

Docket Item #7
BAR CASE #2008-0060

BAR Meeting
May 7, 2008

ISSUE: Sign

APPLICANT: Sterling Title Company

LOCATION: 201 King Street

ZONE: KR/King Street Urban Retail

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends after-the-fact approval of the hanging sign for Sterling Title Company with the condition that the telephone number is removed.

Insert sketch map here.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a hanging sign, STERLING TITLE COMPANY, at 201 King Street. The double-sided wood sign measures 26” by 30” and has black lettering on a white background. The sign includes the phone number of the business (1866-76-CLOSE) and an image of a lion. The sign was installed on a previously existing black metal sign bracket next to the main entrance along King Street.

II. HISTORY:

The three-story, brick building at corner of King Street and North Lee Street was constructed in 1851 as a store and warehouse for William Bayne, grocer and commission merchant. The building is occupied by a retail store on the first level and offices on the upper levels.

The Board has reviewed many signs for the multiple tenants in the building over the years. The two existing circular Comfort One hanging signs (formerly Comfort Zone) were approved in 1993 and 1996 (BAR Case #93-124, 8/18/1993 and BAR Case #96-050, 3/20/1996). In the past the Board has also approved signs for tenants which have since left the building, including two signs for “Oceans of Wildlife Art Gallery” (BAR Case #1997-0178, 9/3/1997) and two signs for a second story coffee shop (BAR Case #2003-0050, 4/23/2003). More recently the Board approved a hanging sign, “The Alexandria Times”, to be installed above the King Street entrance to the upper levels (BAR Case #2005-0156, 7/20/2005). That sign has since been removed. At the present time, the only approved signs on the building are the two hanging signs for Comfort One Shoes.

The applicant is before the Board because Staff became aware of this existing and unapproved hanging sign during the review of a hanging sign for Stokefire, another tenant at 201 King Street. The Board approved a hanging sign for Stokefire on February 20, 2008 (BAR CASE #2008-0009), with the condition that sufficient sign area be created on the King Street front of the building by removing the word “SHOE” in the window transoms. The Board also required that all existing signage on the building be brought into zoning conformance (including sign area and BAR approvals). The applicant and the two other building tenants (Comfort One Shoes and Potomac Trust Mortgage), were sent zoning ordinance violation letters on February 19, 2008. All three tenants have submitted applications to the Board for their after-the-fact signage.

III: ANALYSIS

The proposed hanging sign complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

The *Design Guidelines* recommend that buildings with multiple business and retail tenants have a sign plan for coordinated graphics and placement. The Board minutes from 1986 describe a previously approved plan for the building stipulating three projecting signs for the building and three directory signs. Although the Board approved a sign plan over 20 years ago for the building the Board has repeatedly approved additional hanging signs for upper level tenants.

The use of telephone numbers on signs in the historic districts is strongly discouraged by the *Design Guidelines*. Staff has no objection to the approval of the existing Sterling Title Company sign, provided the telephone number is removed.

IV. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the after-the-fact hanging sign for Sterling Title Company with the condition that the telephone number is removed.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

F-1 The applicant shall obtain a sign permit for the proposed sign and/ or wall lettering.

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.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

R-1 Approve.