

Docket Item # 3
BAR CASE #2010-0343

BAR Meeting
July 6, 2011

ISSUE: Signage and alterations

APPLICANT : CVS/pharmacy by The Velmeir Companies

LOCATION: 503 King Street

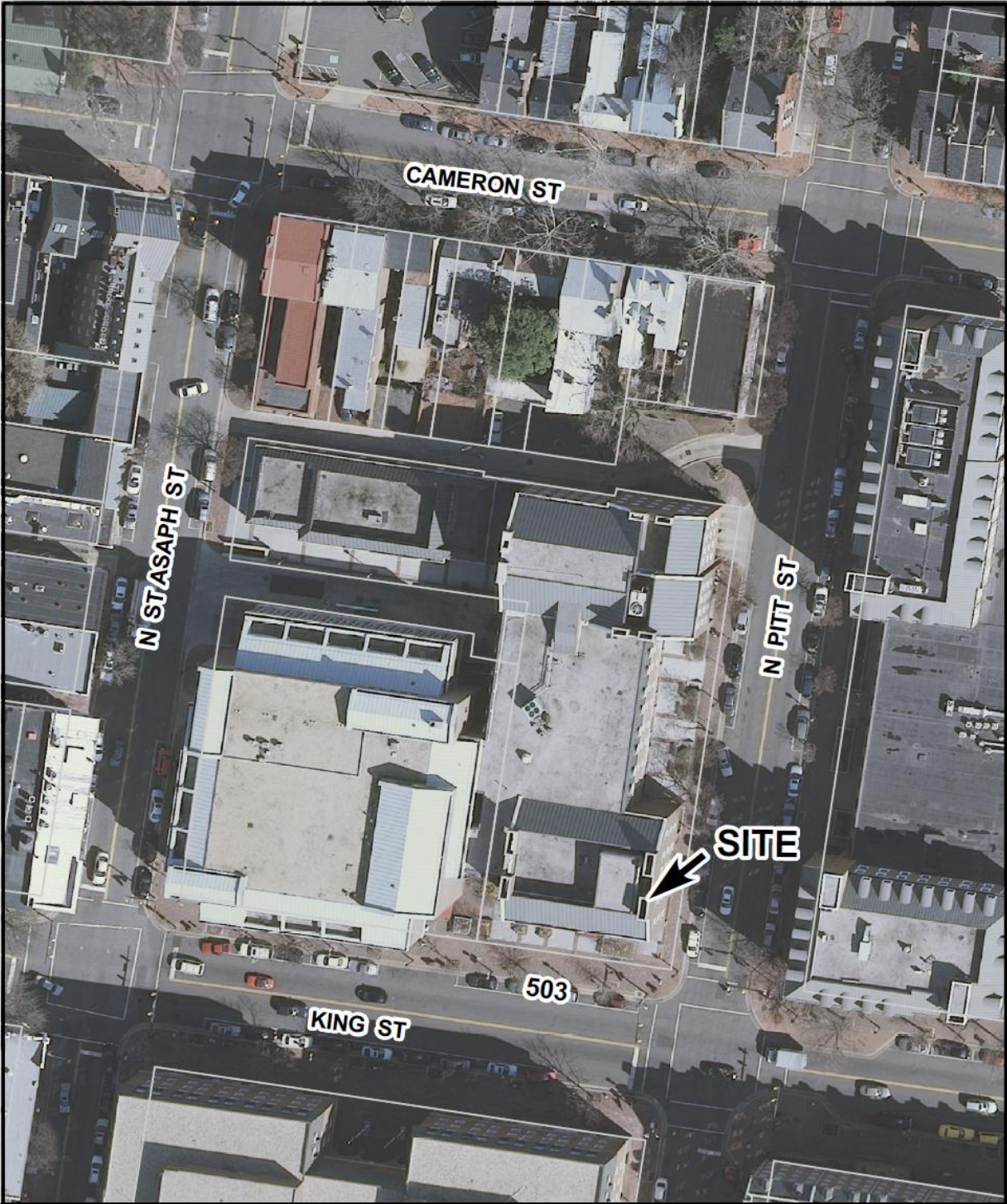
ZONE: KR / King Street Urban Retail

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

1. That the entrance marquis that was removed not be reinstalled but that a small awning may be installed over the entrance to match the existing awnings over the front windows and that the wall sign proposed on the south elevation be centered above the entrance;
2. That the “Open 24 Hours” signs on the two wall signs and two window decals be removed to be in compliance with Zoning Ordinance requirements;
3. That the two windows on the North Pitt Street elevation at the front corner be left entirely open; and
4. That in the instances where the Board approves obscuring window and door openings, that the applicant utilize historic photographs of this area of King Street prior to urban renewal with final photograph selection to be approved by Staff.

