

Docket Item # 2
BAR CASE # 2011-0149

BAR Meeting
July 6, 2011

ISSUE: Signage and Awning
APPLICANT: Rebecca Fertig
LOCATION: 113 North Washington Street
ZONE: CD / Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

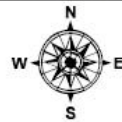
1. That the existing special advertising window signs be removed;
2. That the existing signage be reduced in order to comply with the zoning ordinance:
 - a. That the wood wall sign on the door surround be removed
 - b. That the window decals be consolidated into one window decal per business with each decal being no larger than 3 square feet and within a single glass panel. The two decals shall be symmetrically located on opposite sides of the door.
 - c. That the white letters on the awning valance be reduced in height from 9” to 7”

****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 issuance 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, 703-838-4360 for further information.



BAR CASE #2011-0149



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for an awning and signage at 113 North Washington Street.

The proposed awning measures 20' in length by 3'5" in height by 3' in depth and will be attached to the building through the aluminum mullions on the storefront. The awning will have brown "Sunbrella" fabric and the valance will be printed with the business name "BRAHM & POWELL GUILD OPTICIANS" in 9" high white letters (11.25 square feet of signage).

Two businesses are located in the first floor tenant space at 113 North Washington Street: Brahm & Powell Guild Opticians and Alexandria Eye Care.

II. HISTORY:

The lot at 113 North Washington has had an interesting past, considering its placement on the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. From as early as 1877, the G. M. Hopkins map identified the site as J. Patterson's Livery Stables. By 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps indicate that the site was used as a wagon shed and storage site, becoming a garage by 1921 and then an auto sales and service store by 1941. The BAR approved the demolition of the buildings at 110-116 North Washington Street on May 14, 1953 and the buildings that are currently located on these sites were approved by the BAR on July 9, 1953.

113 North Washington Street is a two-story Modernist brick building with simplified architectural detailing. Three fourths of the façade is made of windows with a pebble-edge concrete surround. While no other previous BAR approvals were located, Staff believes that the broken scroll Georgian style pediment, side lights and transom around the door floating in a large glass storefront are typical of a number of Modernist buildings constructed shortly after the creation of the historic district in order to make them comply with the Board's understanding at the time of the memorial character of the GW Parkway. As such, they are iconic architectural representations of the earliest phases of historic preservation in Alexandria.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed awning and signage comply with zoning ordinance requirements, if the existing special advertising is removed from the window and the overall sign program is reduced.

Awning

Staff recommends approval of the awning as it is appropriate for a storefront along North Washington Street. Several of the adjacent stores have awnings. The *Design Guidelines* state that "awnings should be appropriate and sympathetic to the historical style of the building to which they are attached." The proposed awning is a simple shed style and does not cover or harm any historic fabric on the mid-twentieth-century storefront. The awning will cover the top row of storefront windows; however, these spandrel windows are currently blacked out to cover the space above the lay-in ceiling. Staff finds the awning to be more aesthetically appropriate than the existing blacked out windows.

The awning will be open on the sides and should not block any of the neighboring signs or awnings.

Signage

The signage at 113 North Washington Street must be reduced in order to comply with the zoning ordinance which permits a maximum of one square foot of signage for every linear foot of building frontage. The building frontage at 113 North Washington is 23 linear feet and the existing signage is 15.43 square feet. With the proposed signage on the awning, the total signage comes to 26.68 square feet, 3.68 square feet over what is permitted by the sign ordinance.

Existing signage:

- Brahm & Powell hanging sign – 5.7 square feet
- Brahm & Powell wall sign on door surround featuring business name, hours of operation and phone number– 3 square feet
- Brahm & Powell window decal featuring the following information: doctors name, phone numbers, and web address – 2.25 square feet
- Alexandria Eye Care window decal featuring the name of the business, the optometrists names, and the text “walk-ins welcome” – 4.48 square feet

Proposed additional signage:

- “BRAHM & POWELL GUILD OPTICIANS” in 9” high white letters on awning valance - 11.25 square feet

Due to the repetition of information on various signs and the resulting visual clutter on the storefront, Staff recommends consolidating the window decals and removing the inappropriately sized wall sign that is affixed to the door surround. While Staff understands that there are two different businesses located in the same space, Staff notes that the current signage is confusing. Staff recommends only one window decal per business with each decal measuring no more than 3 square feet and within a single glass panel. The decal for Alexandria Eye Care should be located on one side of the door and the decal for Brahm & Powell should be located on the opposite side in order to differentiate the two businesses and visually separate the window decals. Staff also recommends that the height of the letters on the awning valance be reduced from 9” to 7” to reduce the total amount of signage. As reference, the letters on the adjacent Old Town Deli awning valance are also 7” tall.

