

Docket Item # 3
BAR CASE #2011-0245

BAR Meeting
September 21, 2011

ISSUE: Certificate of Appropriateness
APPLICANT: Allen & Rebecca Weh by Mehmet Elbirlik
LOCATION: 400 N Union Street
ZONE: RM / Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that:

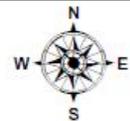
1. That the window replacements comply with the *Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications*;
2. That any rotted window trim is replaced in kind;
3. That the rear patio door replacement comply with the *Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications*.
4. That the two windows on the front and side facades be feature windows to provide more architectural interest at the pedestrian level.

****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 final approval 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 siding or roofing over 100 square feet, windows and 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.



BAR CASE #2011-0245



I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness at 400 N Union Street for:

1. Window replacement on top three floors with *JELD-WEN Sitrine Ex*
2. Rear patio door replacement with *JELD-WEN Sitrine Ex*
3. Resize first floor window openings on both N Union Street and Princess Street facades; new concrete sills on both windows
4. Three new flush mounted, exterior electric lights at rear door (2, 16"x10") and entry (1, 22"x10")

II. HISTORY

The dwelling at 400 North Union Street is a one of a group of 86 three-story brick townhouses bounded by North Union, North Lee, Queen and Oronoco Streets which was approved by City Council in 1968 (Special Use Permit #1084) and constructed in **1971**. At the time the area was developed it was not within the boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, but it was added to the district in June of 1984. 400 N Union is a 3 ½ story two-bay end unit of the simple Colonial Revival style. It has a brick façade laid in a running bond pattern, cast concrete sills, and a front facing garage. The N Union address and the ghost marks around the window to the left of the garage door indicate that the front entry of the townhouse was originally located where the first floor window is on the N Union façade. Shutters previously adorned the townhouse as the hardware is still attached, but they have since been removed.

Staff did not locate any previous BAR approvals for the subject property.

III. ANALYSIS

The proposed project complies with Zoning Ordinance regulations.

Window & Patio Door Replacement

The applicant is proposing *JELD-WEN Sitrine Ex*, a double glazed, simulated divided light, aluminum clad wood window with a 5/8" muntin profile.

While the townhouse currently has wood windows, the *Window Policy* states that "high quality, appropriately detailed aluminum clad wood replacement windows may be used on buildings constructed after 1969." The policy also states that double glazed (insulated) and simulated divided lights may be used on buildings constructed after 1930. The proposed window replacements comply with the *Window Policy* and could have been approved administratively, but the applicant chose to keep the entire application together. In the field, Staff noticed that some of the wood trim around the windows is rotted and conditions that this trim is replaced in-kind during the window replacement process. Staff also recommends that the window replacement comply with the *Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications*.

The existing patio door is a solid glass, triple sliding door. It is completely lacking in style on an already blank rear façade. Staff feels that the new design of the French doors with side-lights is appropriate in detail for this townhouse and much more visually appealing. The materials comply with the *Window Policy* and match the proposed window replacements, providing a consistent look on all three facades. Staff recommends approval of the rear patio door

replacement on the condition that the replacement complies with the *Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications*.

Window Resizing

The applicant proposes to reduce the size of the first floor window on both the N Union (front) and Princess Street (side) façades for both security concerns and the installation of a dumbwaiter on the interior. Both window openings will be reduced to 24” by 42.” Brick will be toothed in around the windows to match the existing brickwork and new concrete sills will be used that will also match the existing. The window on the N Union façade will remain centered with the upper windows and the window on the Princess Street façade will be shifted to the right so that it aligns with the upper windows, an improvement to this façade. The iron bars on these two windows will be removed.

While this is a reasonable utilitarian alteration done to meet interior needs, Staff feels a less invasive alternative to resizing the windows would be to re-install shutters on the two windows and simply close the shutters. This would be a more easily reversible alternative and would not destroy any original building fabric.

The proposed diminutive windows are aligned with the windows above and are a similar multi-pane style. However, they do not provide much architectural interest for pedestrians on the first floor level of this large townhouse facing Founder’s Park. Another alternative would be to install an octagonal feature window with a brick rowlock surround that would help visually balance the entry door (on Princess) and the garage door (on N Union).



Figure 1: Example of closed shutters on a window that is not in use.



Figure 2: Example of octagonal window with rowlock surround (note: in the case of 400 N Union, exterior muntins would be required.)

Staff feels that there are better alternatives for these highly public facades and strongly encourages windows which provide more architectural interest than the proposed alterations.

Lighting

The *Design Guidelines* state that exterior lighting “should not obscure or cause the removal of historic architectural details,” or “wash out architectural features.” It also states that the “lighting fixtures should be sympathetic to the style of the building,” “in scale with the existing building,” and that the “material of the light fixtures should be appropriate to the structure.”