****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 #2010-0343



I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for signage and alterations at 503 King Street. The applicant proposes the following:

Wall Signs

The applicant proposes to install two pin-mounted wall signs to read “CVS/pharmacy 24 HOURS.” The letters will be 21” reverse channel halo lit letters, illuminated at the back with LED. The face of the letters will be painted white aluminum. The “24 HOURS” portion will be an internally illuminated box. Each wall sign will measure 16’10” in width by 21” in height. One will be located on the south (front) elevation slightly to the left of the entrance. The second will be located on the east (side) elevation above the window closest to the corner.

Windows

The applicant proposes to obscure several window and door openings on both elevations with black and white photographs of Alexandria. On the south (front) elevation the applicant proposes to obscure a recessed door and adjacent window as well as the majority of two windows to the left of the entrance. On the east (side) elevation, the applicant proposes to obscure the majority of the two windows at the corner as well as portions of doors and windows adjacent to the terrace.

Window Decals

The applicant proposes two window decals stating “Open 24 Hours” in red lettering to measure approximately 9 square feet (3’ x 3’).

Awnings

The marquis that was formerly at the front entrance to Books-A-Million was removed when that tenant vacated the space. The applicant has not confirmed whether they desire to install a new marquis at this location. The applicant proposes to retain the existing awnings over the windows on the south (front) elevation.

Doors and Windows

The applicant proposes to remove the existing entry doors and replace them with automatic folding doors. The applicant proposes to alter the existing entry door in the former corner retail space to a fixed window, similar to the existing storefront windows.

II. HISTORY

This four-story brick Colonial Revival building, known as Banker’s Square, was constructed circa **1969** as part of the Gadsby’s Urban Renewal Plan Phase Two. The BAR reviewed and approved the design in 1968 with further review and approval of the storefronts in 1969. The related site plan was SIT #68-0033.

The Board has reviewed applications for signage and alterations at this building.

III. ANALYSIS

The proposed signage and alterations will comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements once the "Open 24 Hours" signs are removed as they are considered special advertising and therefore not permitted by the Zoning Ordinance. As the proposed retail store will be over 10,000 square feet in the KR zone, a special use permit is required. On June 25, 2011, City Council approved a special use permit to operate a CVS at this location (SUP #2011-0010). Council approved the SUP with the following condition:

"Windows at the site shall provide open views into the drug store from the street and shall not be tinted, opaque or otherwise obstructed, except as approved by the Board of Architectural Review. Unless otherwise prohibited by the Board of Architectural Review, low-level, well-maintained and regularly updated window displays may be permitted in any windows or door areas approved by the BAR to be blocked."

The *Design Guidelines* state: "Window signs should not obscure the interior view of a retail establishment. Windows should not be painted, inappropriately tinted or otherwise made opaque." Several national retail chains are located throughout the historic districts. However, in many circumstances the corporate package is modified so that signage and alterations are compatible with the character of the district. Some recent examples include the Walgreen's on King Street and the expansion of Trader Joe's on North Saint Asaph Street. In addition, the King Street Retail Study recommends that at least 70% of the windows at the first-story remain clear glass. The study recommends that windows have easy-to-understand and uncluttered displays that regularly change and allow a view into the rest of the store.

