



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: February 9, 2023
SUBJECT: CoA 23-03, Columbia Pike Form Based Code, 2910 Columbia Pike, Historic Facade

Background Information

In March 2002, the *Columbia Pike Initiative - A Revitalization Plan* was adopted by the County Board. A major recommendation of the plan was to develop a new review process to evaluate redevelopment proposals in the corridor, which became the Form Based Code (FBC). In February 2003, the County Board adopted the FBC, which made commercial development sites within the “Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District,” designated on the General Land Use Plan, eligible for development according to the FBC.

The Columbia Station (Halstead) project (2906-2922, and 2926 Columbia Pike) was approved as the first Columbia Pike FBC project in June 2004, which involved a Use Permit approval for a 257-unit residential building with ground floor retail and the preservation of the existing façade of the Arlington Hardware Building (2910 Columbia Pike), the subject of this current application. During the community review process, the applicant worked with the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) to refine the architectural details of the Halstead project to better incorporate the historic façade of the Arlington Hardware Building. As part of that ongoing review by the HALRB, it was determined that an “Art Deco” style design for the Halstead project would best complement the surrounding context, which includes the Arlington Theater and the Elkins Building located across Columbia Pike. As per the FBC requirements, the HALRB granted a series of Certificates of Appropriateness for both the Arlington Hardware Building’s facade renovation and for the construction of the new residential building. At the time of the Halstead’s approval by the County Board in 2004, specific details on future tenants that would occupy the Arlington Hardware Building were unknown.

In 2009, the owner of P. Brennan’s Irish Pub requested a modification of the first-floor clear height requirement under the Building Envelope Standards for Main Street sites, which is allowable under the FBC, to accommodate a mezzanine in their proposed restaurant that would be in the Arlington Hardware Building. With this modification, the mezzanine would be 12.5 feet from the first floor rather than the prescribed 15 feet, to remain compatible with the historic façade’s second story windows and original second story floor location. The proposed mezzanine location would provide active uses behind the second story windows that could be seen from the adjacent street and sidewalk along Columbia Pike. On March 18, 2009, the restaurant owner brought their mezzanine modifications as an informational item to the HALRB meeting to seek their support of the project. The applicant worked with the Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff and the HALRB to develop an overall design for the restaurant that

aligned with the overall purpose and intent of the FBC and the architectural style for the area. The HALRB unanimously voted to endorse plans for the interior, determining that the mezzanine would not detract from the building's historic authenticity and in fact, only improve its exterior appearance. The P. Brennan's restaurant closed in 2017 and the two-level space has remained vacant for the past five years.

The Arlington Hardware Building, which is identified in the FBC as a "Historic Façade", was constructed circa 1920. The hardware store opened in 1931 and was operated by David Eisen and members of his family until the business closed in 2004. In 1996, there was an electrical fire that required the building to be renovated. The HPP staff has provided an architectural description below of the historic façade:

The two-story historic façade has a flat roof with a simple cornice. Below the cornice are two rectangular brick reliefs. The cladding at the first story consists of a vertical metal paneling, and the second story is brick. Centered on the first story is a recessed, double-door entry filled with metal-frame and glass replacement doors that are topped by a transom. There are large plate glass windows located on both sides of the recessed main entry, and beyond the recessed entry alcove are large plate glass windows and single fixed windows, all of which are topped by transoms. Above the first story windows and centered entry is a continuous metal frieze and centered above the frieze is a horizontal sign for the previous restaurant. Based on historic photographs, the sign's Art Deco design is consistent with the original signage for Arlington Hardware (Figures 1 and 2). The second story consists of two pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows (material unknown) at the center bay, and single, one-over-one double-hung windows at the east and west bays. These windows have brick lintels and sills. Historic photographs indicate that the original second-story windows consisted of wood, six-over-one, double-hung windows (Figure 1). Located in the center bay of the second story, between the pairs of windows, is a blade sign from the previous restaurant, which is also reminiscent of historic signage for Arlington Hardware.

