

Docket Item # 4 & 5
BAR CASE #2011-0247 &
2011-0248

BAR Meeting
September 21, 2011

ISSUE: Concept Review for a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and Garage Addition

APPLICANT: Betty and Wesley Foster by Robert Bentley Adams & Associates
(Scot McBroom)

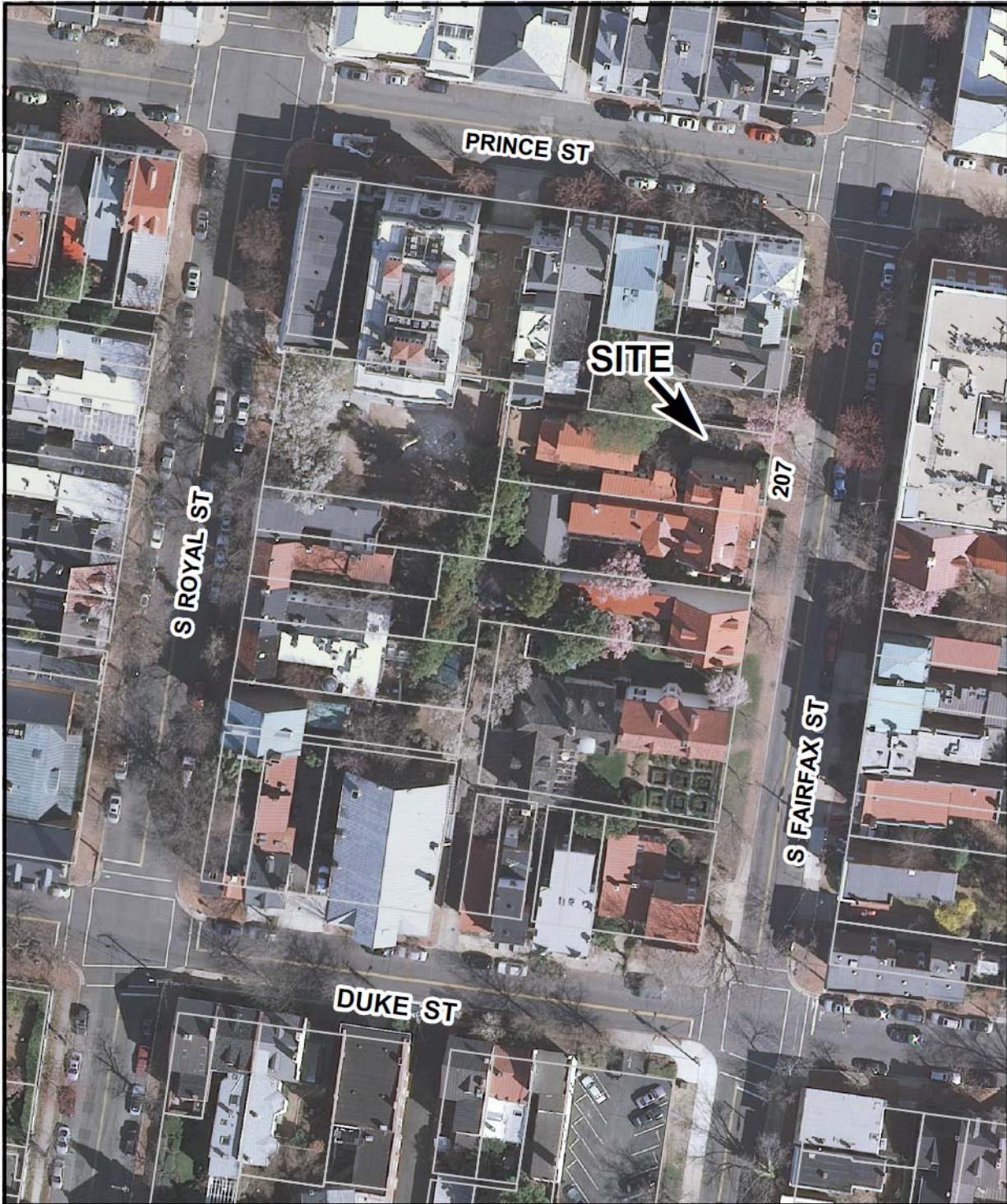
LOCATION: 207 South Fairfax Street

ZONE: RM / Residential

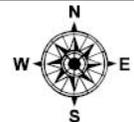
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends deferral for further study.

****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 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 #2011-0247 & 0248



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Note: This item requires a roll call vote. The only application before the BAR is concept review of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and Certificate of Appropriateness at 207 South Fairfax Street, subject to approval of a re-subdivision. Demolition and alterations for garden walls, etc., at 203 South Fairfax Street and 314 Prince Street are not before the Board at this time. However, the Board should recognize that support of this scheme will result in additional requests for these two properties.

I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting concept review for a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate 420 square feet of the north elevation of 207 South Fairfax to attach a one-and-one-half story double garage. The existing brick wall on South Fairfax Street between 203 and 207 will also be demolished. The applicant is also requesting concept review for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a one-and-one-half story double garage and other alterations. The proposed garage will measure approximately 24 feet by 26 feet. The height of the gable ridge will be approximately 21 feet. It will be set back approximately 13 feet from the front brick wall. A new board and batten wood double gate will be installed within the brick garden wall to access the garage.

The first floor of the front (east) elevation of the garage will have two sets of carriage-style garage doors. Two single dormers with arched windows will be above the first story. The garage will be brick with a standing seam metal roof, brick chimney and dentiled cornice. The side (north) elevation will have three windows, one arched at the second story, all with shutters. This elevation also indicates a projecting 3 foot canopy on both the front and rear elevations. The rear (west) elevation will have double arched carriage-style doors to the rear yard.

