

**ISSUE:** Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations

**APPLICANT:** Mark Mitchell, Jr.

**LOCATION:** Old and Historic Alexandria District  
610 Montgomery Street

**ZONE:** CDX/Commercial Downtown Zone (Old Town North)

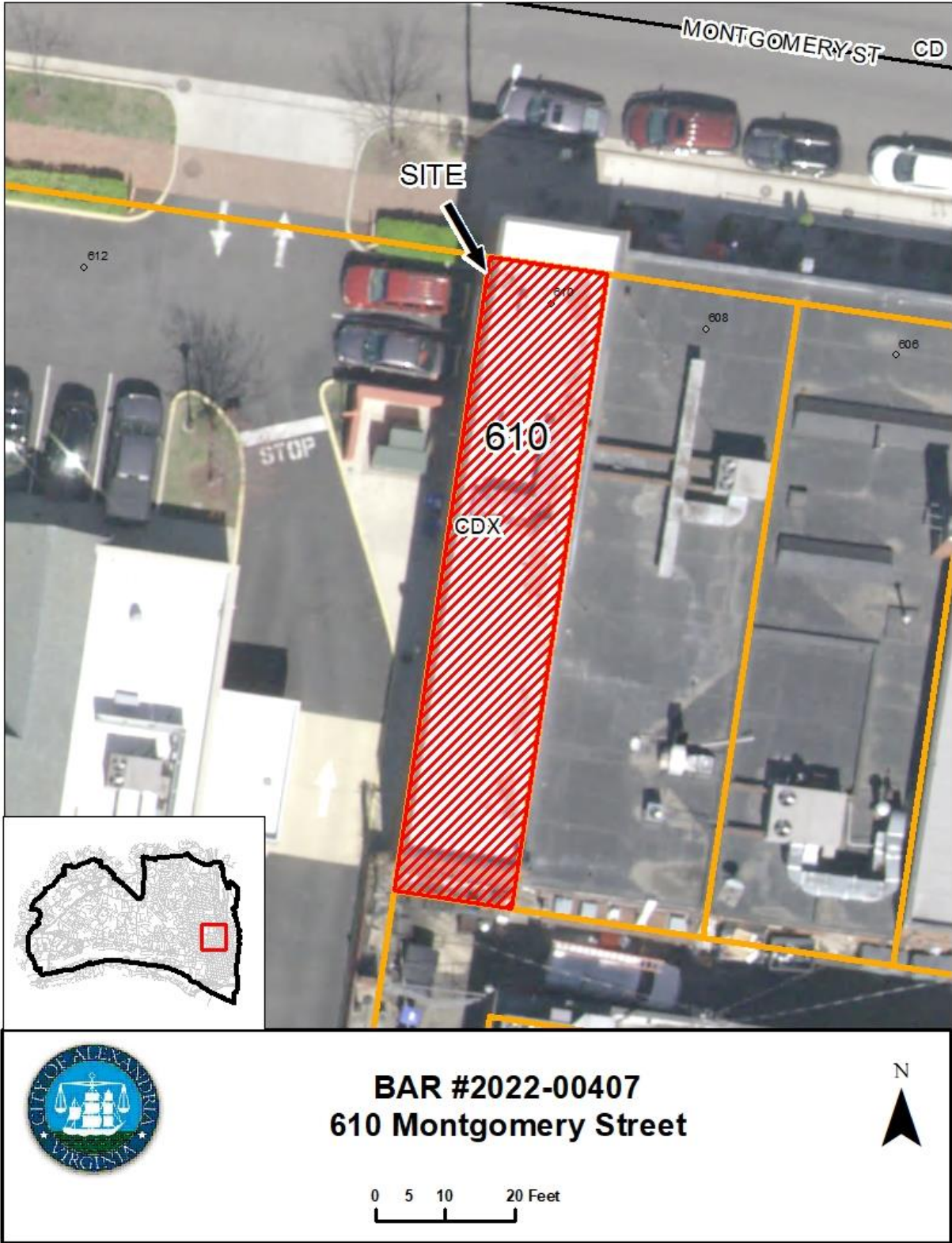
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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval/denial/deferral of the Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations as submitted.