BAR Staff met with the applicant's team on two occasions and has provided ongoing consultation on the design over the past several months. Staff has maintained that the windows should remain clear and open to the maximum extent possible. As with the previous store layout at Books a Million in this location, BAR Staff requested that the applicant restudy the internal layout of the store to minimize the windows to be obscured. In an early scheme the applicant had proposed covering all windows and doors except for two windows and two doors. The applicant relocated the coolers proposed for the front corner farther into the store to reduce the area to be covered at this important corner location. Staff recognizes that there are certain areas where portions of windows and doors must be covered, such as behind the cash register and adjacent to storage areas. Although the applicant has somewhat reduced the windows to be obscured, Staff continues to maintain that the windows at the highly visible front corner, where the travel agency was formerly located, be entirely clear. This front corner is an opportunity to add vibrancy to the streetscape and clearly show customers and merchandise. While Staff would prefer to have the remaining windows on the North Pitt Street elevation entirely unobscured (with the exception of the one covering a storage area), Staff finds that these generally are set back and have less of a street presence. During meetings with the applicant, Staff emphasized that in the locations where windows must be covered, the applicant should use historic photographs of this area of King Street, rather than blown-up contemporary images of nearby buildings, as they originally proposed. These interpretive historic photos may be considered "art" in the zoning ordinance, rather than signs.

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Zoning staff has determined that the proposed “Open 24 Hours” signs (illuminated boxes attached to the two wall signs and two window decals) constitute special advertising. Even if the Zoning Ordinance permitted such signage, BAR Staff would not support these signs due to the proposed method of illumination for the backlit plastic wall signs and the scale of the window decals. Staff finds that unobscured windows will provide open views into the store which will allow the activity within the store itself to advertise the 24 hour nature of this business. In addition, Staff notes that the applicant can utilize the small directory sign adjacent to the entrance to post hours of operation, as other businesses routinely do.

Regarding awnings, the *Design Guidelines* state that “Awnings should be appropriate and sympathetic to the historical style of the building to which they are attached” and “Awnings should not overwhelm or obscure the architecture and decorative features...” After the entrance marquis was removed, Staff inquired whether the applicant proposed to reinstall the marquis and the applicant has verbally indicated that they will not, agreeing that the previous marquis was too large. In Staff’s opinion, this façade is much improved by the removal of the out-of-scale entry marquis as it overwhelmed the entry terrace and made it difficult to see the wall sign. Therefore, Staff recommends a condition that the oversized marquis not be reinstalled and that the proposed wall sign be centered over the entrance. Staff has no objection to installation of a small awning, to match those over the windows, if requested by the applicant.

Staff also has no objection to the proposed alteration to the entry doors or to the conversion of a door to a window, noting that these alterations are easily reversible in the future.

STAFF

Catherine Miliaras, 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

Zoning:

- C-1 Proposed replacement windows and doors comply with zoning.
- C-2 CVS requires a special use permit to operate because it is a retail business larger than 10,000 square feet. (Scheduled for City Council on 6/25/11).
- C-3 Proposed “CVS/Pharmacy” signs comply with zoning.
- C-4 “Open 24 Hours” window and wall signs are special advertising and are not permitted.
- C-5 Proposed photos in windows are not signs and are not regulated by zoning.

Code Administration:

- C-1 Building and electrical permits will be required to be issued prior to the start of any work at this site
- C-2 Anchorage (type, size, and number) details will be required to be submitted for review with the building permit application
- C-3 Wiring/circuit details will be required for the electrical permit.
- C-4 The plans submitted with this BAR application are not approved for construction

Transportation & Environmental Services:

FINDINGS:

- F1. Applicant shall comply with all other conditions or requirements from approvals under separate permit numbers; ex. SUP2011-00010. (T&ES)
- F2. Please contact T&ES/Construction and Inspections Permit Section to obtain information in regards to insurance documents that will be required for any permits, to include building permits, that involve the signage or any other items that may encroach into the public right of way.

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)

CODE REQUIREMENTS

- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line.
- C-2 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3)
- C-3 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)

V. IMAGES



Figure 1. Looking northwest, south (front) elevation and east (side) elevation.



Figure 2. Rear portion of east (side) elevation.