The proposed flush mounted, exterior electric lights with a copper finish do not obscure or wash out any character defining features and are compatible in material, design, and scale to this large 1970s Colonial Revival townhouse. The exterior lighting could have been approved administratively due to the following language in the *Minor Architectural Elements Policy* that states that “new light fixtures may be approved administratively provided that they are architecturally and historically appropriate in design and material,” but again, the applicant chose to keep the entire application together to provide the Board with an overall context for the proposed project. Staff therefore, recommends approval of the proposed exterior lighting.

STAFF

Courtney Lankford, 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

Code Administration

C-1 A building construction permit is required to be issued prior to the replacement of the windows.

C-2 A electrical permit is required if the light fixtures are new.

Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)

F1. Although tagged as being in an RPA, it has been found that this property is NOT located within in a Resource Protection Area (RPA). (T&ES)

- F2. This property and building are located within the 100-yr floodplain. Due to the fact that these improvements do not amount to a "Substantial Improvement" as defined by City ordinance, this project is not subject to the Floodplain District regulations. However, the owner(s) of this property should be advised that flooding can and does occur at this location up to elevation 10' (City Datum) and to ensure safety the project is advised to comply with Section 6-307 (D) "Water heaters, furnaces, electrical distribution panels and other critical mechanical or electrical installations shall not be installed below the 100-year-flood level. Separate electrical circuits that serve areas below the 100-year-flood level shall be dropped from above."
It is also advised that no food storage or preparation areas be located below the 100-year-flood level (elevation 10').
Non-Substantial Improvement Exemption to lowest floor \geq BFE+1 Requirement in Floodplain Ordinance.
All other conditions apply. Section 6-307 Other Conditions, (B):
"All uses, activities and development occurring within any floodplain district shall only be undertaken in strict compliance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VA USBC)." (T&ES)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition. (T&ES)
- R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)

CODE REQUIREMENTS:

- C-1 Any work within or from the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61) (T&ES)
- C-2 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-3 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)

V. IMAGES



Figure 3: N Union Street façade.



Figure 4: Princess Street façade.

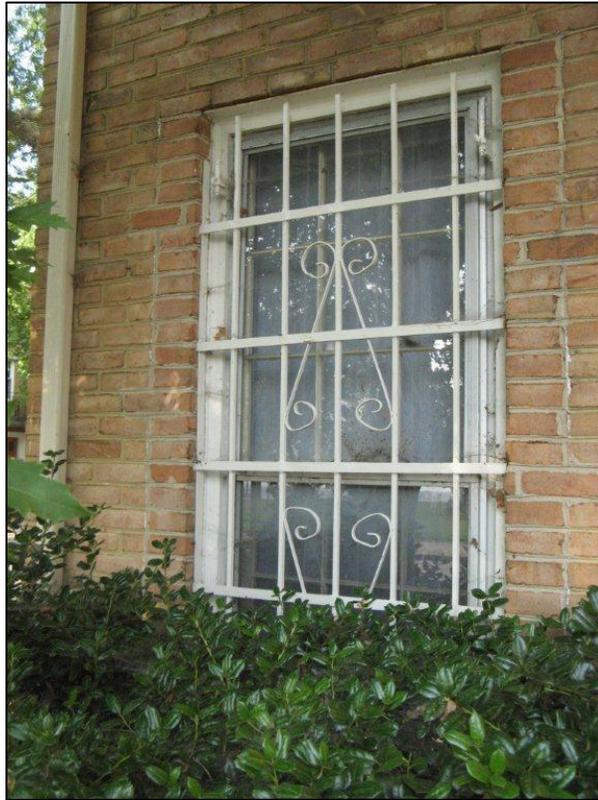


Figure 5: Window being reduced on N Union façade (note ghost marks from when this window was a door).



Figure 6: View of patio doors being replaced on rear elevation.

