

BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, March 1, 2005

Ms. Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

Attendance: Ms. Heidi Miller, Chairman; Mr. James Treffinger; Mrs. Laverne Stebbins; Mrs. Martha Sheley. Absent: Mr. Alok Khare; Mr. Charles Graham; Mr. Jack Gramann. Also present: Mr. Ryan Lee, Planner.

Excuse Absent Members:

MOTION: Mr. Treffinger moved to excuse Mr. Khare, Mr. Graham and Mr. Gramann from the meeting. Mrs. Stebbins seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: Mrs. Sheley moved to approve the Board of Architectural Review minutes of March 1, 2005, as written. Mr. Treffinger seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS

The Mommy Connection - Department of Development Special Approval (Sign)

Mr. Lee stated staff had been working with the applicant since December, 2004, and reviewed with the members some of the previous proposals for permanent signage. The initial application utilized the existing sign structure with an attached wooden cut-out stork attached. This original request was rejected because it required variances for the sign area and sign height. The applicant revised the sign request to eliminate the variances. In reviewing the request, the sign was determined to be larger than the maximum size permitted. The applicant, again, reduced the size to meet the maximum sign area permitted; however, the shape and numbers of colors do not meet the intent of the sign regulations in the APD. Although these issues are not variances, the staff cannot approve the specific sign shape and color. Therefore, the application has been forwarded to the Board for their consideration.

Mr. Lee presented slides of the existing temporary signage which is more of a design staff was working with the applicant to use and encouraged the applicant to incorporate the stork figure within the existing sign face of sixteen (16) square feet. Mr. Lee stated that this could be done in a manner that matches the current sign structure as it exists on the property and is in character of the APD. The general standards for APD signs in the Zoning Ordinance states that "sign designs within the Architectural Preservation District (APD) shall be simple graphic solutions to visual communication needs". Additionally, the Design Review Criteria states that:

Signs are a prominent and important component of the Architectural Preservation District.



Businesses rely on them to identify their location to customers. Because signs tend to be highly visible, their presence and appearance must be regulated. The character of the signs in a business district directly affects the public perception of that district. A proliferation of large, gaudy and poorly-designed signs can negate the attractiveness of a business district, particularly one that is historic. Conversely, signs that are simple and attractive can enhance the character of a business district and reflect community pride.

Based on the above-stated standards, staff recommended the sign be denied.

Ms. Miller asked if the Board could approve a permanent sign for the applicant that would be more of the design of the temporary signage currently in place, or if that would require a new application.

Mr. Lee stated the Board would have the ability to approve a sign with basic guidelines and place a condition on that approval that would require specific color, size, material, etc., subject to staff approval.

Mrs. Darinda Reis, 7560 Pine Frost, stated she was requesting the existing temporary signage be approved incorporating a stork figure as the sign post. She stated the proposed sign does meet the design standards which state that within the Architectural Preservation District (APD), signs shall be simple graphic solutions to visual communications needs. She stated the stork is a very simple idea in that who does not think of a stork when they relate to babies. In addition, the design standards states the type, size, height, number, placement, materials, color, and illumination of the sign shall compliment the architecture of the building located on the premises. Mrs. Reis stated her building is a brick ranch. The construction materials comply with the provisions outlined in the ordinance in that the stork itself is a wood structure and the sign structure is of aluminum construction. The color schemes do comply with the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) color chart. The sign is not internally illuminated—it is externally illuminated. One (1) sign is permitted on the premises and the proposed sign does not have changeable letters. She stated she followed those guidelines set forth. Mrs. Reis stated the church on the opposite side of South Main Street, of which she presented pictures, has a cross extending from the sign face which is the same principle as the use of the stork to convey their message. She stated she is requesting approval based on the fact that they have complied with everything that has been specified in the Ordinance. There are no other specifications and she stated she clarified that with Mr. Lee on several occasions. All requirements have been met and she asked for that approval.

Mrs. Stebbins stated the cross portion on the church sign is not as pronounced as the proposed stork. She stated the stork appears to be larger than the actual sign face for the business. She stated this is not the type of sign that should be in a historic district.

Mrs. Reis asked “as evidenced by what”?

Mrs. Stebbins stated she understood the sign meets the size standards, but the sign post is all stork and does not appear to be proportionate. She stated character figures are not well suited in the APD.

Mrs. Reis stated the Ordinance does not specify that you cannot have character figures. She stated she came before the Board to ask for approval of the proposed sign as the sign is in compliance with the Ordinance as it specifies. There is nothing that specifies that you can't have a character.

