demolished a portion of the front façade, above the marquee, on the eastern section, of an area roughly 1½' x 3 ½' feet, without approvals. Currently, that area has a piece of plywood covering the area. Due to a number of Code violations, the building was closed by the City for safety concerns in November of 2006. The owner/applicant was instructed that the outstanding Code violations had to be addressed, including any BAR issues.

III. ANALYSIS:

In respect to the applicant's proposed solutions for repairing the hole on the front façade, staff does not support the use of the brick located underneath the flashing of the building's parapet. Such an approach would cause additional demolition to the building and further detrimental alterations to the building, which should be avoided at all costs. This method is unacceptable to staff. The second and greatly preferred approach, in lieu of using the actually removed bricks, is to use a brick that matches as closely as possible the size, color, and texture of the brick found that were removed, creating the hole. As stated in the analysis for the Permit to Demolish, brick samples must be provided to Staff for approval prior to their use to repair the hole. The applicant must make exceptional effort to restore the façade and its design elements and features to their appearance prior to the unapproved demolition.

In regards to the material for use on the underside of the marquee, staff does not support the use of Azek or any composite material on this character-defining feature. Only a historically appropriate material for repairs is acceptable on this feature.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the alterations with the following conditions:

- 1) That in lieu of using the actual brick removed on the front façade, a replacement brick must be used that closely matches the existing brick in size, color, and texture to repair the hole;
- 2) That the applicant provide brick samples for staff approval prior to use;
- 3) That a historically appropriate material be used for the repair on the underside of the marquee;
- 4) That the applicant shall obtain a building permit due to the brick removed having come from a bearing wall; and
- 5) That the following alterations are completed within 3 months of approval.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

Upon approval by BAR the applicant shall obtain a building permit due to the brick removed having come from a bearing wall. An inspection will be required as part of the building permit and work so stated in the application.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.