This project is contingent upon approval of a subdivision to convey land from 203 South Fairfax to 207 South Fairfax and 314 Prince Street. The proposed garage will also result in a request for several additional changes and alterations at the adjacent properties at 203 South Fairfax and 314 Prince Street. Changes proposed at 203 South Fairfax will require a variance for a new curb cut and an encroachment to alter an existing low fence.

II. HISTORY

According to Ethelyn Cox in Historic Alexandria, Street by Street, the house at 207 South Fairfax Street was in existence as of **1787** when John Kempff occupied the house. In May **1866**, the single house was converted into two residences (207 and 209 South Fairfax Street) and the architectural elements were updated in an extremely handsome Greek Revival style. A rear ell appears on the 1877 G.M. Hopkins map. In **1987**, the Board approved the existing rear addition. Staff has recently completed administrative approvals for replacement windows on the rear addition, and replacement of window sash and repointing on the main block of the house. In 2010, the Board approved a request for HVAC screening at the rear of the property (BAR Case #2010-00295, 11/3/10).

III. ANALYSIS

The proposed scheme is not in compliance with Zoning Ordinance requirements at the present time. The proposal is based upon approval of a subdivision to allow the parcels at 207 South Fairfax Street and 314 Prince Street to acquire portions of the existing lot at 203 South Fairfax Street. The proposed subdivision will convey approximately 685 square feet from 203 to 207 South Fairfax Street and approximately 516 square feet from 203 South Fairfax Street to 314 Prince Street. It

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appears from a preliminary review that if the subdivision is approved by Planning Commission, all three lots will comply with zoning with respect to lot area, open space and FAR. The proposed scheme will require that 203 South Fairfax Street close the existing curb cut. Should the owner of this property wish to install a new curb cut to the north, the owner must make an application for a variance as Section 8-200(C)(5)(a) does not permit an application to the director of Planning & Zoning and director of Transportation & Environmental Services to approve the curb cut as is permitted for curb cuts in other areas. City policy is to not approve new or relocated curb cuts in the historic districts. In addition, changes to the low fence at 203 South Fairfax Street will require an encroachment.

Permit to Demolish

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, encapsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

In the opinion of Staff, the extensive area proposed for encapsulation meets criteria 3 and 5 of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate in the current submission. Staff finds that the proposed encapsulation effectively results in the visual loss of the entire 18th-century brick wall on the north end of the house. While the proposed encapsulation does not cover the entire brick wall, it will encapsulate more than 50% of the existing wall. Although the applicant states that the wall will only be encapsulated, not demolished, once the Board approves an encapsulation the area is no longer within the Board's purview, unless an easement is obtained. While some small amount of demolition and encapsulation may be reasonable, Staff believes that a significantly smaller garage addition would result in a more acceptable amount of encapsulation and leave the majority of the historic wall visible to the public. The current wall illustrates historic masonry construction techniques and also shows the evolution of the house with the bricked in opening. As many townhouses in the district are attached or closely spaced, opportunities to clearly view side elevations are limited.

Addition

BAR Staff has met with the applicant many times prior to submission to discuss alternatives for a

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garage addition. Staff consistently advised that a two-story or one-and-one-half story garage would overwhelm the existing historic house and completely change the rhythm of building and open space on this blockface – which contains several very beautiful gardens. Staff also noted that the addition of any garage visible from a public street is challenging to integrate into the historic fabric of an 18th century street. The original sketches indicated that one of the adjacent curb cuts would be eliminated and planters would be added to the sidewalk. As there is no parking on this side of South Fairfax Street, tradesmen frequently park on the sidewalk and the proposed raised planters would eliminate that practice. While Staff would prefer that there be no curb cut or on-site parking at all on this historic street, these uses do legally exist today and there is a potential to reduce the visual impact of the automobile through these proposals.

The construction of an addition to any building within a historic district must be evaluated not only for its impact on the building to which it is being attached, but also for its impact on the district as a whole. The *Design Guidelines* encourage “designs that are respectful of the existing structure and which seek to be background statements or which echo the design elements of the existing structure.” Staff finds that the proposed garage addition will unfortunately overwhelm the existing building and will bring one’s focus to the modern garage rather than the historic townhouse. While the proposed garage addition is attractive and very well detailed, it is not a successful background element.

Staff does not find the proposal appropriate with respect to the massing and scale of the existing adjacent houses. Staff notes that the proposed garage addition, although recessed from the street, will be even wider than the existing townhouse. Further, the garage addition is larger than many entire townhouses found in this area of the historic district. While the attention and level of architectural detail of the garage are commendable, Staff can only support a more minimal, yet still high-quality, type of detailing that is deferential to the historic architecture and surrounding open space.

While Staff does not support the current proposal, Staff could support a significantly scaled-down garage addition at this location because it can be set back from the street and largely obscured by a garden wall and gate. Staff recommends that the applicant restudy the proposal to devise a solution that allows the addition to serve as a contextual background element. The proposed garage addition should be no more than one-story with a flat roof and must read as a diminutive background building. Due to its adjacency to the garden and garden walls, a different style garage addition could potentially incorporate features of a garden structure, such as a trellis or arbor. These changes would reduce the massing and scale of the garage addition and allow it to visually relate to the surrounding garden area. In addition, when the gates are closed, due to the setback of the building, the garage will greatly recede from the street and allow the historic townhouse to retain its prominence.

