

Docket Item # 9  
BAR CASE #2013-00097

BAR Meeting  
May 1, 2013

**ISSUE:** Certificate of Appropriateness - Signage  
**APPLICANT:** Daniel Isaac, Pompanoosuc Mills  
**LOCATION:** 277 South Washington Street  
**ZONE:** CD/Commercial Downtown

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Pompanoosuc Mills with the following conditions:

1. That the window sign be made of a vinyl window decal, not to exceed 20% of the window area and with final approval by BAR Staff;
2. That the die-cut vinyl decal in the lower left corner of the window be eliminated;

In addition, Staff recommends a sign master plan for the Atrium building that includes:

1. Remove the tall plantings and fencing along the Duke Street (south) elevation, and replace with low, seasonal planting.
2. Preserve the existing lighting at the top of the arches, with future replacement light fixtures to be administratively approved by Staff. All permanent light fixtures on the ground level of the building should be the same style, with the exception of targeted illumination for signs.
3. Retain the building directory plaques adjacent to the main building entrance, as approved by the BAR in the 1999 Sign Plan, for those ground floor uses with an atrium entrance.
4. Wall signs and hanging sign brackets may not be mounted on the masonry arch.
5. Vinyl window decals are permitted if they do not exceed 20% of the total window area and are in accordance with the BAR Criteria & Standards for Administrative Approval of Signs within the Historic Districts.
6. One projecting hanging sign is permitted for each business near the business entrance, with the bracket not to be located on the masonry arch.
7. Future awnings at the ground floor storefront may not extend across the entire width of the arches but may be mounted above the entrance doors. The awnings must be substantially the same design as the awnings approved at Society Fair or must be separately approved by the BAR.

**\*\*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

**\*\*BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.



**BAR2013-00097**



## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for five signs to identify Pompanoosuc Mills, a retail furniture store located on the southwest corner of the building 277 South Washington Street, otherwise known as the Atrium Building. The applicant requests approval to install:

- Two window signs constructed of a bronze colored aluminum panel with white vinyl adhesive lettering, mounted to the storefront window frame with concealed aluminum clips;
- Two white window decals, each with an area of 1.25 square feet, to be located in the lower left corner of the windows; and
- One hanging sign with an area of 6.3 square feet located adjacent to the central building entrance on Duke Street.

## **II. HISTORY**

The Atrium Building at 277 South Washington Street was constructed in **1977** and was the former headquarters of Time-Life publishing group. It was a postmodern effort to use historicist references on a large-scale commercial building. It was designed by the Alexandria architectural firm of Michael and Michael. The original design was not approved by the Board (BAR Minutes 10/1/1974). The compromise design ultimately built was approved by City Council on appeal. Landscaping elements including benches, new brick planters, and a decorative metal fence were originally approved in February 1995 and, due to expiration of the original Certificate of Appropriateness, re-approved by the BAR on September 19, 1997.

There have been 40 separate applications for signs on the Atrium Building since 1974. The Board approved a coordinated sign plan for this building in January 1999 (BAR Case #98-0223, January 20, 1999). The sign plan allowed for six bronze plaques to be administratively approved at the Washington Street entrance. The sign plan has not been fully executed - only one of the six plaques has been installed, due to the changes in retailing and building use, the ground floor tenant space faces the street, as opposed to the interior atrium space. The existing street front retail includes Society Fair, Eagle Bank, and Ethiopian Airlines; each of which has received approval for exterior street-level signage.

Society Fair received approval for a wood hanging sign (12.5 square feet), two aluminum compact fluorescent sign lights installed in brick planter, two new copper awnings over existing doorways on the South Washington Street elevation, and two custom metal scroll ornaments on the interior of the glass transom above the copper awnings (BAR2011-0246). They later received an after-the-fact approval for the existing window decals in February 2012 (BAR2012-0015). Eagle Bank received approval for two pin mounted channel letter signs with targeted spotlights, a 4.67 square foot hanging sign, and alterations to accommodate an ATM (BAR2012-0198).

