

Docket Item # 2
BAR CASE #2010-0293

BAR Meeting
January 19, 2011

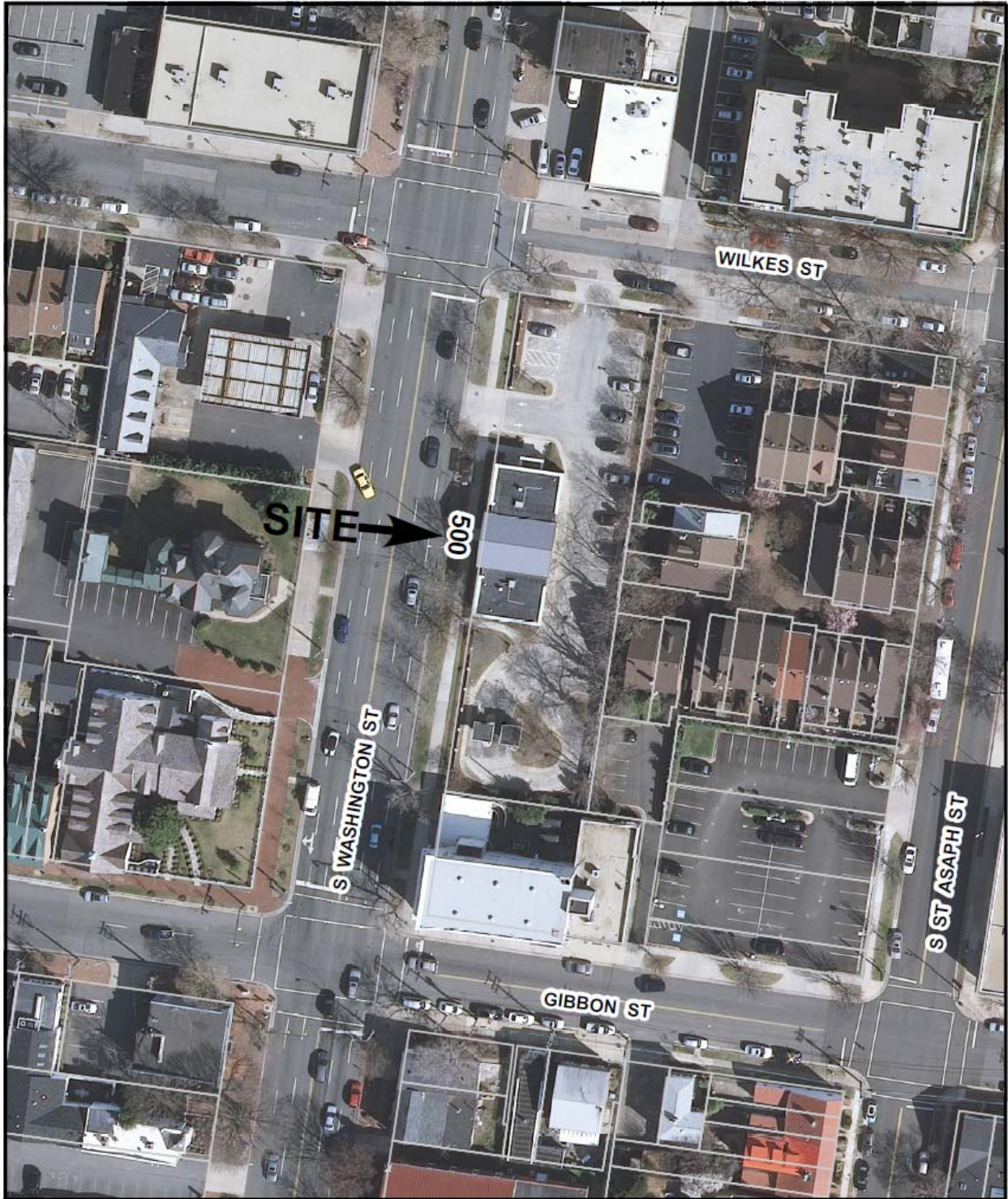
ISSUE: Signage
APPLICANT: Capital One Bank
LOCATION: 500 South Washington Street
ZONE: CD/Commercial

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

1. that the existing ATM/Teller LED/neon “open” signs are removed; and,
2. that the existing and unapproved Capital One Bank signs are replaced with the approved bank signs within 60 days.

****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of final approval if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

****BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further information.



BAR CASE #2010-0293



I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of multiple signs for a new bank, Capital One Bank, at 500 South Washington Street. Capital One Bank acquired the previous bank tenant, Chevy Chase Bank, in 2009.