The display of phone numbers and web addresses on signs is strongly discouraged per the *Design Guidelines*, however, based on recent preliminary discussions with the Board, Staff can support one phone number and one web address on the window decal if it meets certain conditions. While the Board’s previous practice has been to not approve web addresses or phone numbers, many businesses have added this signage without BAR approval and business associations in Old Town have asked the Board to reconsider this policy. The Board, therefore, recently asked Staff to conduct a survey of existing web addresses and propose potential guidelines regarding what would be appropriate in the historic district if the Board were to approve this type of signage. Staff will make a formal presentation and recommendations at the July 20, 2011 hearing.

While Staff and the BAR remain concerned about the effect of this additional signage on the district as a whole, Staff finds that if done discreetly it can be appropriate and not detract from

the character of the district, or in this case, the memorial character of the Parkway. Should the BAR find a phone number and web address to be appropriate, Staff recommends the following:

- Lettering no more than 1 ½ ” in height
- Only one web address and phone number per business
- Decal must be white, silver, gray, or a frosted opaque color
- Decal is a removable, vinyl applique
- Decal is located on the middle or bottom portion of the window

Removing the wood wall sign, consolidating the window decals, and decreasing the height of the letters on the awning valance will bring the overall sign program into compliance with the zoning ordinance as the new sign program will total approximately 20.45 square feet (awning signage: 8.75 square feet; hanging sign: 5.7 square feet; window decals, combined: 6 square feet).

Staff recommends approval of the application with the conditions that the existing special advertising window signs be removed and that the existing signage be reduced in order to comply with the zoning ordinance.

STAFF:

Courtney Lankford, Urban Planner, Historic Preservation Section, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

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

Zoning Division:

- C-1 Applicant must remove existing special advertising window sign (20% off...).
- C-2 Applicant must indicate which signs are to remain (including window decals) and the square footage before zoning can determine compliance.

Code Administration:

- C-1 A building permit is required to be obtained prior to the erection of this awning sign
- C-2 Five sets of drawings must be submitted for review with the permit application
- C-3 At a minimum the plans shall show;
- Sign/awning material
 - Size
 - Anchorage detail
 - Height above grade

Transportation and Environmental Services:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 5-6-224 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)
- R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R3. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R4. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on all plans submitted for approvals. (T&ES)
- R5. The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition. (T&ES)

CITY CODE REQUIREMENTS

- C-1 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)

- C-2 A sign may be erected or displayed flat against a building wall or at an angle thereto, so long as the sign does not project more than four feet from the building wall or within one foot of an established curb line and the bottom of the sign is at least eight feet above a sidewalk or parking area and at least 14.5 feet above any alley. (Sec. 5-2-29(c)) (T&ES)

- C-3 Canopies, awnings and marquees suspended from a building or structure with no ground supports, having a clearance of at least eight feet above a sidewalk, extending no more than four feet beyond the front property line and extending to no more than one foot from the established curb line, may be erected. (Sec. 5-2-29(d)) (T&ES)

- C-4 The owner shall obtain and maintain a policy of general liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 which will indemnify the owner (and all successors in interest); and the city as an additional named insured, against claims, demands, suits and related costs, including attorneys' fees, arising from any bodily injury or property damage which may occur as a result of the encroachment. (Sec. 5-29 (h)(1)) (T&ES)