Staff finds the proposed structure very attractive and well detailed but believes it is not an appropriate design for this particular site and recommends restudy of a much smaller garage that is integrated with the garden.

STAFF

Catherine Miliaras, 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 Enforcement:

- F-1 The review provided by Code Administration has been performed as 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 Thomas Sciulli, Plan Review Supervisor at thomas.sciulli@alexandriava.gov or 703-746-4190. (Code)
- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 This addition to the existing structure building construction permits. Five sets of architectural quality drawings shall accompany the permit applications that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of any mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

Permit to Demolish:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition. (T&ES)

CITY 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)

Certificate of Appropriateness

FINDINGS:

- F1. An approved grading plan may be required at the time of building permit application per City Code Section 5-6-224 (d). Insufficient information has been provided to make that determination at this time. Questions regarding the processing of grading plans should be directed to the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at (703) 746-4064. Memorandum to Industry No. 02-08 was issued on April 28, 2008 and can be viewed online via the following link. **<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/tes/info/gradingPlanRequirements.pdf>**
- F2. The curb cut at 203 S. Fairfax Street will not be useable with the current proposal and shall be removed. It shall be the responsibility of the applicant (207 S. Fairfax St) to close the curb cut currently in front of 203 S. Fairfax. (T&ES)
- F3. The owner of the neighboring property is required to make separate application to the City if they wish to request approval for a new curb cut. New curb cut applications are

subject to a separate approval process, with review and approval required from the Departments of Planning & Zoning and Transportation & Environmental Services. Contact Construction & Inspection Division at (703) 746-4035 for application and requirements. (T&ES)

- F4. No construction shall take place until proof of conveyance has been provided to the City from Land Records in the form of a recorded instrument number. (T&ES)
- F5. New planting areas proposed in the right of way require separate approval of an encroachment ordinance. (T&ES)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 5-6-224 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)
- R2. Applicant shall close existing curb cut currently shown at 203 S. Fairfax Street and install curb and gutter and brick sidewalk to City Standards. (T&ES)
- R3. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R4. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R5. 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)
- R6. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)
- R7. Compliance with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control is required for any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)

CITY CODE REQUIREMENTS

- 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 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-4 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (T&ES)
- C-5 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)

Alexandria Archaeology:

Archaeology Findings:

- F-1 According to Ethelyn Cox's survey of historic buildings in Alexandria, "a large brick house" may have been present at 207 (and 209) South Fairfax as early as 1787. By 1796 Jesse Hollingsworth seems to have acquired the property. Hollingsworth resided in Baltimore and rented out his Alexandria property. Hollingsworth was a naval officer during the American Revolution and later served as a Maryland delegate to the first Abolition Societies of the United States convention in 1794. Tax records indicate that an African American of free status lived in the vicinity, possibly renting the lot from Hollingsworth in the first decade of the nineteenth century (given Hollingsworth's abolitionist beliefs, this seems like a credible scenario). By 1810 Hollingsworth rented the 207 South Fairfax house and lot to Evan P. Taylor. By 1820 Taylor's manufacturing and mercantile company owned the lot with Benjamin Bater acting as on-site supervisor. Part of Taylor's business apparently was coach making. By 1830 Bater's estate owned the property which was occupied by John Knowles. In 1842 John W. Green acquired the property and it remained in the Green family into the twentieth century.
- F-2 Given the long and active history of this property, it has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Alexandria.

Recommendations:

- 1. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
 - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

- b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

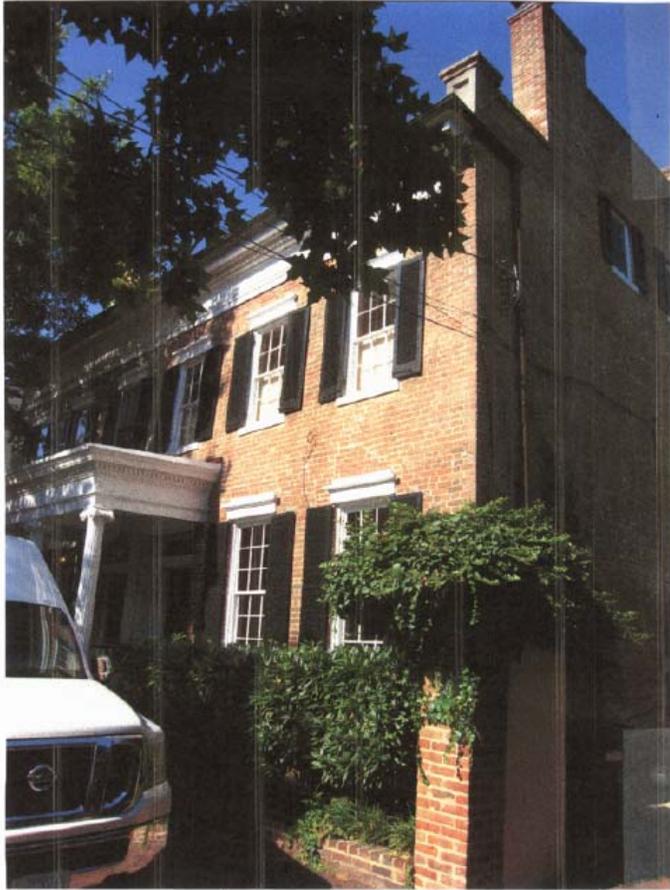
V. IMAGES



Figure 1. Existing conditions, front (east) elevation of 207 (right) and 209 (left) South Fairfax Street.



Figure 2. Existing conditions, driveways at 207 (left) and 203 (right) South Fairfax Street.