Staff has been working with the applicant over the past few months; first informing the bank in May 2010 that Board approval was required prior to the installation of the any new signs. However, the bank installed the following signs:

- Two internally illuminated channel letter signs installed on an illuminated box on the frieze above the Washington Street and Wilkes Street entrances to the bank. The total square footage of these signs is approximately 32 square feet.
- Bank logos on the illuminated sign bands above the three ATM machines.
- A bank logo sign on the illuminated Teller Express box located adjacent to the drive-thru ATM machine which faces South Washington Street.
- A new directional sign and multiple customer parking signs with a blue background and the bank logo.
- New blue clearance signs over the two ATM drive-thru kiosks.
- Two new Capital One Bank door graphics, with the hours of operation (another two Chevy Chase Bank door graphic were removed and not replaced).

In September, the bank submitted a BAR application and the case was first docketed for the November hearing. However, the application has been deferred on two occasions – first due to failure to notify surrounding property owners, and second, in order to make revisions to the application. The following signs are now proposed:

- The existing signs above the Washington Street and Wilkes Street entrances will be removed and new reverse channel white letters (halo lit) with the bank logo (minus the red “swoosh”) will be installed. The Washington Street sign will measure 14” by 13’ 10 3/4” (approximately 16.2 square feet). The Wilkes Street sign will measure 9” by 8’11” (approximately 6.6 square feet).
- The teller express box adjacent to the westernmost ATM drive will be resurfaced with a solid blue insert (the Capital One Bank logo will be removed).
- The Capital One Bank logo installed on the directional sign next to the Wilkes Street entrance, and on the customer parking signs throughout the parking lot, will be removed and only the relevant information – on a blue background – will be provided.
- No changes are proposed to the already installed blue clearance signs above the drive-thru ATMs, the three ATM sign bands or the door graphics.

It should be noted that the materials provided by the applicant show the previous Chevy Chase Bank signs and not the already installed Capital One Bank signs.

II. HISTORY

The Board reviewed the construction of the Greek Revival style building for the previous bank

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owner, Chevy Chase Bank, on two occasions. In 1995, the Board determined that the proposed building met the *Additional Standards for Washington Street* set forth in the Zoning Ordinance (BAR CASE #1995-0070), and again in 1996, when the building and associated signage were approved (BAR Case #1996-0015, January 17, 1996). The approved signage consisted of two individually illuminated letter signs, Chevy Chase Bank, in the pediment above the bank's Washington Street and Wilkes Street entrances. The Washington Street sign measured 14 inches by 12 feet (13.92 square feet), whereas the Wilkes Street sign measured 10 inches by 10 feet (8.3 square feet). The Board also approved bank signage on each of the three ATM's – two in the drive-thru kiosks and the third adjacent to the Wilkes Street entrance, as well as "other signage normally associated with ATMs."

III. ANALYSIS

The proposed alterations comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

While the applicant was given clear direction that the installation of signs required BAR approval and a sign permit, the bank none-the-less installed the existing Capital One Bank signs. Staff, and the National Park Service, find these signs to be too large, too bright and generally inappropriate for this prominent Greek Revival style bank building on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. After the BAR application was submitted, the applicant worked closely with Staff and understood that the installed signs were unlikely to gain Board approval. A November 17th, 2010 letter from the National Park Service also concurred that the signs were excessive and inappropriate. However, with a few exceptions, Staff supports the revised application. The National Park Service also submitted a letter of support on January 10th, 2011, commending the applicant for the revised sign package.

The *Design Guidelines* specifically state that "The Board is particularly concerned with the maintenance and memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway which passes through Alexandria as Washington Street. Therefore, requests for signage on Washington Street must be compatible with the memorial nature of the parkway." In addition, the *Guidelines* specifically discourage the use of internally illuminated signs. However, given the existence of numerous illuminated signs along the Parkway (TD Bank, PNC Bank, CVS), as well as the age of the building and the Board's previous action, Staff can support a limited amount of illumination.

Although never explicitly approved by the Board – "other signage normally associated with ATMs" – Chevy Chase Bank installed two ATM/Teller open/closed neon-like LED signs on each drive-thru ATM kiosk. Although the applicant does not propose any change to these signs, Staff finds them particularly egregious because of their visibility from South Washington Street. It is generally assumed that ATMs are open at all times and that remote teller machines are open during normal business hours (it is also confirmed on the Bank's door graphics, which list the teller hours of operation and notes that the ATMs are open 24 hours). Therefore, Staff believes that these signs are unnecessary and should be eliminated.

In addition, because of the amount of time the unapproved signs have been in place, Staff recommends that the Board require a shorter-than-average time frame (60 days instead of the usual one year approval) for the installation of the new signs and the removal of the unapproved Capital

One Bank signs.

STAFF

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Administration:

- F-1 The applicant shall obtain a sign permit for the proposed sign and/ or wall lettering.
- C-1 Wall letters / signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111] Please indicate the method to be used for anchoring the letters to the wall.
- C-2 A building permit is required for the monument signs.

National Park Service:

See attached letters.

IMAGES



Figure 1: Previous Chevy Chase Bank sign and proposed Capital One Bank sign – Wilkes Street.



Figure 2: Photo of existing, unapproved Capital One Bank signs at the Wilkes Street entrance.