Current Proposal

The applicant and new restaurant owner are proposing to modify the first story of the building's historic façade located at 2910 Columbia Pike. The proposal includes removing the 7' by 13' large plate glass windows that are located on both sides of the recessed main entry, and demolishing the exterior wall below the windows, which consists of 3' by 13' concrete breeze block. The applicant proposes to install a Vetrina Bi-fold Panoramic V-Wall system, more commonly described as a bi-fold window, that will measure 10' by 13'. The bi-fold window will be supported by a track system that would allow the windows to fold inside the interior of the restaurant space.

DRC Review

The Design Review Committee (DRC) considered this application at its February 1, 2023, hybrid meeting. Although the applicant was unable to present their project, the HPP staff attempted to answer questions from the DRC members. The DRC asked about the first story of the building, including if the current fenestration pattern was original and if the material behind the vertical metal paneling was known. The HPP staff was unable to answer these questions, as no historic photographs had been located as of the date of the DRC meeting. However, the HPP staff could confirm via Google Streetview that the existing windows are non-historic replacements. Further DRC discussion focused on the appropriateness of expanding the existing window openings from 7' by 13' to 10' by 13', and changing the fenestration pattern from fixed storefront windows to bi-fold windows. The DRC agreed that enlargement of the window opening was not appropriate, but bi-fold windows that matched the existing window opening of 7' by 13' could be appropriate. If the applicant agreed to this change, the DRC agreed this item could be placed on the Consent Agenda for the HALRB's consideration. However, upon the HPP staff presenting



the DRC guidance to the applicant the following day, the applicant indicated that they had already ordered the custom built bi-fold window system and requested that their application be placed on the Discussion Agenda for the February 15, 2023, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The HPP staff does not recommend approval of the subject application as submitted. The HPP staff located two historic photographs depicting the Arlington Hardware Building prior to the electrical fire in 1996, and after its renovation when it reopened as a gift and garden shop, which was operated by David Eisen's daughter, Leonora Gabaldon, from 1996 until its closing in 2004 (Figures 1 and 2). Both photographs show the first story containing the existing window fenestration pattern, which remain 7' by 13' large plate glass windows topped by transoms. The material behind the vertical metal paneling at the first story could not be determined from historic photographs.

Based on the approved Use Permit request dated June 15, 2004, the developer of the Halstead project agreed to preserve the existing historic façade of the Arlington Hardware Building. Further, according to the guidance provided in the FBC, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* are to be utilized by the HALRB, and/or the DRC, when considering development projects involving historic facades.

The subject application does not comply with Standards #2, #9, and #10 of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

Standard #2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

Standard #9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Standard #10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

As mentioned in Standard #2, enlarging the existing window openings would change the spatial relationship of the building's first story configuration, which is a character-defining feature of the historic façade. Concerning Standard #9, enlarging the existing window openings would be an exterior alteration that would destroy historic features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. Lastly, with Standard #10, the demolition of the exterior wall below the existing windows would affect the essential form and integrity of the historic façade.

The HPP staff recognizes that this is an historic commercial building, and it is necessary to adapt the space to the needs of future owners/tenants. Staff believes that the existing windows were replaced when the historic façade was reconstructed during the Halstead project in 2004. Although the HPP staff does not consider the existing fixed windows or their existing fenestration pattern to be character-defining features, staff does consider the following elements of the Arlington Hardware Building to be character-defining: the two-story form, flat roof, brick cladding, window and door sizing and spatial relationship on the façade, and the original location of the historic façade along Columbia Pike.

In conclusion, if the applicant chose to pursue the design approach suggested by the DRC at its February 1, 2023, meeting, the HPP staff would support a bi-fold window, or another type of operational window, that would fit within the existing window openings.



Figure 1: Photograph of the Arlington Hardware Building prior to the electrical fire in 1996 (Arlington County HPP)



Figure 2: Photograph of the Arlington Hardware Building in April 1997 (Arlington County HPP)