In June 2012, Pompanoosuc Mills received administrative approval for one metal hanging sign (40"x 24") and one vinyl decal (24" x 7.5") (BAR2012-00191) on the Washington Street elevation. The applicant has since moved locations within the Atrium Building and is now located on the northeast corner of South Columbus and Duke streets, and requests a Certificate of Appropriateness for new signage at this location.

### **III. ANALYSIS**

The proposed sign area, based on the linear frontage of the space occupied by the tenant, is compliant with Zoning requirements. Staff fully supports the hanging sign, with the condition that it be relocated adjacent to the primary entrance for Pompanoosuc Mills, but does not recommend approval of the window signs, as submitted. Staff finds the proposed mounting for the window signs clunky and awkward in design and recommends that the applicant explore other signs that would be more fully integrated into the building storefront design.

In response to this application, Staff has reviewed all of the existing signs on the building and determined that hanging signs, simple awnings, and decals are generally preferable. For example, the sign plan for Society Fair is an example of appropriate signage for ground floor retail on this building. The Eagle Bank signs, however, should not be considered a precedent for signs at this building. The bank's walls signs obscure the masonry arches, one of the character-defining elements of the building, and required removal of the light fixture typically located at the top of the arch. Additionally, the placement of the hanging sign is awkward – it is not adjacent to the main entrance of the bank and is not symmetrically placed in relation to the window openings or to Society Fair's hanging sign.



**Figure 1:** Society Fair approved signs. Image source: Google Street View, image date July 2012.



Figure 2-3: Eagle Bank signs

Based on these observations, Staff recommends a vinyl window decal as the preferable and most appropriate sign for Pompanoosuc Mills. The applicant has expressed concern that the size of the transom window above the entrance is not large enough to accommodate a decal sign. However in Staff's opinion, six feet in length is sufficiently large to accommodate the store's name and would be plainly visible from Duke Street. The store currently has a temporary sign in this location that proves this point, as it is quite visible to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The small vinyl die-cut decal proposed for the lower corner of the windows, however, is redundant advertising and will not be visible from the public street because of the existing brick planters and railings.

Staff strongly recommends that the applicant work with the building owner to remove or severely trim the Nandina (aka Heavenly Bamboo) plants surrounding the south side of the building and consider removal of the decorative iron fencing that was added in 1999. The overgrown bamboo and fencing severs pedestrian traffic from the building's patio and does not create the inviting and welcoming space necessary for a retail tenant. Additionally, the removal of these existing plant materials and replacement with low seasonal flowers in the planters will create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape that will increase visibility of signage and merchandise display, benefiting the retail tenants and ultimately, the building owner.



Figure 4-6: View of subject storefront from Duke Street showing obstructive vegetation

Finally, Staff recommends the adoption of a coordinated sign plan for the Atrium Building that would require the following:

1. Remove the tall plantings and fencing along the Duke Street (south) elevation, and replace with low, seasonal planting.
2. Preserve the existing lighting at the top of the arches, with future replacement light fixtures to be administratively approved by Staff. All permanent light fixtures on the ground level of the building should be the same style, with the exception of targeted illumination for signs.
3. Retain the building directory plaques adjacent to the main building entrance, as approved by the BAR in the 1999 Sign Plan, for those ground floor uses with an atrium entrance.
4. Wall signs and hanging sign brackets may not be mounted on the masonry arch.
5. Vinyl window decals are permitted if they do not exceed 20% of the total window area and are in accordance with the BAR Criteria & Standards for Administrative Approval of Signs within the Historic Districts.
6. One projecting hanging sign is permitted for each business near the business entrance, with the bracket not to be located on the masonry arch.
7. Future awnings at the ground floor storefront may not extend across the entire width of the arches but may be mounted above the entrance doors. The awnings must be substantially the same design as the awnings approved at Society Fair or must be separately approved by the BAR.

Any sign mentioned above that meets sign requirements set forth in the Zoning Ordinance would only require BAR administrative approval, in accordance with the BAR's Administrative Approval of Signs policy.