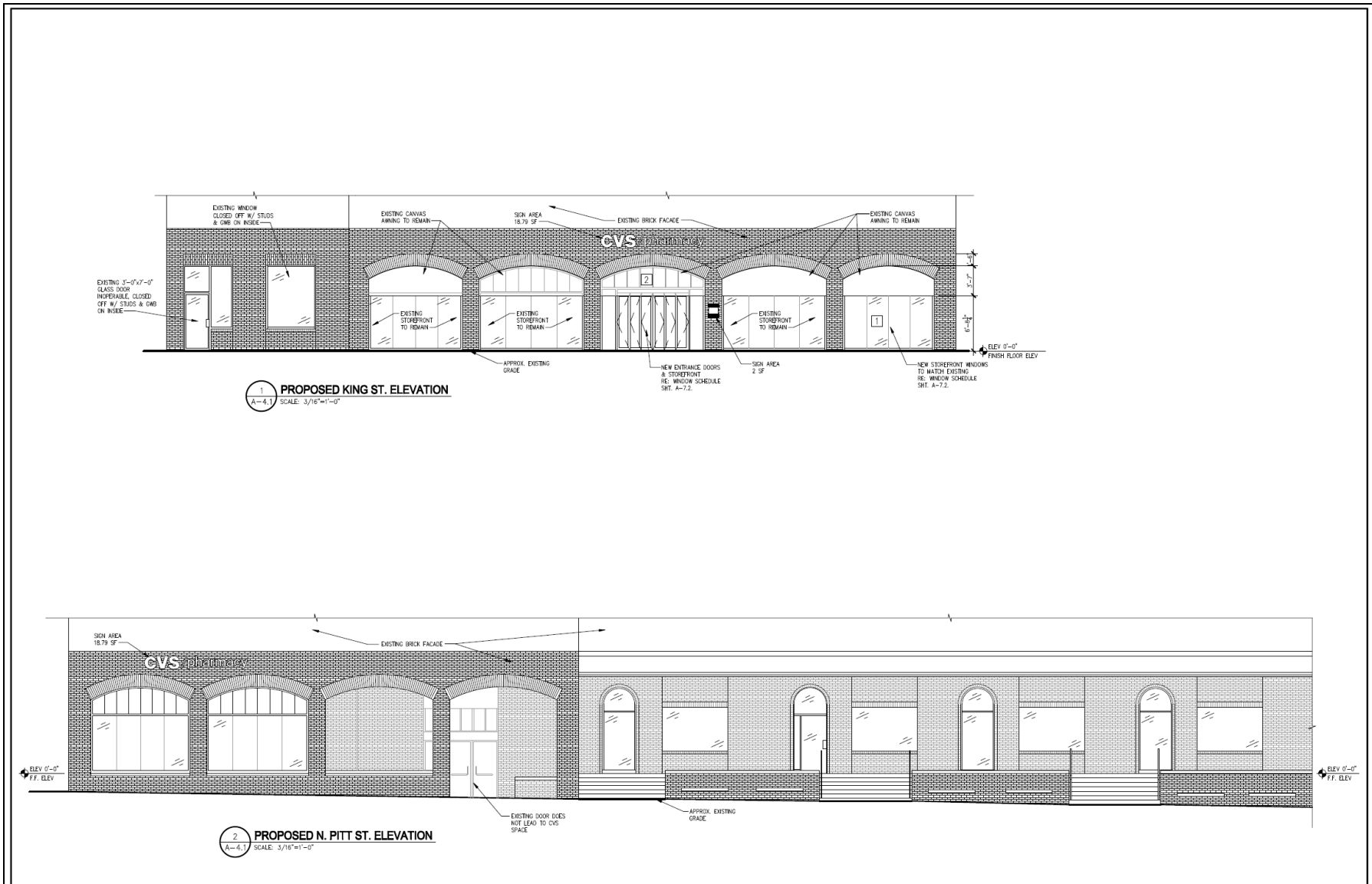


Figure 3. Existing elevations.

