

To: HALRB  
From: Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation Planner  
Date: September 13, 2016  
Subject: 2900 Columbia Pike, CoA 15-06A, Form Based Code Project

### **Background Information**

The commercial building located at 2900 Columbia Pike, formerly known as Blanca's Restaurant, is the oldest commercial building on Columbia Pike, constructed circa 1920 (new information discovered since last CoA case). Built in the Renaissance Revival style, this brick building is characterized by a hipped metal tile roof, pedimented entryway, and large rounded arch windows on the side elevation. Originally used as a bank, the building has been modified on the interior and in certain areas on the exterior to accommodate a restaurant use for at least the last forty years. The building at 2900 Columbia Pike is called out for Full Building Preservation under the Columbia Pike Revitalization Plan and Form Based Code (2005). The property was certified as a Form Based Code Project in 2015, therefore all subsequent alterations to the building require CoA review and approval by the HALRB.

In September 2014, the HALRB heard the changes proposed by the new restaurant tenant as a courtesy review. At that time, the HALRB was supportive of the overall project, with minor changes. A final CoA for a number of exterior alterations was previously approved by the HALRB in June 2015. Since that time, a new tenant has been renovating the interior spaces and is ready for permit approvals associated with the new restaurant.

The subject CoA application is for two (2) items related to the new restaurant:

1. Installation of four (4) exterior speakers.
2. Installation of two (2) signs.

New speakers are proposed to be installed along the elevation facing South Walter Reed Drive. There will be four (4) speakers; the two nearest Columbia Pike will be installed 18' above grade, while the two near the rear of the building will be installed 10' above grade. Two will be placed under the eaves of the tile roof, just adjacent to the soffit, and two will be at the roofline of the flat-roofed kitchen wing to the rear. The dimensions of the speakers, mounting hardware, and final locations are noted in the attached drawings. The speakers will be mounted so that no historic masonry or wood are damaged and no brackets will be disturbed, removed, or obscured. The speakers are associated with new outdoor seating that will be placed on the corner adjacent to the building.

The applicant is also proposing two (2) new signs. One sign will be placed underneath the pediment surrounding the front door facing Columbia Pike. The internally illuminated LED channel letter sign will read "BRICKHAUS". The sign will measure approximately 10½" x 128". The sign will be mounted into the wall with lag bolts through the mortar joints, and will not damage any masonry or other historic materials. The second sign will be placed on the South Walter Reed Drive elevation. It will be an internally illuminated cabinet wall sign that reads "BRICKHAUS" per the attached drawings. The sign cabinet will be constructed of an aluminum frame and will be powered by LED lights. The sign also will

be mounted with lag bolts through the mortar and will not damage the masonry or any other historic elements.

The DRC originally asked the applicant to explore other sign types and locations. Given the required height clearance by Zoning and the small size of this building, few other locations were available. The applicant did lower the wall sign on South Walter Reed Drive so that the top of the sign aligns with the spring of the adjacent arched window. The DRC had no further comments at the September 6<sup>th</sup> DRC meeting and recommended this case be placed on the consent agenda.

As this is not a local historic district, there are no design guidelines to inform a decision. In lieu of design guidelines, the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance Section 15.7 directs the HALRB to use the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* to evaluate applications. Staff finds that the application meets Standards 2 & 9, as follows:

*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.*

No historic building materials, spaces, or fabric will be removed or altered by this proposal. The signs are of a size, design, and style that will not detract from this simple, revival-styled building.

*9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property.*

No historic building materials, spaces, or fabric will be destroyed, obscured, or altered by this proposal.