### **SUMMARY**

Staff recommends approval of the hanging sign and approval of vinyl window decals in lieu of the proposed bronze aluminum window signs, with the condition that the hanging sign be relocated adjacent to the retail tenant's primary entrance. Additionally, Staff recommends that the Board adopt a coordinated sign program for the Atrium Building that includes removal of tall plants and fencing surrounding the perimeter of the building. Consistency in sign types, lighting, and increased visibility will enhance not only the building aesthetic, but will also greatly improve the visitor experience and compatibility with signs for shops in historic buildings nearby.

### **STAFF**

Mary Catherine Collins, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

### **IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

### **Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES)**

F1. Conditions from other approvals shall be applied, BAR2011-00246, ENC2010-0003; SUP2010-00009, SIT75-0018

- R1. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R2. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (T&ES)
- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99). (T&ES)
- C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line. (T&ES)
- C-3 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)

### **Code Administration**

- F-1 The review by Code Administration is a preliminary review only. Once the applicant has filed for a building permit, code requirements will be based upon the building permit plans. If there are any questions, the applicant may contact Ken Granata, Plan Review Services Division Chief at [ken.granata@alexandriava.gov](mailto:ken.granata@alexandriava.gov) or 703-746-4193.
- C-1 A Building Permit must be obtained prior to applicable work commencement. Five sets of *construction documents* that fully detail the construction as well as layout must be submitted to the Code office for review. If a design professional prepares drawings for the project the plans must bear the seal of the design professional in accordance with the Code of Virginia Section 54.1-410B.
- C-2 Any proposed alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC).

### **V. ATTACHMENTS**

*1 – Supporting Materials*

*2 – Application for BAR2013-00096 at 277 S Washington Street*

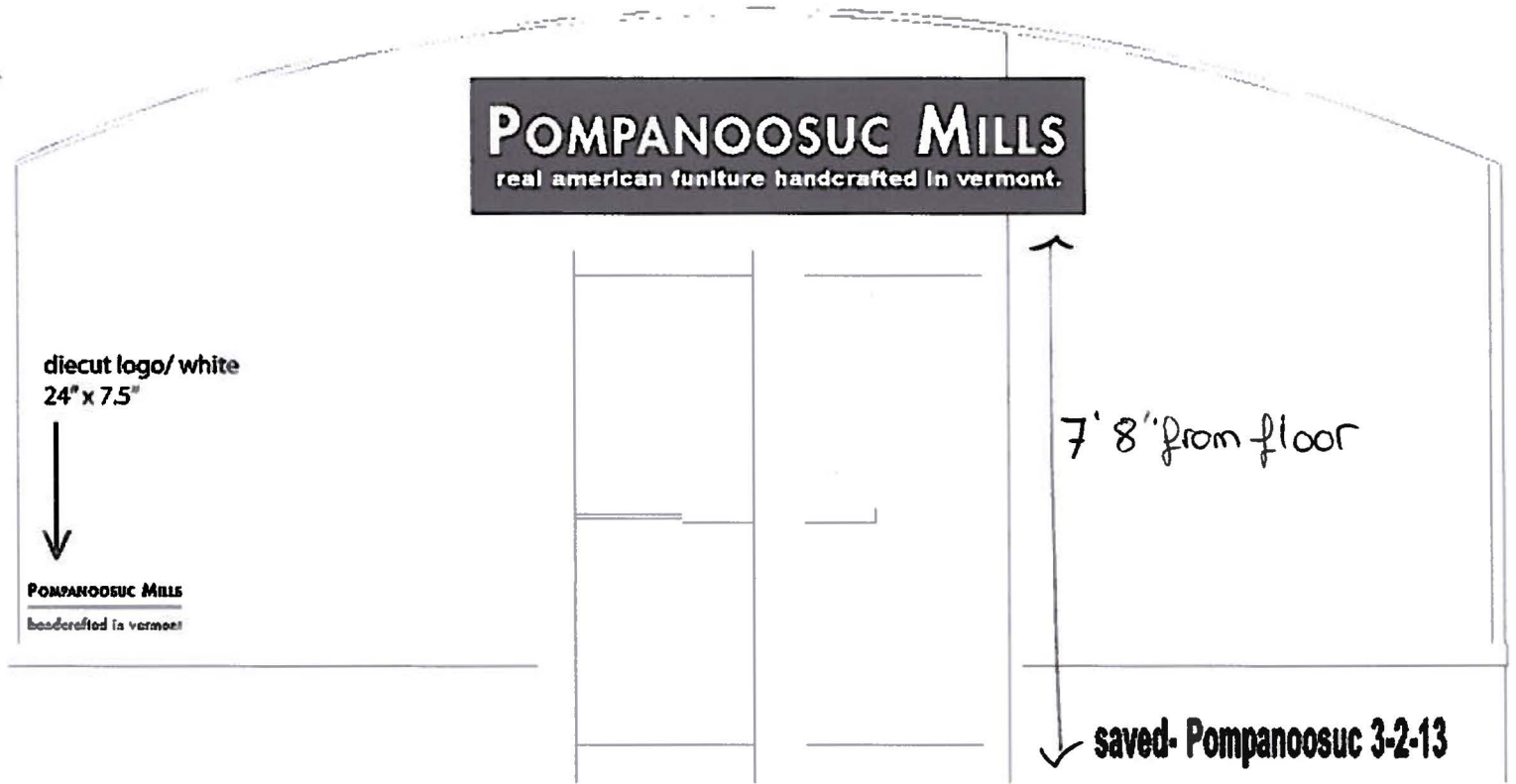
Existing Conditions. Front / corner. Duke St. & S. Columbus St.