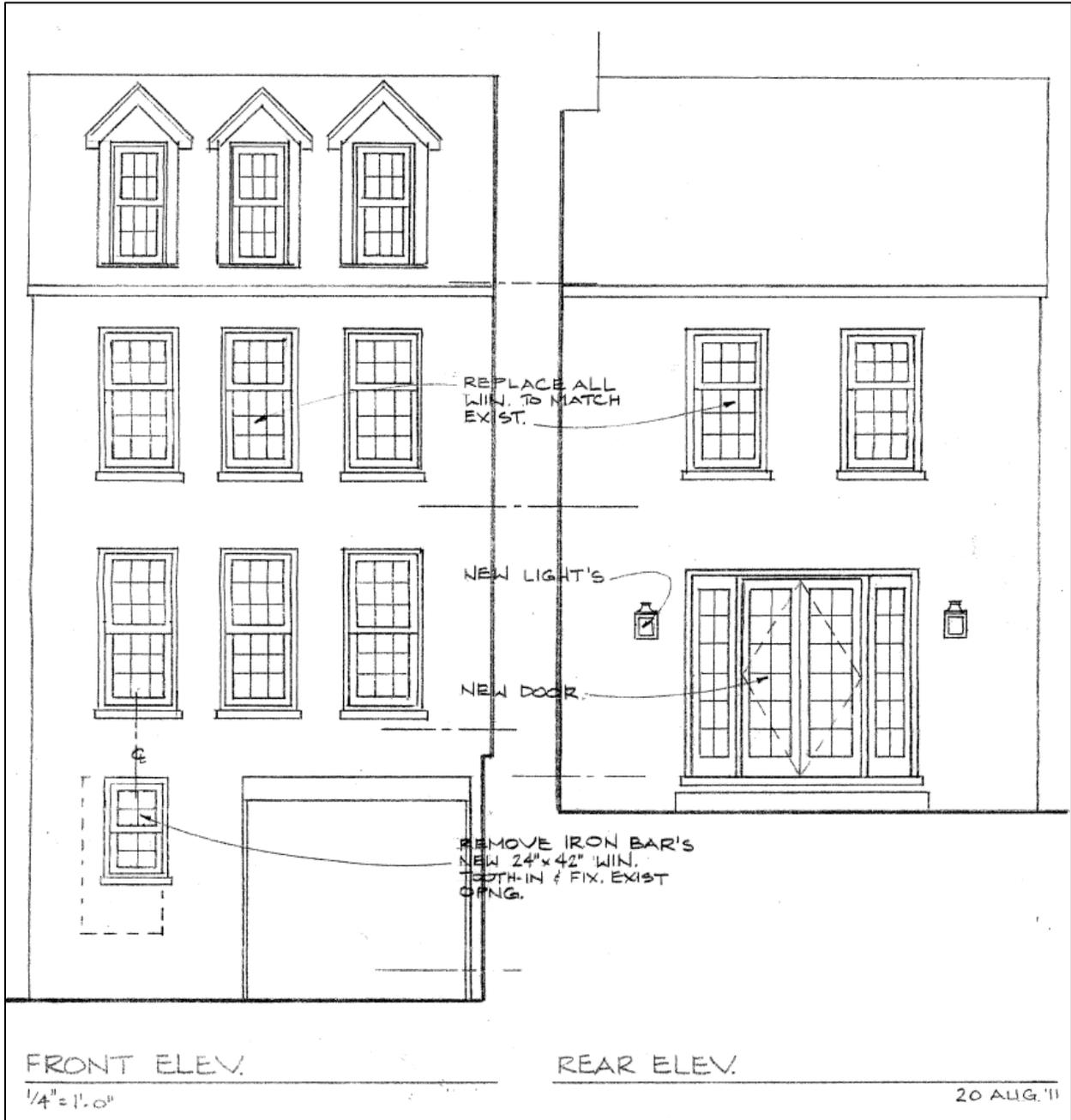


Figure 7: Front and rear elevation changes.

