

Docket Item # 5
BAR CASE # 2011-0001

BAR Meeting
January 26, 2011

ISSUE: Change to previously approved plans for windows Phase I, James Bland Redevelopment

APPLICANT: James Bland Housing I LP

LOCATION: 808 Madison Street

ZONE: Zoned CDD #16

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of the submitted application.

*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. In the case for a certificate or permit for a project that requires a development special use permit or site plan under section 11-400 of the zoning ordinance, the period of validity shall be coincident with the validity of the development special use permit or site plan pursuant to section 11-418 of the ordinance.

**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.



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting a change to previously approved plans for an alternate window material in Phase I of the James Bland Housing redevelopment project. This block is bounded by North Columbus Street, Madison Street, North Alfred Street and Wythe Street. The original BAR Certificate of Appropriateness approval was for wood windows on all elevations of all units, both market-rate and ARHA. As part of the initial concept approval, the BAR made the following conditions:

3. Side and rear elevations should relate to their respective front elevations in regard to architecture, materials and color.
4. That the applicant work with Staff to determine a materials palette of historically-appropriate materials and meet all the standards set forth in the *Design Guidelines*.

The applicant had specified MW Jefferson simulated divided light wood frame and sash windows with a CPVC brickmould and sill. Upon inspection of the first townhouses constructed, Staff observed that the window sash were also CPVC, rather than the approved wood. Staff met with the applicant to discuss this issue and informed the applicant that Certificates of Occupancy would not be issued until action was taken to correct this issue. The applicant placed a rush order to replace the window sash on the front and side elevations of the market-rate units and submitted a BAR application to allow for the CPVC windows on the ARHA units as well as the rear (alley-facing) elevations of the market-rate units (see diagram).

According to the applicant, the installed windows are the Ply Gem MW Pro Series 400 which are identical to the wood windows except the sashes are solid, paintable CPVC instead of wood. The applicant indicated that the installed windows were more expensive than the wood windows and that cost was not a motivating factor.

The application before the Board raises many questions, including the following:

1. Is a CPVC window considered the same as a vinyl window?
2. Should different materials be allowed on the ARHA units when the concept of this project is to construct public housing and market-rate units that are indistinguishable?
3. Is there a different level of review or consideration for rear elevations visible only from an alley, even if the alley has a public access easement?
4. Are the alleys in this project different from other alleys found throughout the district?
5. How should the recently adopted Window Policy be applied in this case?
6. Is there a distinction between what materials are appropriate for entirely new construction as opposed to a new addition attached to a historic building?

II. HISTORY:

Parker-Gray has been recognized as a local historic district since 1984, with review and approval of exterior alterations, demolition and new construction by the Parker-Gray Board of Architecture Review. The boundaries for the locally designated district include all five blocks of James Bland Homes.

In early 2007, the City began the process of nominating the Uptown/Parker-Gray neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries of the Uptown/Parker-Gray historic district encompass the local district as well as a number of additional blocks. On January 12,

2010, the National Park Service listed the Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to that, in June 2008, the State of Virginia listed the historic district on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

In advance of the demolition of the existing buildings in Phase I, the applicant thoroughly documented James Bland Homes as required by the BAR when approving the Permit to Demolish. The documentary requirements were: a written history, HABS/HAER level measured drawings and photo documentation. Copies of the materials are located in both the Kate Waller Barrett Library and the Alexandria Black History Resource Center.

All of the private streets and alleys within the blocks of the project have public access easements and, therefore, anything visible from the private streets and alleys are within the Board's purview.

Prior Reviews and Approvals for the James Bland Redevelopment:

September 24, 2008: Approval of Permit to Demolish and Concept Approval (BAR Case #2008-0150/0151).

October 2008: Development Special Use Permit approved by Planning Commission and City Council (DSP #2008-0013).

May 27, 2009: Approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase I (BAR Case #2009-0088/0089).