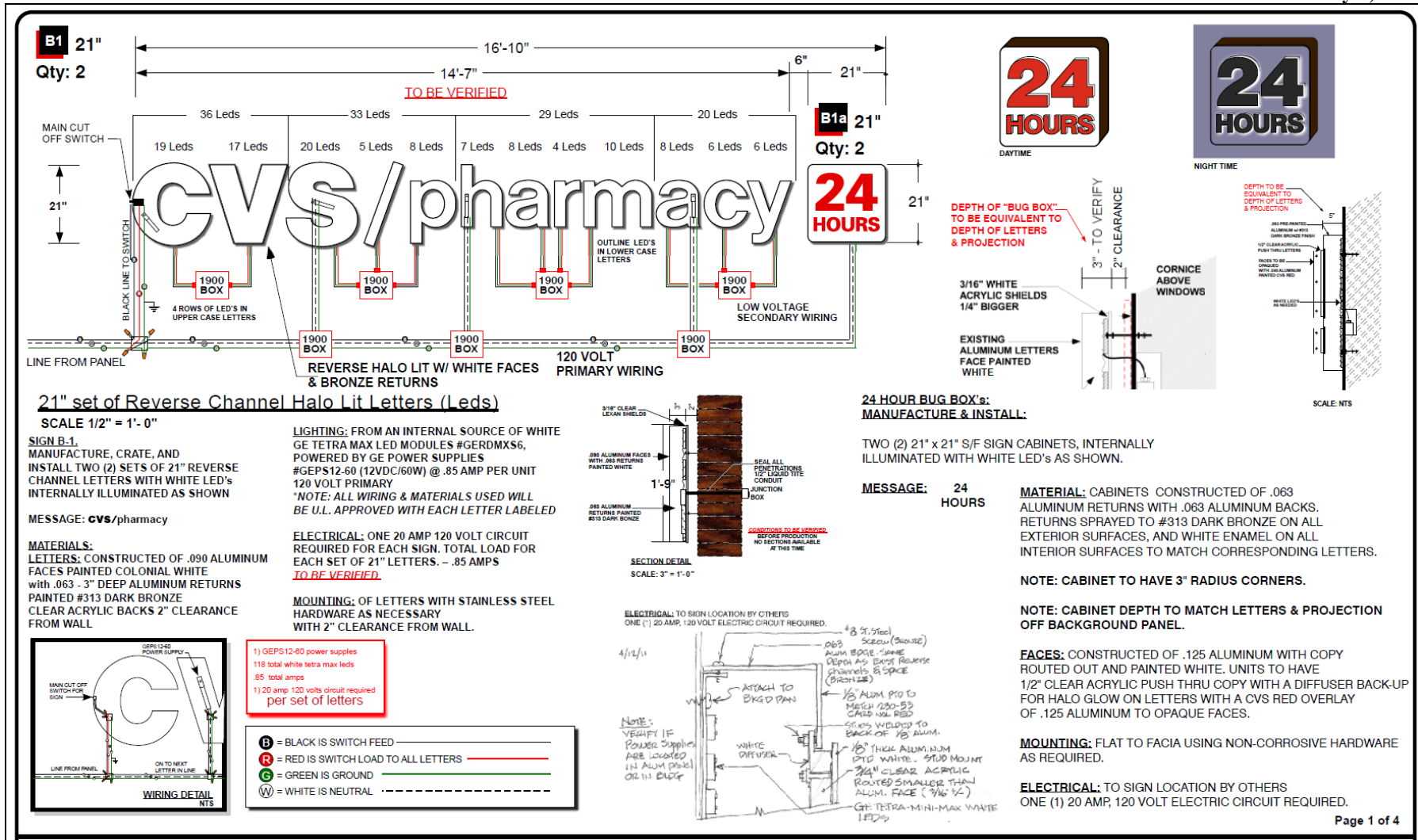


Figure 4. Proposed wall sign.

Day Time
Simulations



Existing

Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



Existing

Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Proposed



Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Proposed

Figure 5. Day time simulations with the previous marquis awning (now removed) and proposed wall signs.



Figure 6. Night simulations with proposed signage.