Front and NE Corner



Existing brick driveway & garden walls

Figure 3. Existing conditions of 207 South Fairfax Street (front, NE corner) and driveway.

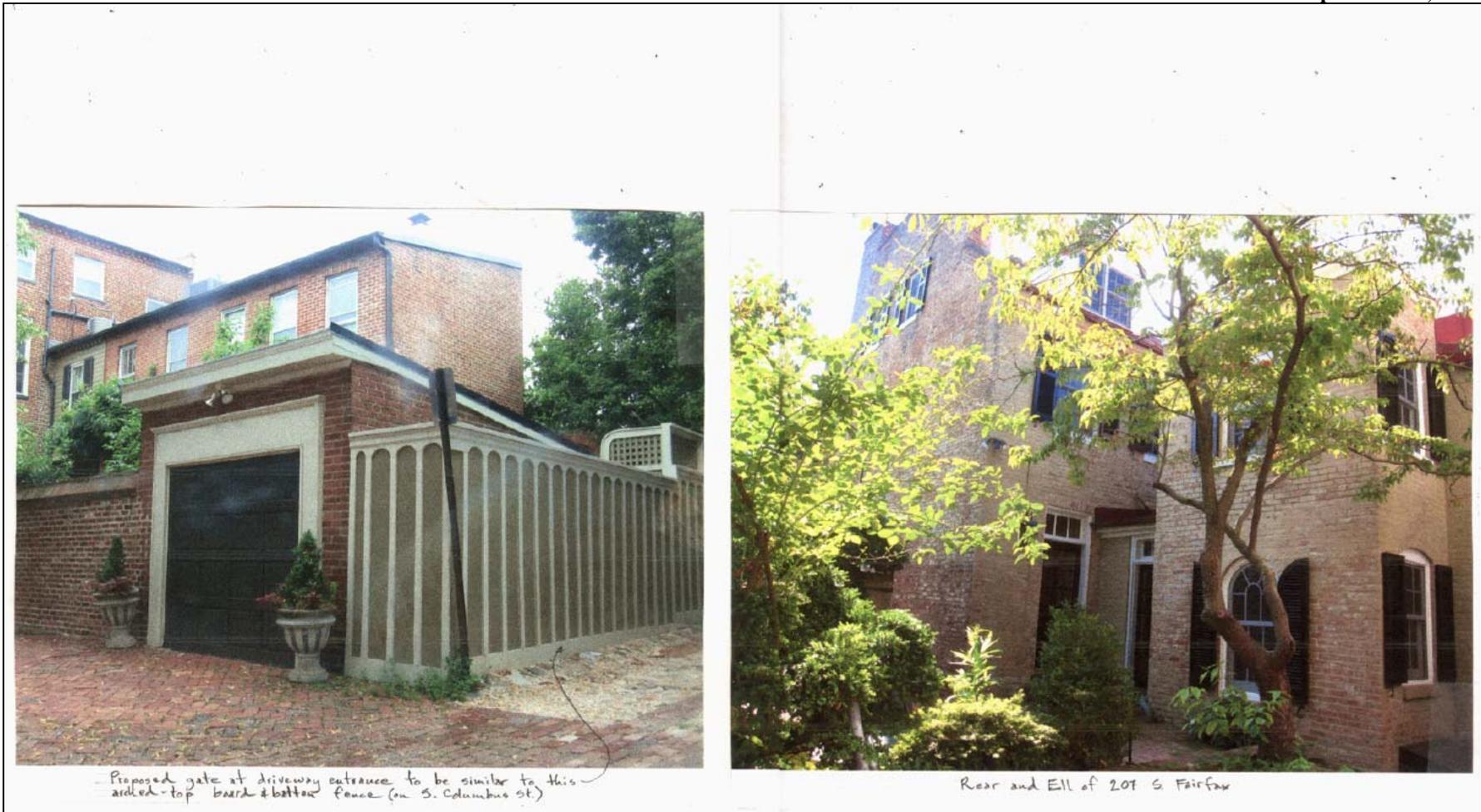


Figure 4. Board and batten similar to proposed gate and rear (west and north) elevations of 207 South Fairfax Street.