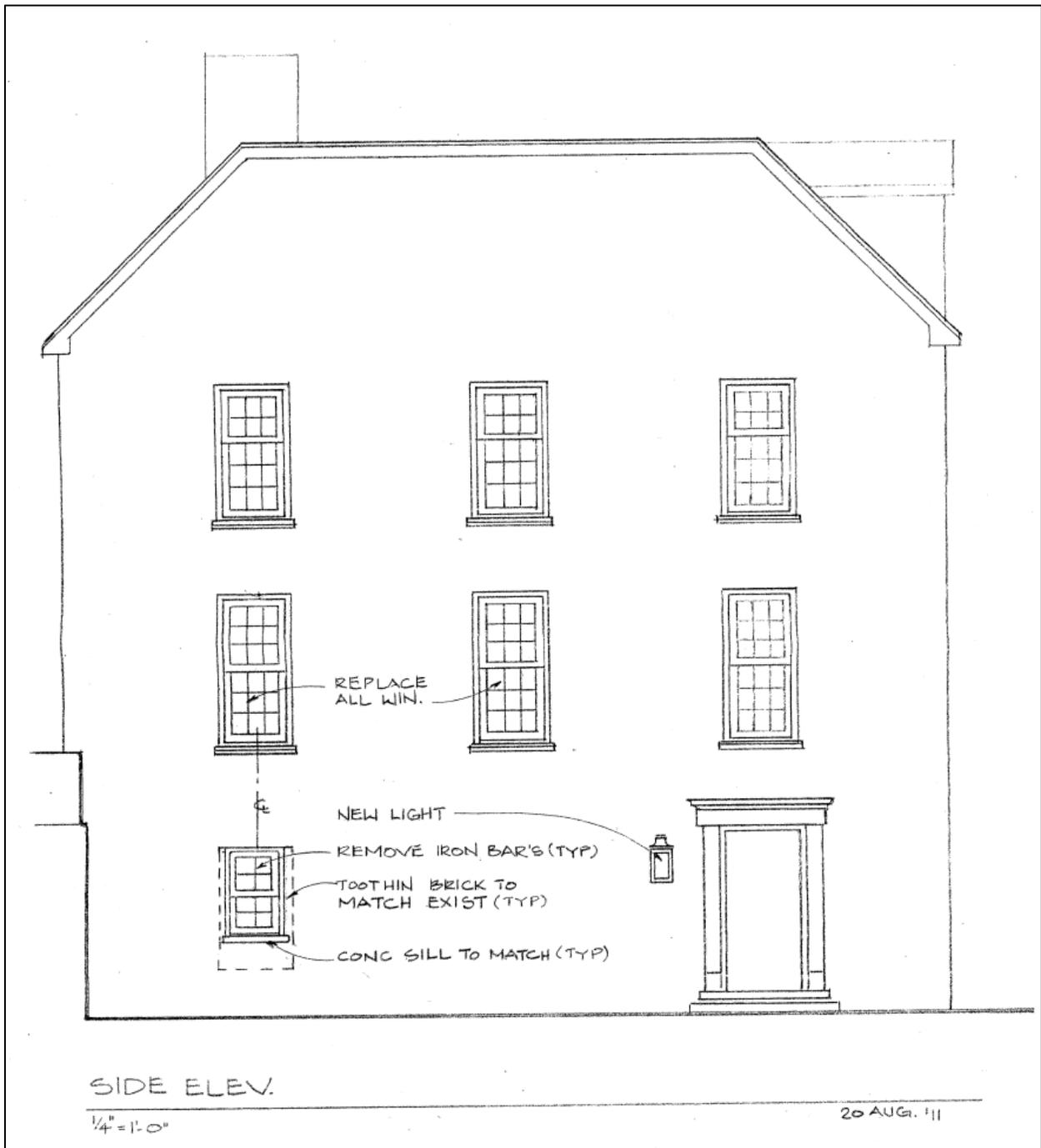


Figure 8: Side elevation changes.

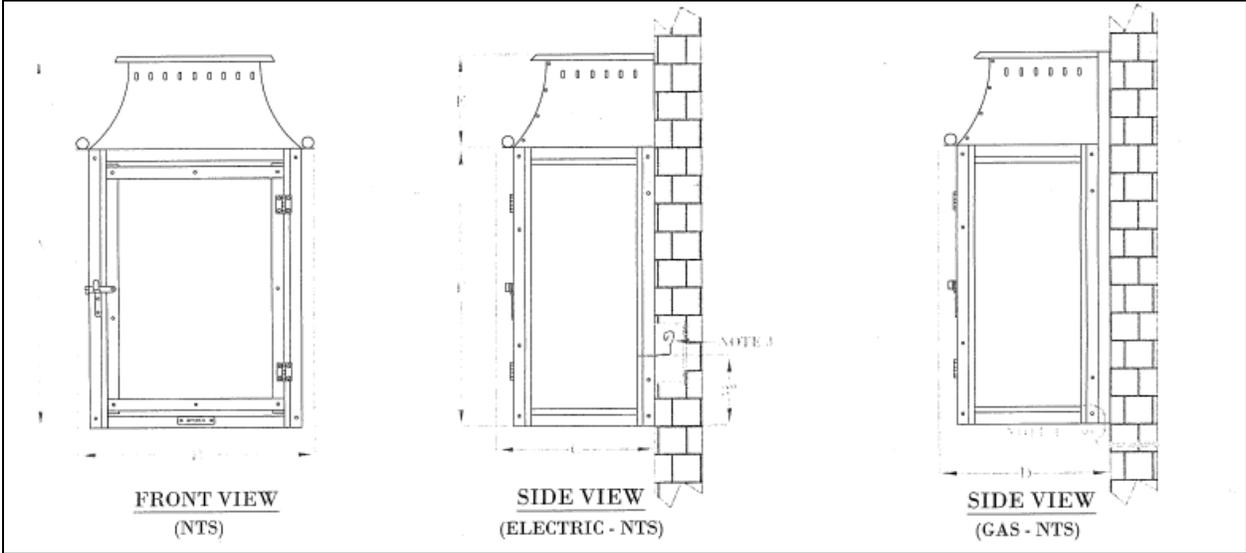


Figure 9: Proposed lighting