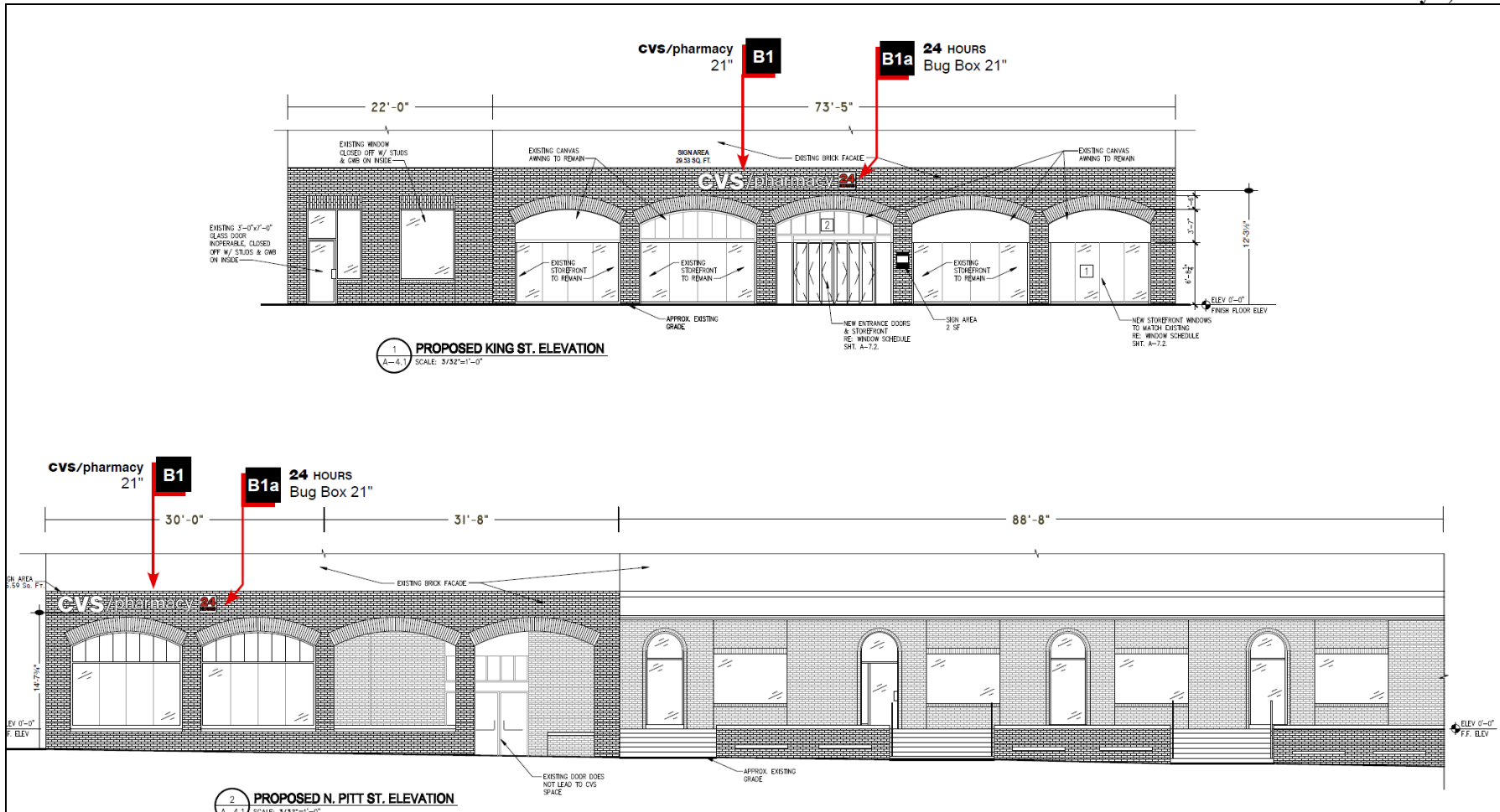


Figure 7. Proposed wall signs on elevations.

4.1.2011
STANDARD STORE
 STORE 2149: 503 KING STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

KING ST. ELEVATION - HISTORIC
 TWO LAYER INSTALLATION

3'
OPEN
24
HOURS
 3'