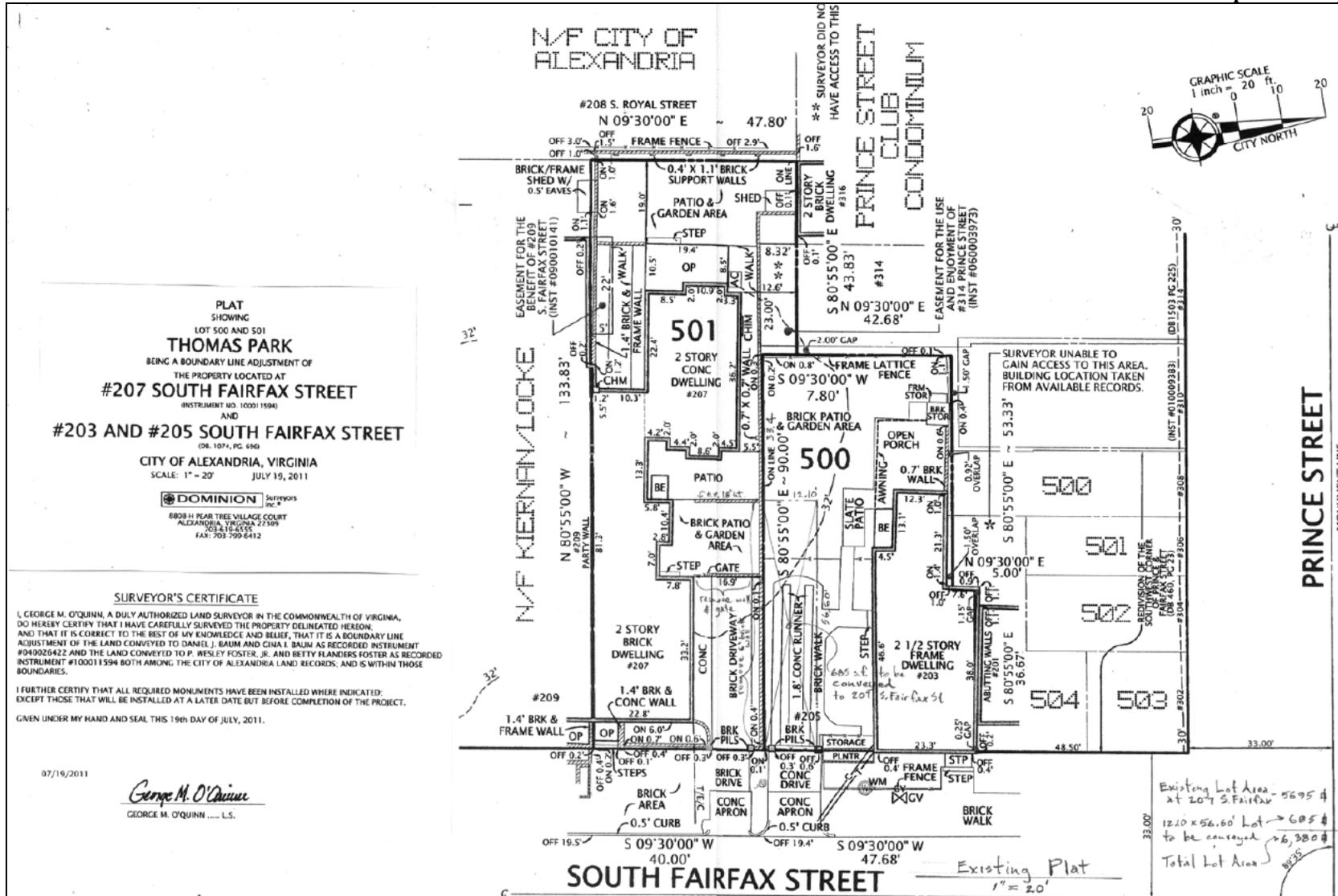


Figure 5. Survey plat.

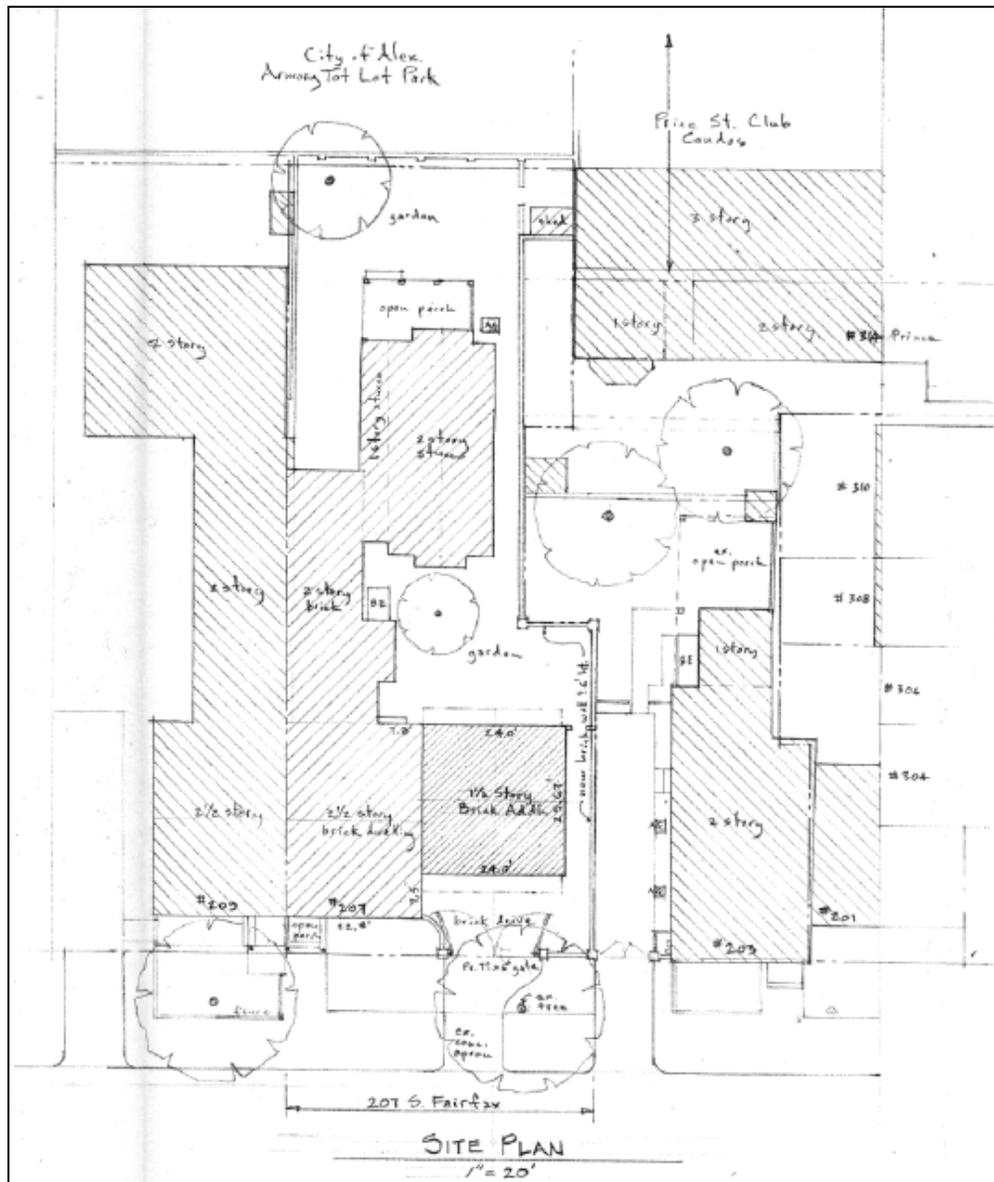


Figure 6. Proposed site plan.