**GENERAL NOTES TO THE APPLICANT**

1. **APPEAL OF DECISION:** In accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, if the Board of Architectural Review denies or approves an application in whole or in part, the applicant or opponent may appeal the Board's decision to City Council on or before 14 days after the decision of the Board.
2. **COMPLIANCE WITH BAR POLICIES:** All materials must comply with the BAR's adopted policies unless otherwise specifically approved.
3. **BUILDING PERMITS:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Department of 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, 703-746-4200 for further information.
4. **ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS AND PERMITS TO DEMOLISH:** Applicants must obtain a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness or Permit to Demolish PRIOR to applying for a building permit. Contact BAR Staff, Room 2100, City Hall, 703-746-3833, or [preservation@alexandriava.gov](mailto:preservation@alexandriava.gov) for further information.
5. **EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B), 10-206(B) and 10-307 of the Zoning Ordinance, any 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.
6. **HISTORIC PROPERTY TAX CREDITS:** Applicants performing extensive, certified rehabilitations of historic properties may separately be eligible for state and/or federal tax credits. Consult with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) prior to initiating any work to determine whether the proposed project may qualify for such credits.



## I. APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a Certificate of Appropriateness to paint a mural on the west elevation of this brick building, at 610 Montgomery Street.

### Site context

The west elevation of the building, where the proposed mural would be painted, is adjacent to a parking lot which fronts onto North Washington Street. The mural would therefore be visible from a public right-of-way. See Figure 1.



Figure 1: View of subject property from North Washington Street

## II. HISTORY

At the September 20, 1951 hearing, the BAR approved the construction of a new building at 610 Montgomery Street. Building permit #5235 was issued to James Juliano on October 4, 1951 to construct a new building at 610 Montgomery Street. The building therefore was most likely constructed in **1952** and is categorized as a Later building. This area of Montgomery Street was included within the boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District in 2000.

### *Previous BAR Approvals*

In addition to various approvals for signage (BAR2007-0205; BAR2012-0296), the BAR approved the installation of new rooftop exhaust equipment and a corresponding iron guardrail at the January 7, 2009 hearing (BAR2008-0243). Staff administratively approved a small cell antenna on a replacement utility pole in 2019 (BAR2019-00259).



## II. ANALYSIS

According to the *Design Guidelines*, “The color of a building is, perhaps, its most dominant visual characteristic. The color of a building can enhance or detract from its own architectural characteristics as well as neighboring structures.” As the Board well knows, the *Design Guidelines* also say “...the Boards strongly discourage the painting of a previously unpainted masonry surface.” In the case of 610 Montgomery Street, painting a mural on the west elevation will enhance its architectural characteristics and those of its neighbors. The building sits at the end of a string of five brick buildings, three of which are painted. See Figure 2. As seen in Figure 1, the west elevation serves as a background building to the parking lot and a mural here would upgrade its appearance.



Figure 2: 600 block of Montgomery, left to right: Hank's Oyster Bar, offices, T.J. Stone's, subject property.

Although the BAR strongly discourages painting unpainted masonry, the Board has done so in the past. The Board approved painting a 1948 rowhouse at 731 Bernard Street in 2004 (BAR2004-0242). The Board approved two instances of painting unpainted masonry of historic/Early houses, the side elevation of 408 Duke Street (BAR2002-00194) and the rear elevation of 715 Princess Street (BAR2005-00100). The BAR also approved a limewash application to the first floor the brick storefront at 726 King Street (BAR2016-00361). In 2017, the BAR approved painting the 1960s rowhouse at 309 North West Street BAR2017-00379). More recently, the BAR approved limewashing most of the exterior of 515 King (BAR2022-00257).