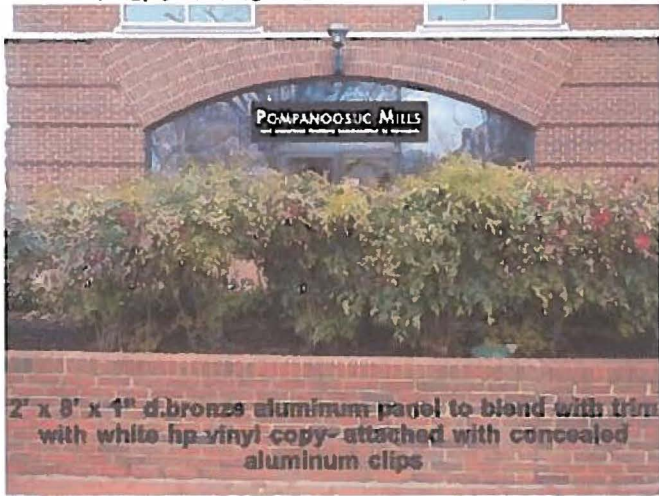
Existing Conditions. Side of Building - S. Columbus St.



# Dimensioned Drawings of Proposed Signs.



Front Entrance - Duke St.



Side Window - S. Columbus.





Address **Hummer Alley / South Columbus Street**

Address is approximate



Location of  
side sign.  
7'8" from floor.

© 2013 Google



Location of  
Front sign.  
7'8" from floor.

Location of Diecut  
white logo. 24" x 7.5".

Location of Hanging  
Sign. 9' 3" from floor.  
Dimensions 38" x 24"



# Pompanoosuc Mills, Hanging Frame Proposal.

277, S. Washington St, Suite 100, Alexandria, VA, 22310.



BAR Case # \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF PROJECT: 277, S. Washington St., Suite 100, Alexandria, VA, 22314

TAX MAP AND PARCEL: 074.02-13-03 ZONING: Retail Shopping Establishment. CD.

APPLICATION FOR: (Please check all that apply)

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

PERMIT TO MOVE, REMOVE, ENCAPSULATE OR DEMOLISH  
(Required if more than 25 square feet of a structure is to be demolished/impacted)

WAIVER OF VISION CLEARANCE REQUIREMENT and/or YARD REQUIREMENTS IN A VISION CLEARANCE AREA (Section 7-802, Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)

WAIVER OF ROOFTOP HVAC SCREENING REQUIREMENT  
(Section 6-403(B)(3), Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)

Applicant:  Property Owner  Business (Please provide business name & contact person)

