

Docket Item #8  
BAR CASE #2004-0161

BAR Meeting  
August 25, 2004

**ISSUE:** Signs  
**APPLICANT:** Lan Cao  
**LOCATION:** 924 Queen Street  
**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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**\*\*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 the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

- 1) That the transom window sign be omitted;
- 2) That the flat sign be omitted; and,
- 3) That the bracket for the hanging sign be simplified.

## **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a flat sign, a hanging sign and three window signs at the two story commercial building at the southeast corner of Queen and Patrick Streets.

### Flat sign

The flat sign is to be mounted above the front door. The door is located on an angle at the corner of the building facing Queen and Patrick Streets. As shown in the materials provided, the 2' by 5' will also be mounted on top of the cornice above the door and at the same angle as the door. The photograph with sign superimposed does show the sign in scale. The proposed sign is to be 2' high and 5' long. No information was provided as to how it would be mounted. The sign will be white with black lettering reading "Salon 360 Nailspa Hair Body." The verbiage will be bracketed by curving arrows. The sign will be made of wood

### Hanging sign

The double sided hanging sign will be located to the left of the door on the fascia board above the door. It will be hung from a decorative metal bracket and will be 2.5' long and 2.5' wide. The bottom of the sign will be at least 8' above the sidewalk. The sign will be made of wood and will be white with black lettering reading "Salon 360 Nailspa Hair Body." The verbiage will be bracketed by curving arrows.

### Window signs

White lettering reading "Salon 360 Nailspa Hair Body" and bracketed by curving arrows will be located in the center panel of the glazed show windows on either side of the door. The total size of each of the two signs will be approximately 2' by 2'. In addition, there will be a similar sign in the transom window over the door.

## **II. HISTORY:**

According to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the 2-story brick commercial building at 922-924 Queen Street was erected between 1907 and 1912. The first story originally housed a pharmacy and the second story served as the residence of the pharmacist. The building is located on the southeast corner of Queen and North Patrick Streets and extends 24' along Queen Street and approximately 48' along North Patrick Street. The structure is an excellent example of late Victorian commercial-vernacular architecture in Alexandria. Its corner-oriented storefront, projecting shop windows, and strong cornice elements are typical of this period and style.

On November 22, 2000, the Board approved multiple signs at this location for the previous tenant, State Farm Insurance (BAR Case #2000-00237). Nine signs were approved after-the-fact

and included two small board signs located on the fascia board above the door, two window signs and five signs in the transoms above the windows and door. Within the past several years, the Board has approved signs for two other businesses at this same intersection: two hanging signs at 1000 Queen Street for the Queen Street Clinic (BAR Case#2000-00200, 9/13/2000) and a wall mounted and a projecting box sign at 300 North Patrick Street for Upscale Gift Baskets (BAR Case #2003-00069, 4/23/2003).

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The building is located in the RB, residential zone, and the proposed hair salon use will exist as a non-conforming use approved by City Council June 12, 2004 (see SUP2004-00004). The City Attorney has ruled that a legal non-conforming use may have commercial signs in accord with the statutes regulating signs in commercial zones. The Sign Ordinance, Section IX of the Zoning Ordinance, regulates the size of signs in commercial zones based on a one to one ratio of sign area to linear building frontage [Sec.9-202 (B)]. The proposed signs comply with the zoning ordinance requirements. The building frontage on Patrick Street is 48' long and on Queen Street is 24' long. The proposed signage is approximately 28.25 square feet in total. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance limits the coverage of all window signs to a maximum of 20 percent of the window area. The proposed window signs cover approximately 8% of the window area, and are significantly smaller in size and number than those of the previous tenant, State Farm Insurance. Therefore, the signs comply with the Zoning Ordinance requirements.

Staff appreciates that the applicant is requesting less window signage than the previous tenant, but questions the appropriateness of the overall proposed signage plan. In some respects, the multiple signs appear to be redundant. The *Design Guidelines* recommend that there be only one sign per building (Signs - Page 3). The intent of the recommendation is to minimize visual clutter. However, Staff recognizes that the Board has frequently allowed more than one sign for businesses located on a corner and for businesses on the Patrick Street corridor. Staff believes multiple signs may be appropriate in this situation, but questions whether the proposed signage plan allocates the signage in the most effective way.

Staff has no objection to the two window signs, which are to be no more than 20% of the window area of each of the show windows. However, the sign in the transom appears to be redundant and, if actually executed at 20% of the window size, would be so small as to be unreadable. In addition the large numeral "360" over the door and atop the street address sign could be confusing. Therefore, Staff recommends that the transom sign be omitted.

Staff is not convinced that the flat sign would work at the dimensions proposed. As the sign is not depicted in scale on the materials the applicant provided, it is difficult to be certain how it will appear. Staff notes that the ledge at the top of the cornice where the sign is proposed to be installed is actually quite shallow. Thus, as the sign cannot be set back, will overhang the cornice on either side by a significant amount. In addition, at 2' high, it appears likely to extend across the bottom of the window on the second story facing Patrick Street. The *Design Guidelines* recommend that signs should not obscure architectural features (Signs - Page 3). Staff believes this sign will be extremely awkward in appearance. In addition, with the hanging sign just below it, it appears to be redundant. Therefore, Staff recommends that the flat sign be

omitted.

Staff believes a hanging sign is appropriate and would not require any changes, but does suggest that it would be more visible from Patrick Street if it were mounted at the corner of the cornice, above the door. Staff believes the bracket is overly ornate for this handsome, but simple, building and recommends a simpler bracket be used. An example of an attractive but not overly ornate bracket can be seen across the street at 1000 Queen Street.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

- 1) That the transom window sign be omitted;
- 2) That the flat sign be omitted; and,
- 3) That the bracket for the hanging sign be simplified.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

- C-1 A building permit and final inspection are required for installing the signs. Installation must be performed by a licensed contractor. A separate electrical trade permit is required for installation of the proposed lighting. (See Code Enforcement Memo to owners and contractors *Permits for Wood Signs* dated March 24, 2004.)
- C-2 Wall letters / signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111] Please indicate the method to be used for anchoring the letters to the wall – number & size of anchors and approximate weight of sign.
- C-3 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.
- C-4 Wall signs projecting above the roof shall comply with USBC H111.3.

### Historic Alexandria:

“Seems like a great many signs.”