

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
March 24, 2015 Meeting**

15. **CAR No. 15-040** (M. Hawk)

**1000 N. 25th Street
Union Hill Old & Historic District**

Project Description: **Install new building-mounted wall signs**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval for the installation of building-mounted wall signs advertising a planned, new restaurant at this structure in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The applicant is proposing aluminum, flat wall signs located on three sides of the contemporary addition to the historic structure. At this time the applicant is *not* proposing to install the plastic banner in the area of the cornice.

The wall signs would be constructed of aluminum and consist of a white-to-black gradient background with white and red lettering advertising the name, phone number, and slogan of the business. Two signs would be 36" x 48" and one sign, which would be adjacent to the main entrance, would be 48" x 60".

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that, "Flat wall signs are wooden or metal sign panels applied directly to a building façade when a storefront cornice is not present. Generally these signs are intended to be viewed from a moderate distance. Flat wall signs should be designed to enhance the façade by blending with the architectural features of the building. They should not be merely applied to the surface of the building, nor should they cover or obscure important architectural elements" (p. 70). The *Guidelines* also state that, "Signs within a District should be modest in size and addressed to pedestrians and slower vehicular traffic. Larger signs designed with heavy, high speed vehicular traffic in mind are not appropriate" (p. 69).

The proposed signage would be applied directly to the building, but would not obscure any important architectural features. The proposal for a building mounted sign is appropriate as there is not a sign band or other traditional area for signage typically found with historic commercial buildings. The proposed colors of the signs also relate to the brick and mortar colors of the building.

Staff is concerned that the proposed signs are too large, and seem intended to be viewed by faster moving automobiles rather than by pedestrians. Given the mix of slower-moving traffic as well as pedestrians along N. 25th Street, staff feels that slightly smaller signs would still be easily read by either a motorist or pedestrian and would provide more harmony with the overall structure.

Therefore, staff recommends that the signs be slightly reduced in size. A 25% reduction in the size of the signs would result in two signs being 27" x 36", and one sign being 36" x 45". Staff recommends that the applicant verify with the Zoning division that the proposed signage does not exceed the allotted signage square

footage of the building. Staff also recommends that the sign be attached to the building at the mortar joints, not through the brick.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions above, is consistent with the Standards for Signage outlined in Section 114-930.7(f) of the City Code, and with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.