Mrs. Stebbins stated the standards do state that.

Mrs. Reis asked what that standard was in the Ordinance.

Mrs. Stebbins stated the standard is simple graphic solutions for visual communication needs. That statement is in the Ordinance. The stork is not a simple graphic solution.

Ms. Miller stated that any kind of artwork is subjective to opinion. She stated the Board is in no way saying the sign is poorly designed or that it would not be appropriate somewhere other than a historic/architectural district. Specifically, the proposed sign does not feel like it is in context with the historic district and would not have been used back in that era. By making the stork figure the primary element of the sign versus the actual sign copy, and staying within the square footage, the stork is taking up half the square footage of the permitted space and is not communicating the name of the business as effectively with the proposed sign as does the existing temporary sign. Also, Ms. Miller stated the sign does not have any kind of historic significance that might be consistent with what the City is trying to portray in the APD.

Mrs. Sheley stated she agreed with Ms. Miller's analysis as the proposed sign does not have the historic flair the Board is looking for.

Mrs. Reis stated she came before the Board because she definitely believed, and she indicated she had expressed to Mr. Lee on numerous occasions, that the Ordinance specifies what you can have. To say to an applicant that you don't feel that this portrays what you want—you can't tell someone that. She stated she couldn't know the feelings of the Board and could only read what is written and submit a design based on what is written. A design cannot be submitted based on how the Board feels. She stated she understood, but she needed to say that you can't tell people this how the Board feels because feelings change. Your feelings this month might not be the feelings of the Board next month. You have to go on what is written and it does say simple graphic solutions which is very vague and broad, and you are putting a very narrow focus on something that is written very loosely. She stated that is what concerned her personally as a business owner that is also a resident of the City. She stated she addressed that with Mr. Lee, that somehow the standards need to be tightened up so that people do know what they need to do to comply without feeling that it is subjective and it is not objective. She stated that is truly where we are at. She stated the consideration of her sign was very subjective—it's how the Board feels. It is not what is written.

Ms. Miller stated she somewhat agreed with that, however, she still felt the bigger issue comes from the clear communication of the sign. She stated she thought that the example of the church sign as far as the cross coming out of the sign, is a good example of what Mrs. Reis was trying to portray on her sign. However, the cross is not the primary element of their sign as you read it first and then see the cross. She stated it concerned her that the sign copy is secondary to the stork.

Mrs. Reis stated the sign face is 43 inches high and the stork is an additional 10 inches for a total of 53 inches high so she did not think when you look at the measurements that it is probably not accurate in how it would look. She stated she did not want to belabor it as she indicated she knew what the Board was going to do. She stated there was nothing she could say to the Board other than she was concerned, and there is a bigger issue here. She stated she was not the first person to come before the Board and ask for something and won't be the last person, but she thought it is important to give people clear and direct guidelines. If you take the argument of the cross projecting out from the sign and you again apply that to the ordinance, it does not say how prominent that should be or not be—so either it is or it isn't.

Ms. Miller stated the Board is in the process of developing a piece of literature that will more clearly define the use of signage. She stated she respected everything Mrs. Reis was saying, but it is very difficult to create a district where all signage is consistent with shapes, colors, etc., but the reason the BAR exists is because you cannot put on paper exactly black and white what fits. The BAR has ability to consider issues that do not exactly fit within the words, they can review them to make an educated decision on what they feel is consistent with what they are trying to accomplish in the appearance of the APD.

Mrs. Reis stated if what Ms. Miller was saying is all the Board is going to allow is shapes of circles, rectangles, triangles, those types of geometric shapes, the standards should say that. It clearly should say that because that is specific and that does convey where the signage should go versus simple graphic solutions. She stated this was very frustrating that in her more than forty years, you hear of people applying for different things. Now having experienced that firsthand and voicing that to Mr. Lee, it is just very frustrating that you think you are where need to be and you are not. And then, she stated, you come here and still hold some hope that if you apply the standards as they are written, you cannot say you feel this is how we want to convey the district because you have to be objective.

Ms. Miller stated she felt the design of the temporary sign is appropriate and some additional color could be added to it.

MOTION: Mrs. Sheley moved to deny Special Approval Application #DD-05-12 submitted for The Mommy Connection, 155 South Main Street, as submitted. Mrs. Stebbins seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

Mr. Lee informed Mrs. Reis of her right to appeal the decision of the BAR to City Council.

POLL OF MEMBERS

The members discussed the progress of the new sign color chart which Ms. Miller indicated could be reviewed at the next meeting.

There being no further the business, the meeting was adjourned.