

Docket Item # 3  
BAR CASE# 2008-0006

BAR Meeting  
February 6, 2008

**ISSUE:** Alterations

**APPLICANT:** Jemal's First Federal Holdings by GTM Architects

**LOCATION:** 119 North Washington Street

**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

(Insert sketch here)

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the commercial building at 119 North Washington Street. The applicant proposes to replace the existing two story bow front window with a new three-bay storefront system, which will also have a bow shape. The new storefront system will incorporate a sign band approximately two-thirds of the way up the window. The sign band and window cornice will be constructed of wood which will be painted to match the building's exterior doors and windows. The new brushed aluminum storefront system will be installed within the existing cast stone surround.

**II. HISTORY:**

The three-story First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Alexandria Building at 119-121 North Washington Street was constructed of brick-faced concrete block in 1949-1950 with a bow front window with flanking brick pilasters and flanking entry doors with broken scroll pediments surmounted by a granite frieze used as an incised sign band. It was designed by local architect Robert Willgoos, a practitioner of Colonial Revival architecture and a former member of the Board of Architectural Review.

In the last few years, the building has had a variety of tenants and the Board has approved a number of sign schemes (BAR Case 2001-0134, 6/20/2001 and BAR Case 1998-106, 8/19/1998, 1998). On July 18, 2007 (BAR Case 2007-0125), the Board approved alterations to the subject bow window, allowing the applicant to modify the existing grid system by reducing the number of individual window panes. The applicant subsequently determined that it was not feasible to modify the existing window so the applicant is returning to the Board to request further modifications.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

Proposed window changeout complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

While the building has had a succession of tenants since it was constructed in 1949 there have been relatively few changes to the façade with the exception of new entry doors. Thus the window alteration is the most significant change to occur to the exterior since the building was originally constructed.

Staff continues to believe that the new window system is compatible with the original design intent. Clearly windows that are two stories in height were not part of any design vocabulary of Colonial architecture. The original multi-light muntin pattern was clearly intended as a cipher of Colonial architecture, but even that was belied by the size of the original window panes. Although the muntin pattern is changing, no other aspect of the original exterior building design is proposed to be altered. Staff supports the addition of a sign band within the window because it allows for the bow form to be maintained and because it helps to break up the large expanse of glass, making it similar in scale to traditional retail storefront windows. Thus, staff believes that the fundamental architectural character of the building is being maintained while the window is updated for modern commercial retail uses. Therefore, staff has no objection.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

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 the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

C-2 Glass shall comply with the current edition of the Uniformed Statewide Building Code (USBC).

C-3 A Building permit will be required for the proposed project.

C-4 Glass shall comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) for wind loading.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

The existing bow window at 119 N. Washington Street is a handsome addition to the window fenestration along Washington Street, although the wide bare aluminum muntins and mullions are somewhat peculiar. The size of the existing individual windowpanes would appear to impede contemporary retail use of the space, but the proposed window replacement may impose a stark blandness to an otherwise dignified building.

It is unclear from the drawings included with the proposal whether the proposed new window retains the existing bow effect or is instead a series of flat panels. The new window materials are also not specified.

R- It is recommended that at a minimum BAR require retention of the bow window form and the stone base beneath the existing window.

S- It is suggested that BAR consider two options for the design of the new glazed areas of the window.

1. Replace the existing window with a new bow window featuring wood true divided lights with thinner muntins and mullions and substantially larger windowpanes; or
2. Replace the existing window with a new bow window featuring three large glazed panels in lower section, and three multi-paned, true divided light fixed sash panels above (similar to the look at Restoration Hardware), echoing the fenestration to the left and on the second level of the building.