V. IMAGES:

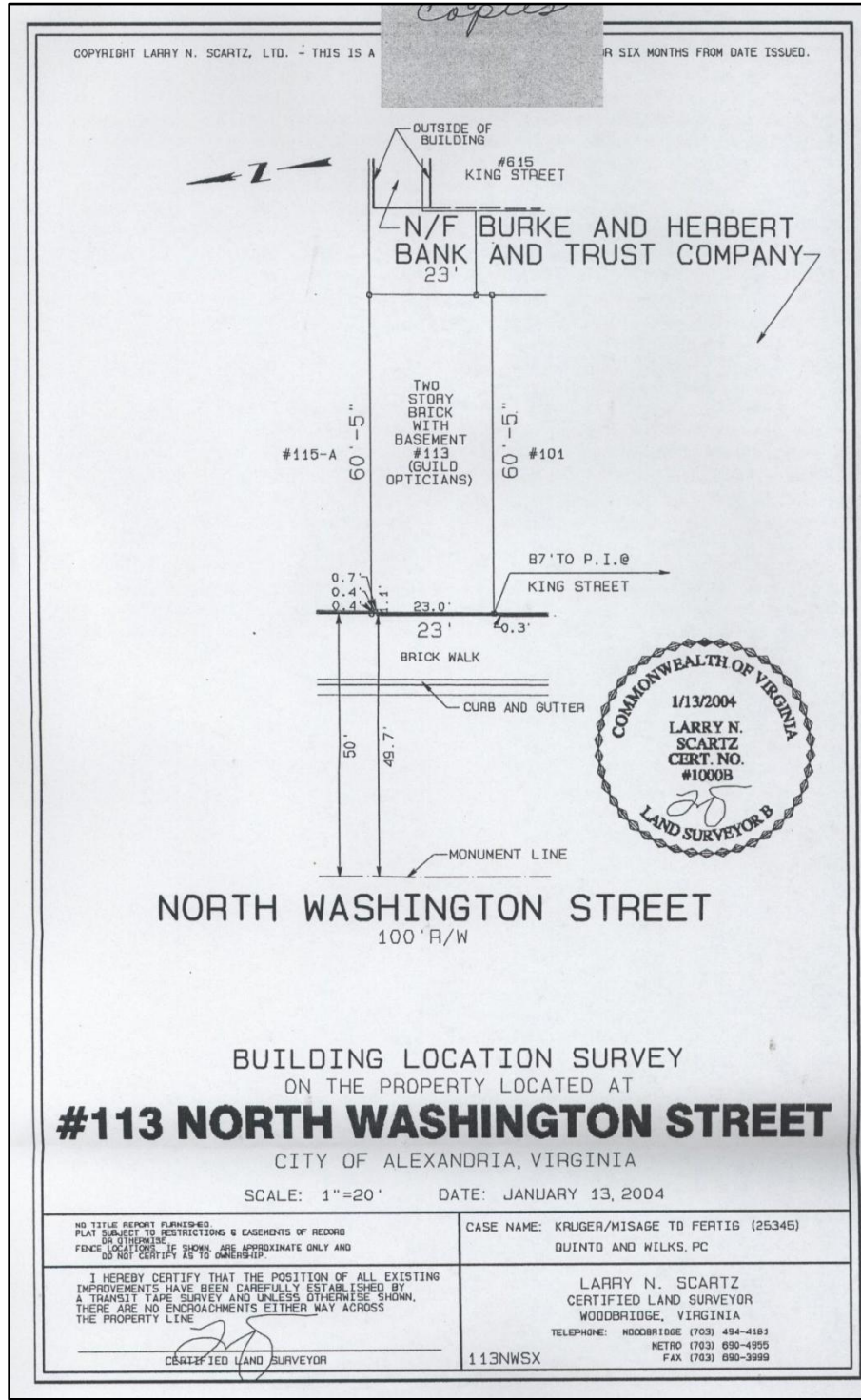


Figure 1: Plat for 113 N Washington Street.



Figure 2: Current view of 113 N Washington Street.



Figure 3: View of 113 N Washington Street with proposed awning.

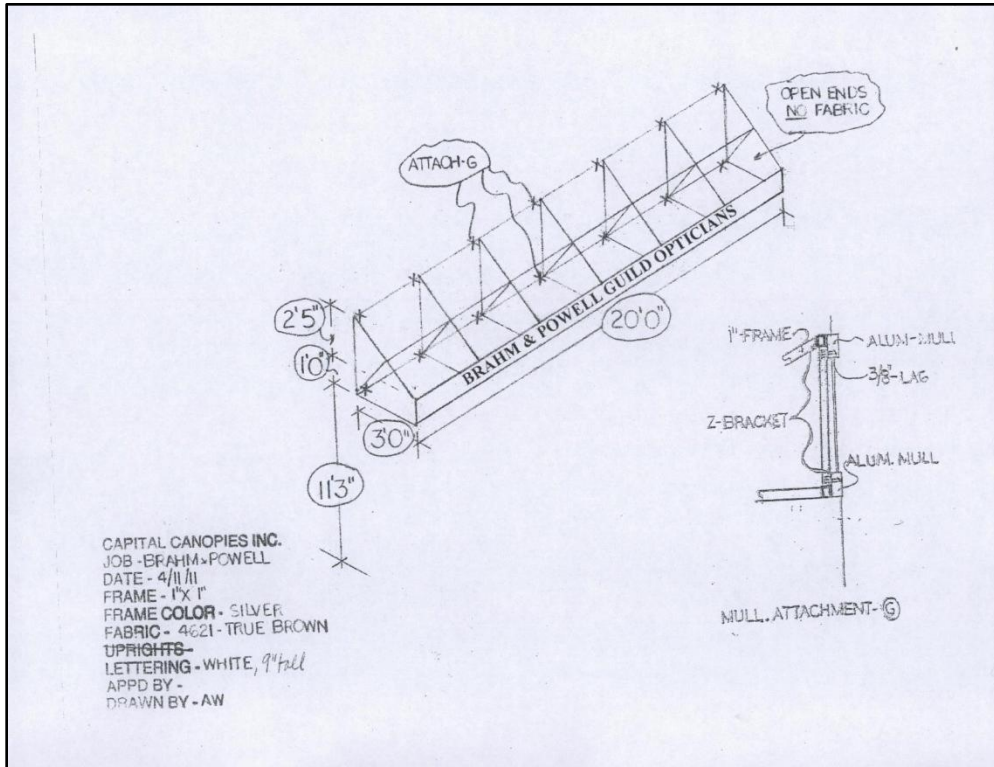


Figure 4: Detail drawing of proposed awning.



Figure 5: Neighboring business with awning.



Figure 6: Google Street View Image showing neighboring properties with awnings.