Like the rowhouse on Bernard Street, the subject property is at the edge of the historic district, just within the boundary of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Additionally, this Later building is not historic, nor is its brickwork character-defining. The primary reason for discouraging the painting of unpainted masonry is the potential damage it could cause to the brick. However, mid- to late- twentieth century brick differs greatly from historic brick. Modern brick is much harder than historic brick; it has a higher compressive strength and is less porous. Older

brick may appear similar to modern brick, but it is much softer and absorbs much more water. Most, if not all, modern brick is laid with Portland cement, which should never, ever be used on historic brick due to the damage it causes. Yet Portland cement is perfectly fine on modern brick. Therefore, modern brick is far less likely to be damaged by paint than painting historic is.

Painting this masonry will not negatively affect any historic character, nor will it negatively affect the neighborhood. Instead, it will uplift and revitalize this building and its surroundings. The proposed mural will cover the entire wall, celebrating the beauty and ecological sustainability of forests where triple-certified coffee is grown. To quote from the application, the work will: “display the ecological beauty of the forests where coffee can be grown in a manner that supports over 260+ species of native and migratory birds.” The muralist is Virginia-based, deaf, and “focuses on climate change, environmental imagery (like birds and pollinators), and intersectional feminism.” The mural will not include the company name, logo, or other business-identifying information. It therefore is not considered a sign in the zoning ordinance definition. It is art, not signage. Other buildings in the Old and Historic Alexandria District with murals include:



Figure 3 (L): Butterfly Effect, 924 King, installed by Virginia House Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker  
Figure 4 (R): Mural on south elevation of 106 North Lee, in Ramsay Alley



Figure 5 (L): South elevation of 1012 King Street; Figure 6 (R): Linder Academy at 601 S. Washington





Figure 6: Pacers Running, 1301 King, photo by Jeff Heeney, ribbon-cutting ceremony by Mayor Wilson  
Figure 7: Fibre Space, 1319 Prince, visited by Vice-President Harris March 2021

As indicated by the images above, murals have become very fashionable in Alexandria and appear in numerous social media posts. The murals show the creative side of Alexandria, and those in Figures 3 & 4 are popular spots for photographs and selfies. The mural depicted in Figure 3 was funded by members of the Old Town Boutique District, ALX Community, and other area sponsors. A press release explained that the mural's purpose was to "engage visitors through interactive art that portrays the character of Old Town and its passion for inclusivity."<sup>1</sup> Figure 4, the Butterfly Effect, served as a philanthropic project and raised more than \$10,000 for various nonprofits. An individual described the mural in Figure 5 as "...breaking out of the norm and feeding into the creative side of the human psyche."<sup>2</sup> The proposed mural at 610 Montgomery Street will bring attention and panache to this unexceptional building and to Alexandria overall while heightening awareness of ecological sustainability.

Staff recommends approval of this project.

### **STAFF**

Susan Hellman, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Tony LaColla, AICP, Land Use Services Division Chief, Planning & Zoning

### **III. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

#### **Zoning**

F-1 Proposal is for a painted mural on masonry and not for a sign.

F-2 Proposed painted masonry complies with zoning.

#### **Code Administration**

No comments received.

<sup>1</sup> Arya Hodjat and Missy Schrott, "New Murals Add Color to Old Town Businesses," *Alexandria Times*, July 25, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> James Cullum, "Mural Mania: Check Out These Three New Murals in Old Town," *ALXnow*, September 9, 2021.

**Transportation and Environmental Services**

- R-1 The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition, if a separate demolition permit is required. (T&ES)
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-3 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)
- F-1 Previously reviewed under BAR2008-00243 and BAR2019-00259. (T&ES)
- F-2 After review of the information provided, an approved grading plan is not required at this time. Please note that if any changes are made to the plan it is suggested that T&ES be included in the review. (T&ES)
- F-3 If the alley located at the rear of the parcel is to be used at any point of the construction process the following will be required:  
For a Public Alley - The applicant shall contact T&ES, Construction Permitting & Inspections at (703) 746-4035 to discuss any permits and accommodation requirements that will be required.  
For a Private Alley - The applicant must provide proof, in the form of an affidavit at a minimum, from owner of the alley granting permission of use. (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-4 Roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (Sec.5-6-224) (T&ES)
- C-5 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (T&ES)
- C-6 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)
- C-7 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons,

etc. must be city standard design. (Sec. 5-2-1) (T&ES)

**Alexandria Archaeology**

F-1 No archaeological oversight is required for this project.