Name: DANIEL ISAAC, Pompanoosuc Mills

Address: 277, S. Washington St., Suite 100,

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: 571 321 7495 E-mail: daniel.isaac@pomp.com

Authorized Agent (if applicable):  Attorney  Architect  \_\_\_\_\_

Name: N/A Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Property Owner:

Name: CARR PROPERTIES, Ellen Paganì

Address: 1800, Diagonal Rd, Suite 470

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: 571 384 2082 E-mail: epaganì@carrprop.com

- Yes  No Is there an historic preservation easement on this property?
- Yes  No If yes, has the easement holder agreed to the proposed alterations?
- Yes  No Is there a homeowner's association for this property?
- Yes  No If yes, has the homeowner's association approved the proposed alterations?

If you answered yes to any of the above, please attach a copy of the letter approving the project.

**NATURE OF PROPOSED WORK:** Please check all that apply

- NEW CONSTRUCTION
- EXTERIOR ALTERATION: Please check all that apply.
  - awning
  - doors
  - lighting
  - other \_\_\_\_\_
  - fence, gate or garden wall
  - windows
  - pergola/trellis
  - HVAC equipment
  - siding
  - painting unpainted masonry
  - shutters
  - shed
- ADDITION
- DEMOLITION/ENCAPSULATION
- SIGNAGE

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK:** Please describe the proposed work in detail (Additional pages may be attached).

• 2'x8'x1" Bronze Aluminum Panel - to blend with trim. Lettering consists of HP vinyl copy in white. Attached with concealed aluminum clips. Two of these signs total - one on front of showroom (above door on Duke St.) and one on side window on S. Columbus St.

• Hanging Sign 9'3" from ground. Dimensions 33" x 24". metal Bracket/Black pin

• Diesel Logo in white lettering 24" x 7.5" on bottom left of front window (on Duke St.)

**SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:**

Items listed below comprise the **minimum supporting materials** for BAR applications. Staff may request additional information during application review. Please refer to the relevant section of the *Design Guidelines* for further information on appropriate treatments.

Applicants must use the checklist below to ensure the application is complete. Include all information and material that are necessary to thoroughly describe the project. Incomplete applications will delay the docketing of the application for review. Pre-application meetings are required for all proposed additions. All applicants are encouraged to meet with staff prior to submission of a completed application.

Electronic copies of submission materials should be submitted whenever possible.

**Demolition/Encapsulation :** All applicants requesting 25 square feet or more of demolition/encapsulation must complete this section. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

- N/A Survey plat showing the extent of the proposed demolition/encapsulation.
- Existing elevation drawings clearly showing all elements proposed for demolition/encapsulation.
- Clear and labeled photographs of all elevations of the building if the entire structure is proposed to be demolished.
- Description of the reason for demolition/encapsulation.
- Description of the alternatives to demolition/encapsulation and why such alternatives are not considered feasible.

**Additions & New Construction:** Drawings must be to scale and should not exceed 11" x 17" unless approved by staff. All plans must be folded and collated into 12 complete 8 1/2" x 11" sets. Additional copies may be requested by staff for large-scale development projects or projects fronting Washington Street. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

- <sup>N/A</sup> Scaled survey plat showing dimensions of lot and location of existing building and other structures on the lot, location of proposed structure or addition, dimensions of existing structure(s), proposed addition or new construction, and all exterior, ground and roof mounted equipment.
- FAR & Open Space calculation form.
- Clear and labeled photographs of the site, surrounding properties and existing structures, if applicable.
- Existing elevations must be scaled and include dimensions.
- Proposed elevations must be scaled and include dimensions. Include the relationship to adjacent structures in plan and elevations.
- Materials and colors to be used must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided or required.
- Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
- For development site plan projects, a model showing mass relationships to adjacent properties and structures.

**Signs & Awnings:** One sign per building under one square foot does not require BAR approval unless illuminated. All other signs including window signs require BAR approval. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

- <sup>N/A</sup> Linear feet of building: Front: 38' 8" Secondary front (if corner lot): 83' 9"
- Square feet of existing signs to remain: \_\_\_\_\_
- Photograph of building showing existing conditions.
- Dimensioned drawings of proposed sign identifying materials, color, lettering style and text.
- Location of sign (show exact location on building including the height above sidewalk).
- Means of attachment (drawing or manufacturer's cut sheet of bracket if applicable).
- Description of lighting (if applicable). Include manufacturer's cut sheet for any new lighting fixtures and information detailing how it will be attached to the building's facade.

