



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Serena Bolliger, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: January 11, 2023
SUBJECT: 249 North Glebe Road, CoA 23-01, Buckingham Commercial Area Historic District

Background Information

Designed by Henry Wright, Allan Kamstra, and Albert Lueders, the Buckingham Shopping Center was built as a component of the planned Buckingham Village residential community between 1937 and 1946. The complex consists of numerous commercial buildings at the intersection of North Glebe Road and North Pershing Drive. Evoking the idea of a traditional village center, the commercial complex was one of the final examples in the Washington, D.C., area of separating stores by a street, which was a popular design among planners in the 1920s. The majority of Buckingham Village became a Local Historic District (LHD) in 1993 and the commercial properties are also contributing resources to the Buckingham Village National Register Historic District.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to install two neon signs which conform with the *Neon Signage Guidelines for the Buckingham Shopping Center* in two separate locations over the historic storefronts which previously had signage for the Sun Trust Bank. The proposed sign over the business entry on the southwest storefront facing N. Glebe Rd. would read “Urgent Animal Care of Arlington.” The second proposed sign would read “Urgent Animal Care” and be installed over the central window on the northwest store elevation facing N. Pershing Dr.

DRC Review

The Design Review Committee (DRC) considered the application at its January 4, 2023, hybrid meeting. Mr. Wenchel noted this was the only building in the commercial area with a red granite block finish and suggested that maybe that could be changed to match the other storefronts. Ms. Bolliger explained that the granite finish was identified in the National Register nomination form as a character-defining feature. Mr. Dudka agreed that this finish was in historic photos.

Mr. Wenchel asked whether the wheelchair accessible ramp to the former ATM location would be removed and if the original storefront would be restored. The applicant explained that the new tenant would not be making any changes to the exterior beyond signage.

Ms. Meyer noted that the proposed sign on the N. Pershing Dr. side was longer than the existing awning beneath it, and signs were historically aligned with awnings. The DRC members suggested shortening the

wording to reduce the size of the sign on this elevation. Mr. Dudka stated that if the applicant amended the application to match the length of the sign to the awning, the item could be placed on the Consent Agenda for the January 18, 2023, hybrid HALRB hearing, otherwise it could be placed on the Discussion Agenda.

The applicant has amended the application based on the DRC's recommendation. The proposed sign on N. Pershing Dr. now reads "Urgent Animal Care" to retain the dimensions over the middle window within the shadow of the previous sign. Therefore, based on the DRC's comments, the application was placed on the HALRB's Consent Agenda.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation staff recommends approval of the subject application. The proposed materials, colors, and overall design of the new signs are consistent with the other signage in the Buckingham Commercial Area LHD. Further, staff finds that the proposal meets the intent of both Chapter 11: Guidelines for Commercial Areas: Signage in the *Buckingham Historic District Guidelines* as well as the *Neon Signage Guidelines for the Buckingham Shopping Center*.

Staff appreciates that the applicant amended the proposal based on the DRC's recommendation to reduce the N. Pershing Dr. signage to one awning length. While the *Neon Signage Guidelines for the Buckingham Shopping Center* state "Only one sign, designated to the first awning, will be allowed on the sides of the Shopping Center," staff believes it is appropriate to allow the proposed sign along N. Pershing Dr. to be installed over the central window, as there is evidence both on the building and in photographs that a sign was previously installed over this middle awning. The DRC likewise did not express concern about this proposed central placement.