**V. ATTACHMENTS**

*1 – Application Materials*

*2 – Supplemental Materials*



**APPLICATION FOR BAR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL**

Administrative approvals by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) Staff are only for historically appropriate repairs/replacement. Please note that upon reviewing an application for administrative approval, BAR Staff may determine that a full application must be made to be heard at a public hearing before the BAR and cannot be administratively approved.

**ADDRESS OF PROJECT:** 610 Montgomery Street

**TAX MAP AND PARCEL:** 12154500 **ZONING:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: Mark Mitchell, Jr.

Address: 610 Montgomery Street, 2nd Floor

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: (703) 862-8731 E-mail: lightpropertiesva@gmail.com

**Authorized Agent** *(if applicable):* ☐ Attorney ☐ Architect ☒ **Agent**

Name: Julia Battocchi Phone: (703) 862-8731

E-mail: sip@sipcoffeeforgood.com

**Legal Property Owner:**

Name: Mark Mitchell, Jr.

Address: 610 Montgomery Street, 2nd Floor

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: (703) 862-8731 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                              |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | Is there an historic preservation easement on this property?                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No            | If yes, has the easement holder agreed to the proposed alterations/repairs?        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | Is there a homeowner's association for this property?                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No            | If yes, has the homeowner's association approved the proposed alterations/repairs? |

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

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

Hand painted mural along exposed side of building (parallel to the GW Parkway) to:  
1) raise awareness of triple-certified (Fairtrade, Organic, and Bird Friendly) coffees;  
2) display the ecological beauty of the forests where coffee can be grown in a manner  
that supports over 260+ species of native and migratory birds; and  
3) as an advertisement for our new coffee business to be located on the second floor.  
We are planning on working with a Virginia-based deaf muralist who focuses on climate  
change, environmental imagery (like birds and pollinators), and intersectional feminism.

### SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

At a minimum, you will need to include the following:

- Photographs of the existing conditions
- Specifications for the proposed replacement/repair

Staff may request additional information as necessary to evaluate the application. Please refer to the relevant section of the *Design Guidelines* for further information on appropriate treatments.

**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.)

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 or BAR Staff acting on behalf of the Board based on such information may be invalidated. 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: Mark-Allen B. Mitchell, Jr., Digitally signed by Mark-Allen B. Mitchell, Jr.,  
President, Light Properties, LLC President, Light Properties, LLC  
Date: 2022.08.22 18:52:35 -04'00'

Printed Name: Mark Mitchell, Jr.

Date: 08/22/2022

## 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 three 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
<sup>1</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.	610 Montgomery Street, Alexandria, VA 22314	100%
<sup>2</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		
<sup>3</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		

**2. Property.** State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the property located at 610 Montgomery Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (address), unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than three 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
<sup>1</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.	610 Montgomery Street, Alexandria, VA 22314	100%
<sup>2</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		
<sup>3</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		

**3. Business or Financial Relationships.** Each person or entity indicated above in sections 1 and 2, with an ownership interest in the applicant or in the subject property are 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. **All fields must be filled out completely. Do not leave blank. (If there are no relationships please indicated each person or entity and "None" in the corresponding fields).**

For a list of current council, commission and board members, as well as the definition of business and financial relationship, [click here](#).

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.)
<sup>1</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		
<sup>2</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		
<sup>3</sup> Mark Mitchell, Jr.		

**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.

August 22, 2022

Mark Mitchell, Jr.

Mark Allen B. Mitchell, Jr., President, Light Properties, LLC  
Digitally signed by Mark Allen B. Mitchell, Jr., President, Light Properties, LLC  
Date: 2022.08.22 15:05:05 -0400

Date

Printed Name

Signature