**Alterations:** Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

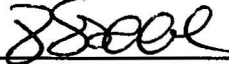
- <sup>N/A</sup> Clear and labeled photographs of the site, especially the area being impacted by the alterations, all sides of the building and any pertinent details.
- Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
- Drawings accurately representing the changes to the proposed structure, including materials and overall dimensions. Drawings must be to scale.
- An official survey plat showing the proposed locations of HVAC units, fences, and sheds.
- Historic elevations or photographs should accompany any request to return a structure to an earlier appearance.

**ALL APPLICATIONS:** Please read and check that you have read and understand the following items:

- I have submitted a filing fee with this application. (Checks should be made payable to the City of Alexandria. Please contact staff for assistance in determining the appropriate fee.)
- I understand the notice requirements and will return a copy of the three respective notice forms to BAR staff at least five days prior to the hearing. If I am unsure to whom I should send notice I will contact Planning and Zoning staff for assistance in identifying adjacent parcels.
- I, the applicant, or an authorized representative will be present at the public hearing.
- I understand that any revisions to this initial application submission (including applications deferred for restudy) must be accompanied by the BAR Supplemental form and ~~1~~<sup>5</sup> sets of revised materials.

The undersigned hereby attests that all of the information herein provided including the site plan, building elevations, prospective drawings of the project, and written descriptive information are true, correct and accurate. The undersigned further understands that, should such information be found incorrect, any action taken by the Board based on such information may be invalidated. The undersigned also hereby grants the City of Alexandria permission to post placard notice as required by Article XI, Division A, Section 11-301(B) of the 1992 Alexandria City Zoning Ordinance, on the property which is the subject of this application. The undersigned also hereby authorizes the City staff and members of the BAR to inspect this site as necessary in the course of research and evaluating the application. The applicant, if other than the property owner, also attests that he/she has obtained permission from the property owner to make this application.

**APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT:**

Signature:   
Printed Name: DANIEL ISAAC  
Date: 03/29/13

<b>DANIEL ISAAC</b> Showroom Manager Design Consultant	277 South Washington St. Suite 100 Alexandria, VA 22314
daniel.isaac@pompy.com www.pompy.com	571.321.7495 888.534.6136 toll free 571.257.2757 fax
<b>POMPANOOSUC MILLS</b>	

**OWNERSHIP AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

Use additional sheets if necessary

**1. Applicant.** State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. Dwight Sargent	3184 Route 5, East Thetford, VT, 05043	90%
2. Thomas Sargent	25 The Waterway, Wellesley, MA, 02481	10%
3.		

**2. Property.** State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the property located at 277 S. Washington St, 22314 (address), unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. Atrium Building LLC c/o Carr Property, Ellen Parag	1800 Diagonal rd, Suite 470 Alexandria, VA, 22314	N/A.
2.		
3.		

**3. Business or Financial Relationships.** Each person or entity listed above (1 and 2), with an ownership interest in the applicant or in the subject property is required to disclose any business or financial relationship, as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance, existing at the time of this application, or within the 12-month period prior to the submission of this application with any member of the Alexandria City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals or either Boards of Architectural Review.

Name of person or entity	Relationship as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance	Member of the Approving Body (i.e. City Council, Planning Commission, etc.)
1. Dwight Sargent	N/A	N/A.
2. Thomas Sargent	N/A.	N/A.
3. Atrium Building LLC	N/A	N/A.

**NOTE: Business or financial relationships of the type described in Sec. 11-350 that arise after the filing of this application and before each public hearing must be disclosed prior to the public hearings.**

As the applicant or the applicant's authorized agent, I hereby attest to the best of my ability that the information provided above is true and correct.

03/29/13  
Date

DANIEL ISAAC  
Printed Name

  
Signature