View of Existing North Wall

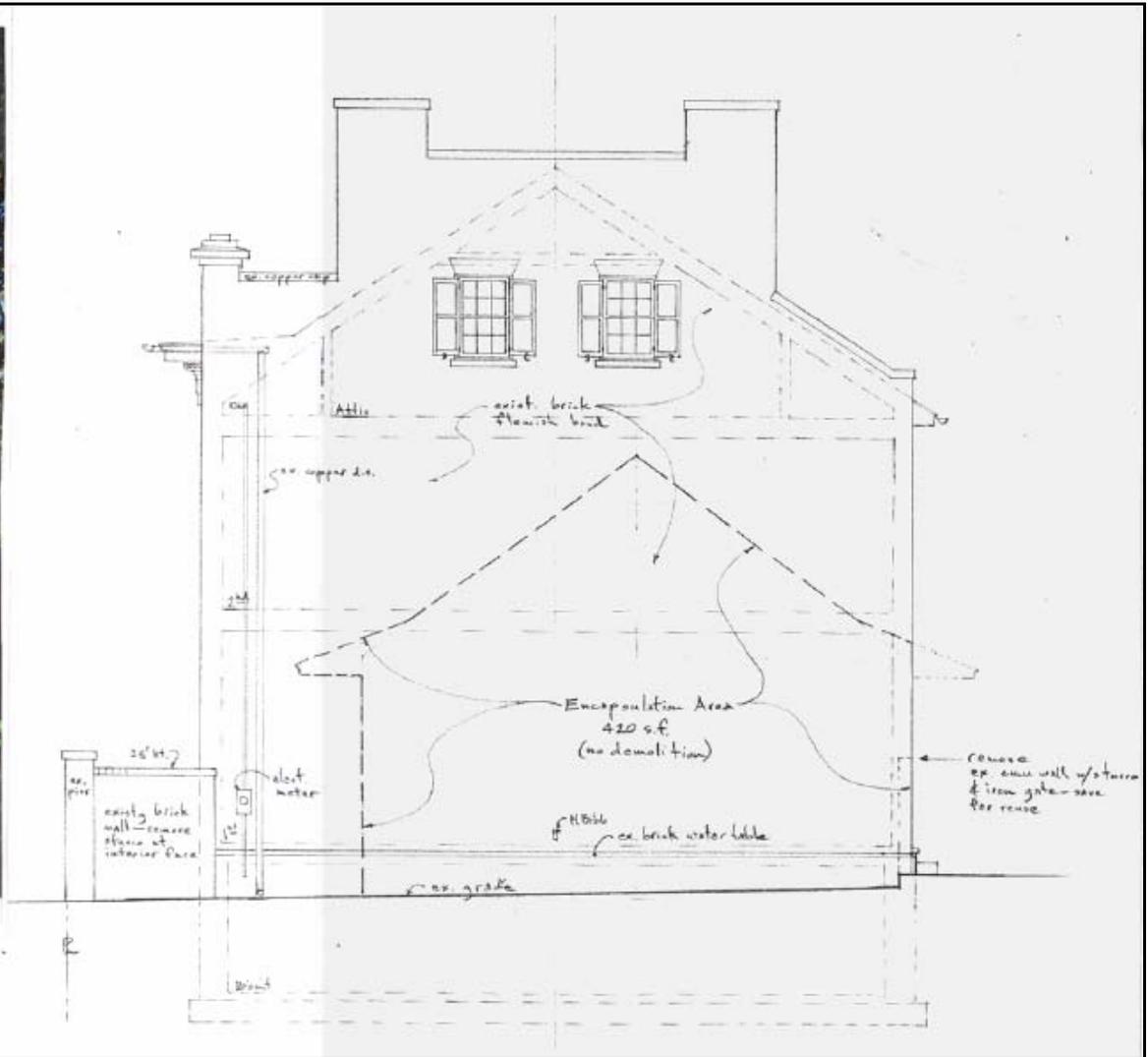


Figure 7. Existing north wall and area proposed for demolition/encapsulation.