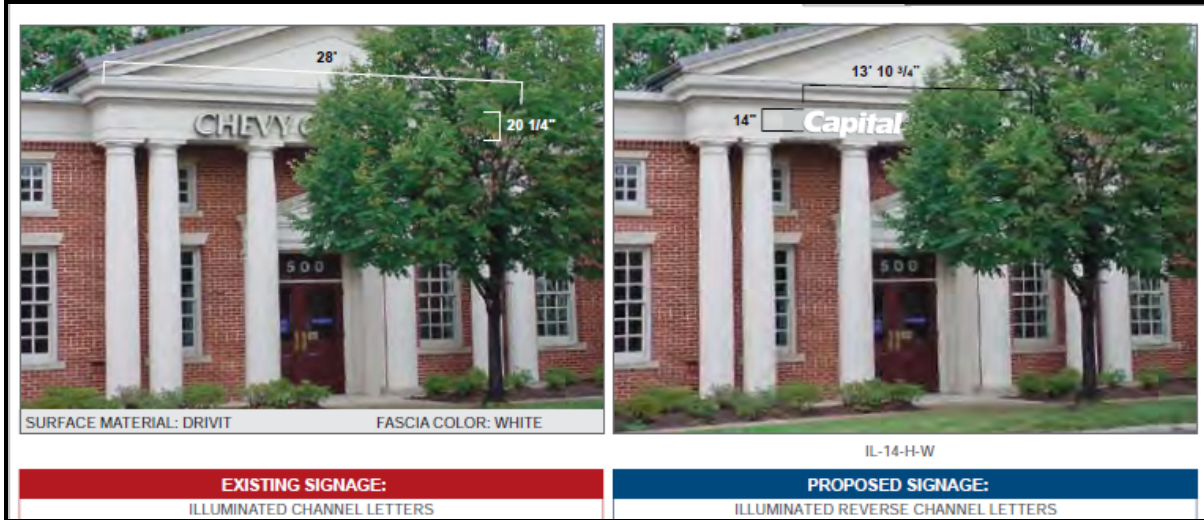


Figure 3: Previous Chevy Chase Bank sign and proposed Capital One Bank sign – Washington Street.



Figure 4: Previous drive-up teller express sign and proposed directional sign.



Figure 5: Previous and already installed ATM header sign – drive-thru kiosk (1).

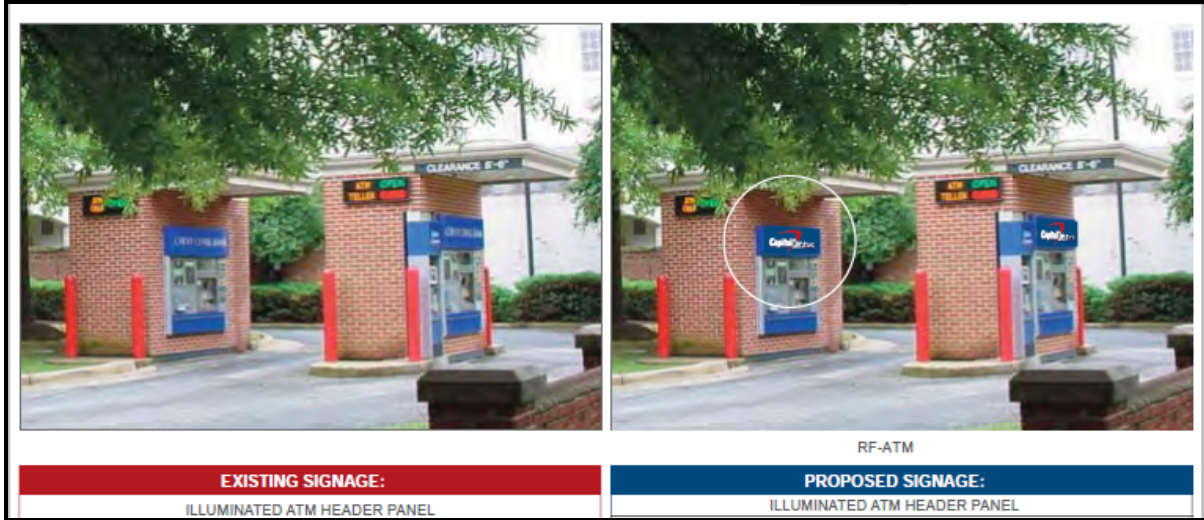


Figure 6: Previous and already installed ATM header sign – drive-thru kiosk (2).



Figure 7: Previous and already installed ATM header sign – Wilkes Street walk up.



Figure 8: Previous and proposed Teller Express sign (blank).



Figure 9: Previous and proposed customer parking signs (multiple locations).



Figure 10: Previous and already installed door graphics on two entrance doors.



Figure 11: Previous and already installed clearance signs over two ATM drive-thru kiosks.



Figure 12: Photo of existing ATM/Teller open signs.



Figure 13: Close up photo of existing ATM/Teller sign.