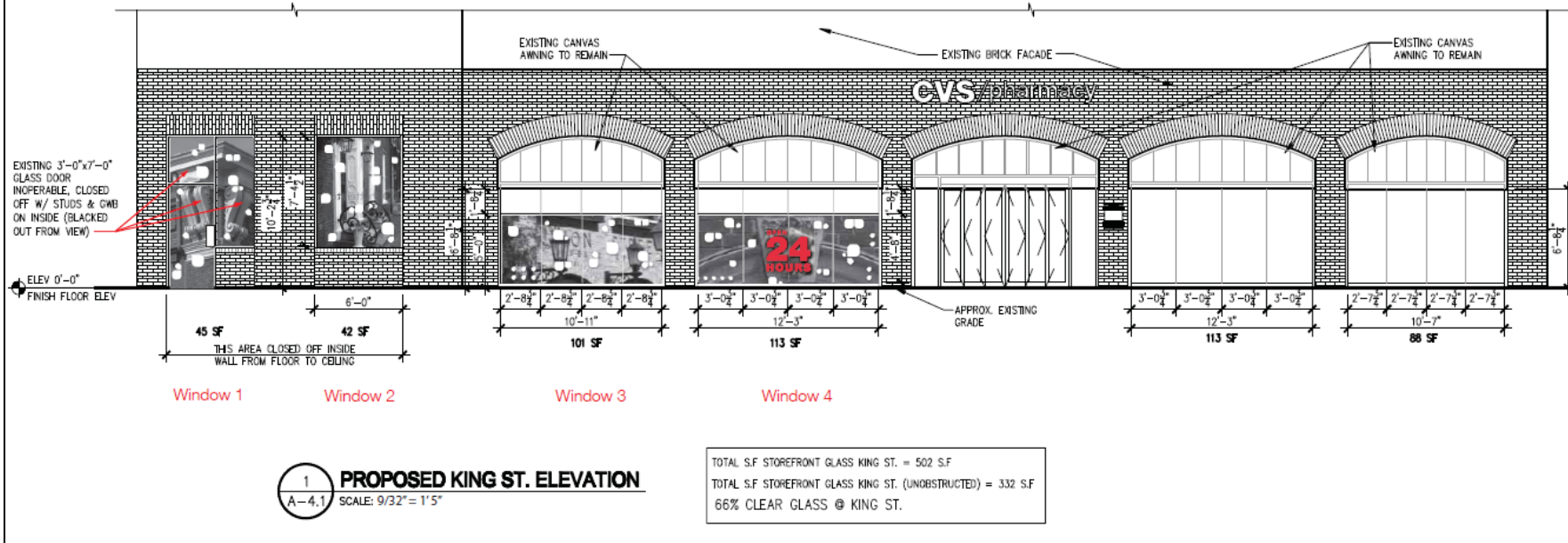


Figure 10. Proposed south (front) elevation (wall sign is not accurate) showing window alterations on King Street.

4.1.2011

STANDARD STORE

STORE 2149: 503 KING STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

PITT ST. ELEVATION - HISTORIC

TWO LAYER INSTALLATION

3'
**OPEN
 24
 HOURS**
 3'