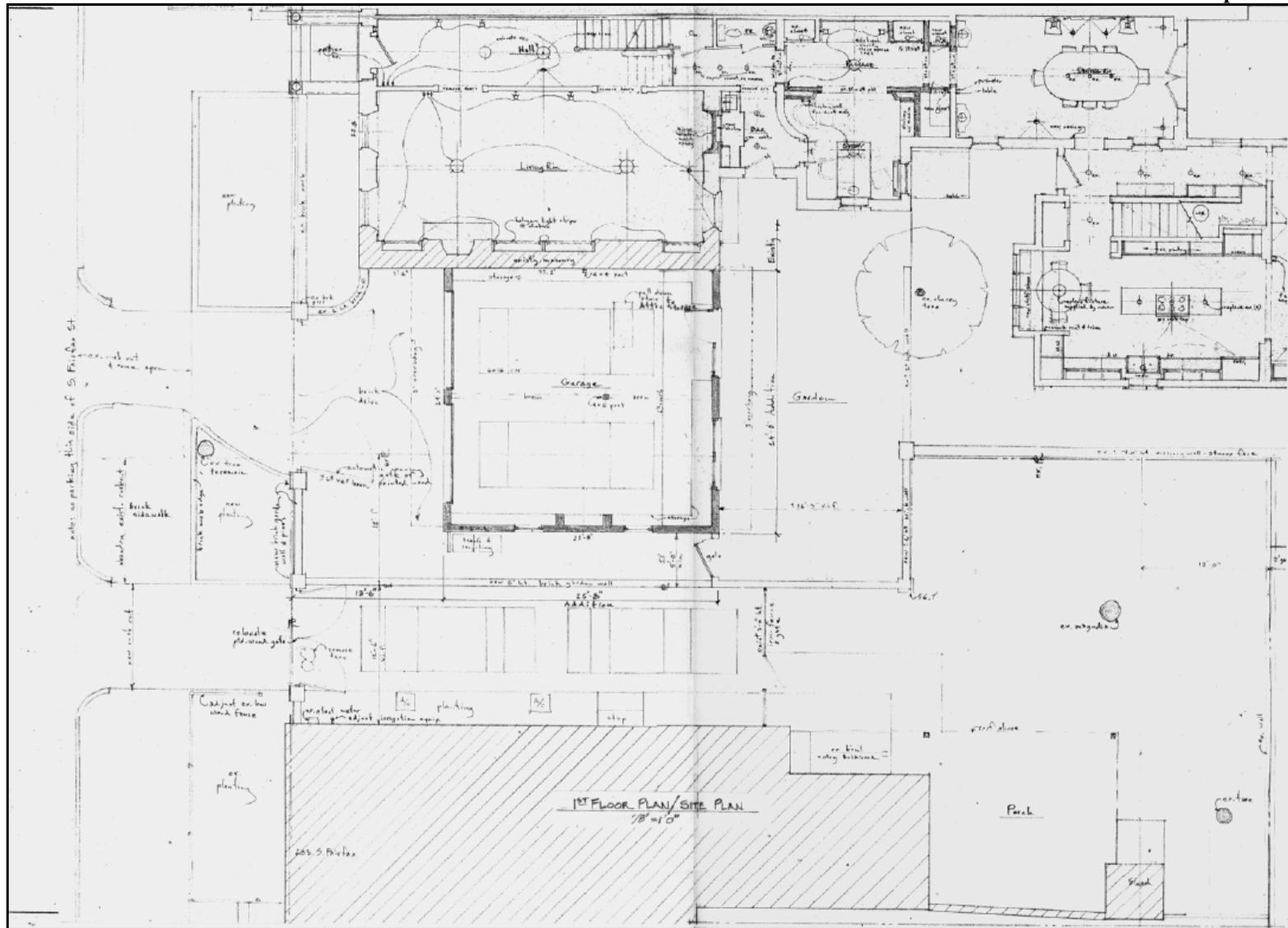


Figure 8. Proposed plan.

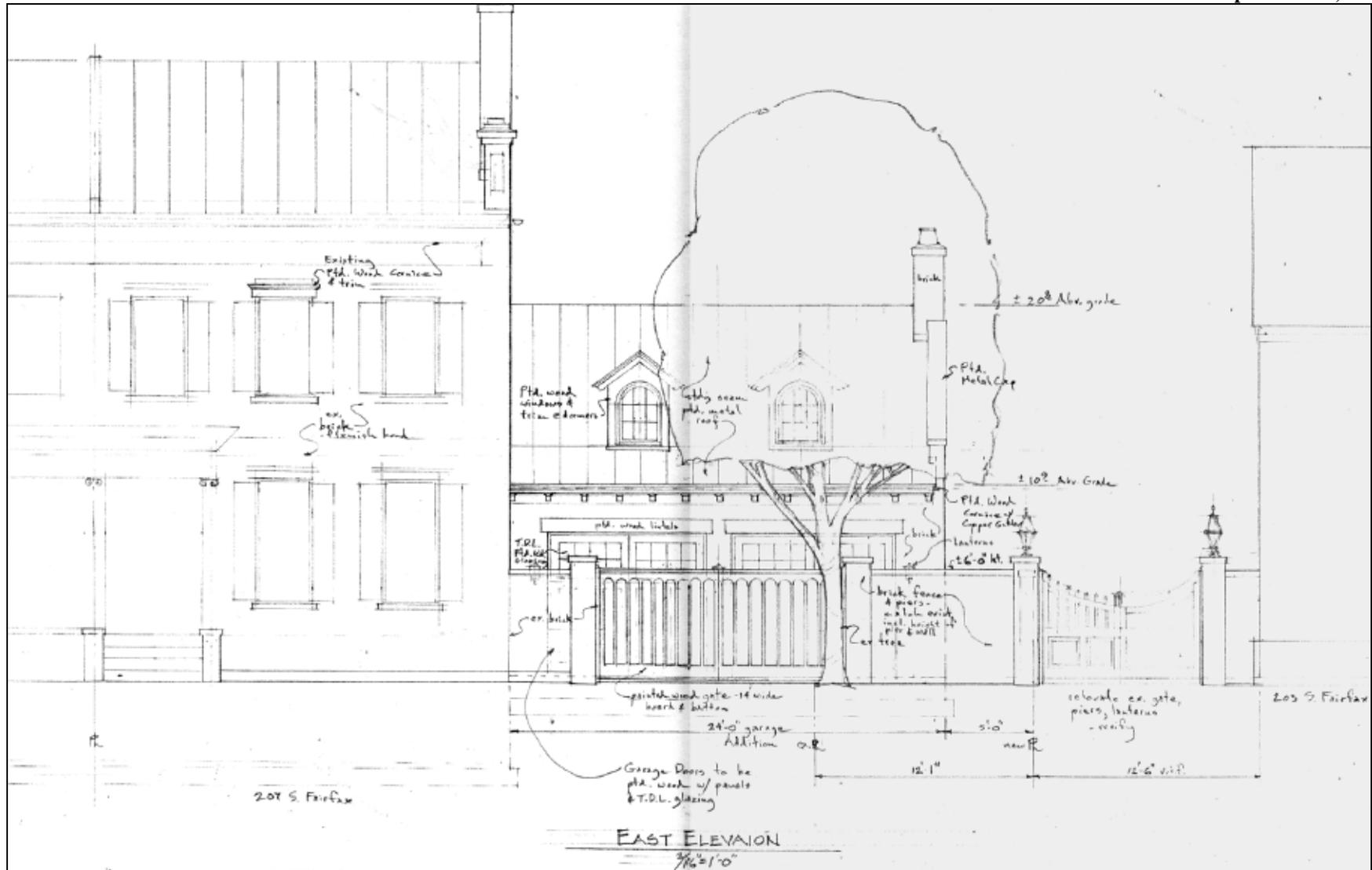


Figure 9. Proposed front (east) elevation.

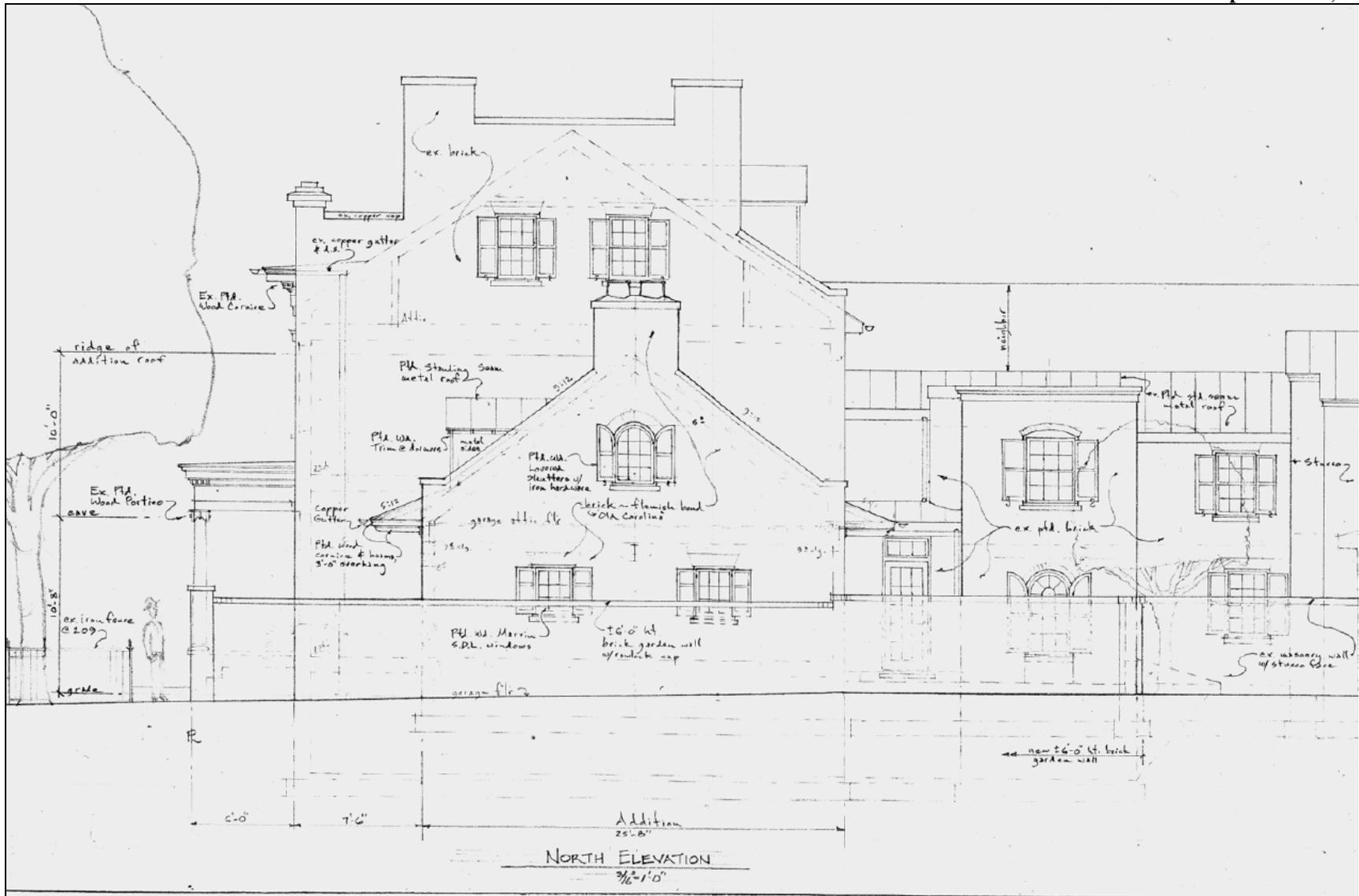


Figure 10. Proposed north elevation.



Figure 11. Proposed rear (west) elevation.