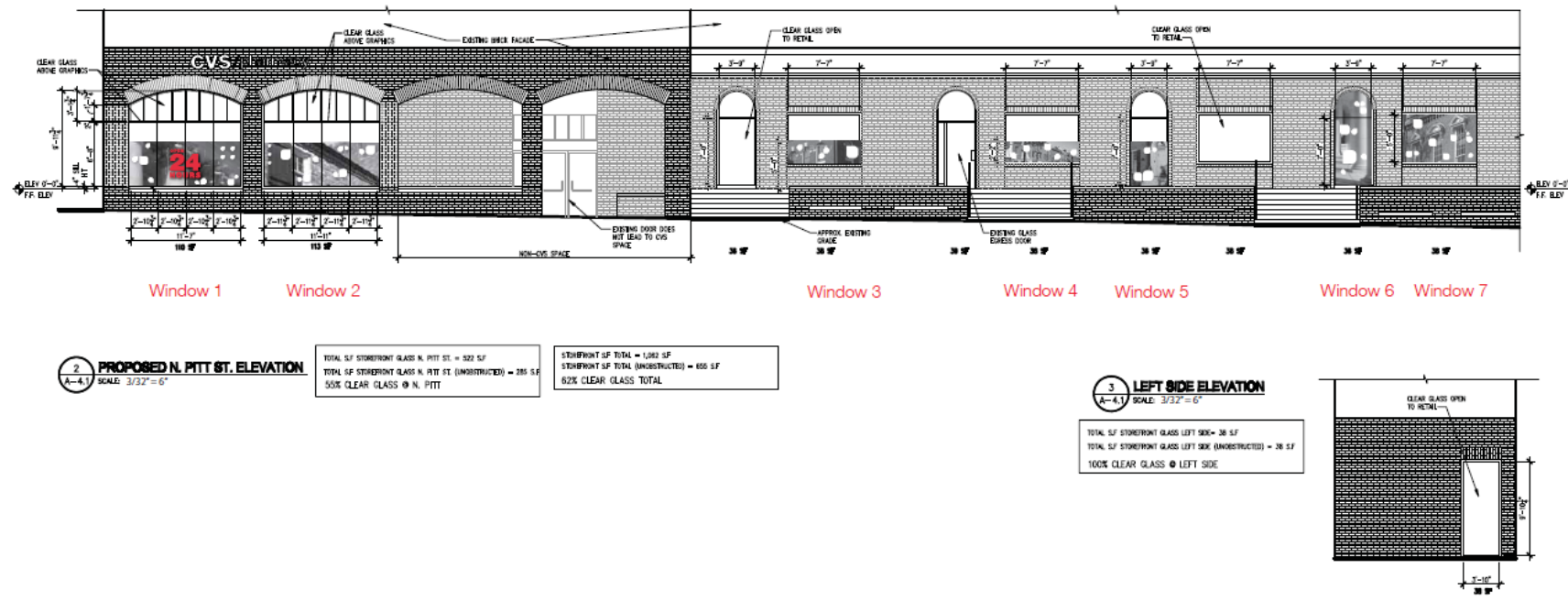


Figure 11. Proposed east (side) elevation (wall sign is not accurate) showing window alterations on North Pitt Street.

4.1.2011

STANDARD STORE

STORE 2149: 503 KING STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

WALL SECTIONS

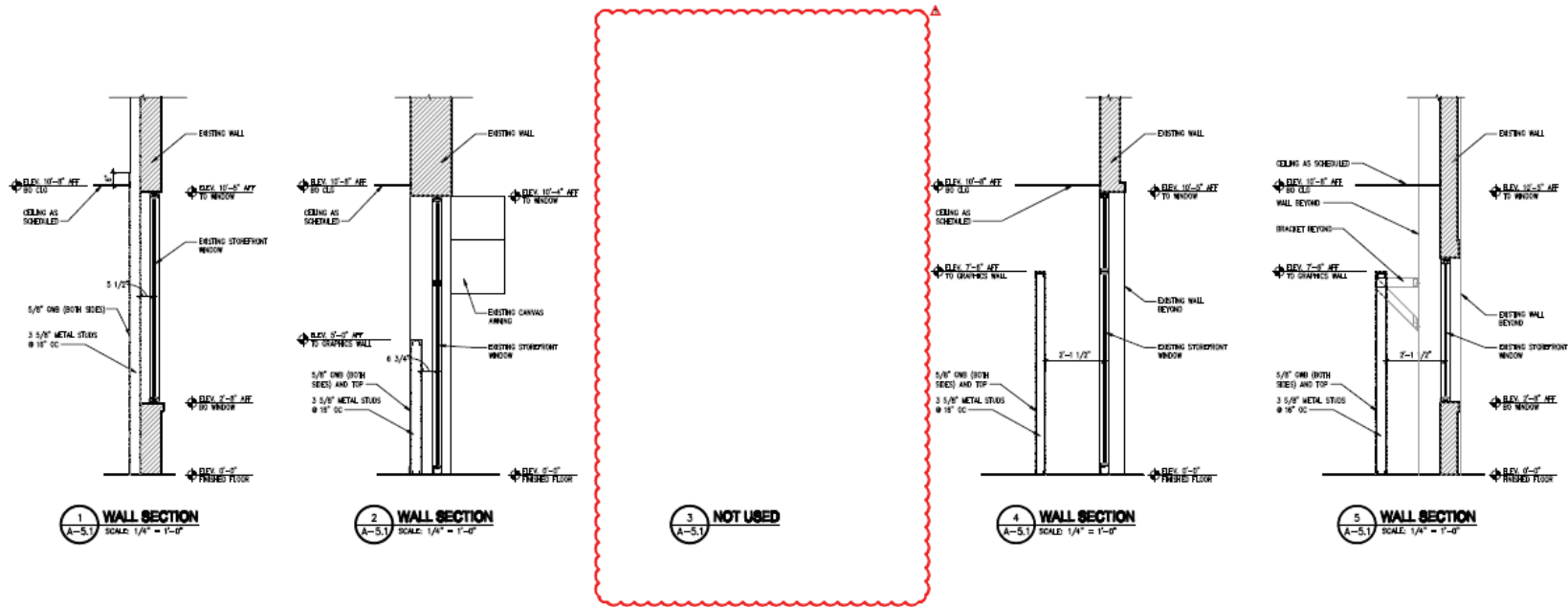


Figure 12. Proposed window alteration section.

PHOTOGRAPHY

King Street Elevation - Old Town Building Details



Window 1



Window 2



Window 3



Window 4

Pitt Street Elevation - Old Town and Alexandria Building Details



Window 1



Window 2



Window 3



Window 4



Window 5



Window 6



Window 7



Window 8

Figure 13. Applicant's proposed images for window coverings.