May 26, 2010: Approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase II (BAR Case #2010-0070)

April/May 2011: Anticipated approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase IV (includes multi-family buildings, townhouses and park)

III. ANALYSIS

In October 2010, the Boards of Architectural Review approved a Window Policy to provide clear and consistent direction for what Staff can approve administratively, as well as general standards for the Board's consideration. In Section A, the Policy notes: "Vinyl or vinyl-clad windows...are not considered appropriate or compatible by the Boards and may not be approved administratively as replacement windows." In addition, the Policy states "Proposed replacement windows not in compliance with the Board's adopted policies, or not architecturally compatible or historically appropriate, in the opinion of Staff, require review and approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the BAR. The BAR will evaluate such cases on the merits of that particular building and the window product proposed."

The *Design Guidelines* have discouraged the use of vinyl or vinyl clad windows throughout the districts since adoption of the *Guidelines* in 1993. In Staff's personal and professional

experience, the hollow, extruded vinyl windows available in the late 20th century could not be painted, suffered rapid degradation from exposure to ultraviolet light and quickly became inoperable as the latches and sash balances frequently failed. These inexpensive products were sold as no-maintenance windows but often did not last more than 20 years before having to be replaced.

The proposed windows, however, are largely constructed of solid CPVC. CPVC, or Chlorinated polyvinyl chloride, is a thermoplastic produced by chlorination of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) resin. PVC has been widely used for drain pipes, etc. in the construction industry since the mid-20th century because it is cheap, durable, and easy to assemble. CPVC has recently become widely available for building trim and has recently been approved by both Boards on new construction because it is solid-through-the-core, paintable and millable and is visually similar to wood when field painted.

As part of the Certificate of Appropriateness for Phases I and II of James Bland, the Board approved the use of high-quality composite or synthetic materials for specific elements on these new buildings. For example, the Board approved the use of HardiePlank smooth lap fiber cement siding; CPVC trim & cornice brackets ("Fypon"); a solid CPVC porch rail; and a synthetic slate shingle. However, most roof materials, doors, windows, and fences were approved as traditional materials (metal and wood).

Upon inspection of the first units requesting Certificates of Occupancy, Staff noted that the windows were a synthetic material rather than wood and contacted the applicant. The applicant investigated and explained that a construction order error had occurred when the manufacturer responded to the need to provide a more energy efficient window than the originally specified wood unit and that this material substitution had not been noticed in the field. The applicant rush ordered replacement windows for the front and side elevations of the market-rate units but retained the CPVC windows on the ARHA units (at the housing authority's request) and on the rear of the market-rate units not visible from the streets (because the alleys are private). The applicant is replacing the windows on the market-rate unit rear elevations that are visible from the streets, both public and private, with wood sash windows as originally approved. However, BAR Staff subsequently discovered that the private alley in the rear has a public access easement and these windows, too, will require replacement or Board approval.

The applicant has submitted a BAR application for approval of a change in window material for the ARHA units and the rear elevations of market-rate units visible from the alley. Staff explained to the applicant that the newly-adopted Window Policy clearly states that vinyl is not appropriate. Although CPVC is a material relative of vinyl (PVC, among other forms), the CPVC window has distinct differences from the typical vinyl window. Whereas, a typical vinyl window is hollow, difficult to paint and ages poorly, CPVC is a solid-through-the-core, millable and paintable material. While we do not know how this CPVC window will weather and age over time, CPVC has been used with success for trim, cornices and railings for several decades.

One of the premises of the redevelopment of the James Bland site was to create a community with a mix of market-rate and ARHA units that would be virtually indistinguishable from a design standpoint. Throughout the review process, in respect to architectural design and materials, the Board applied the same criteria from the *Zoning Ordinance* and the *Design*

Guidelines in making findings of appropriateness for all units. However, the *Zoning Ordinance* does allow the Parker-Gray BAR to consider economic hardship in Section 10-209 *Permitted Maintenance of Exterior Architectural Features*. Sec 10-209(A)(2) states "...this provision shall not be construed to prevent the replacement of material in kind in cases when the cost of the work would be materially increased by the use of another material." The Housing Authority posits that the CPVC windows, while more expensive to initially purchase, will have greater durability and a lower maintenance cost over time. Staff research indicates that the Board previously approved the use of vinyl windows for existing ARHA properties in the district for this reason.

As noted above, the private streets and alleys in this project all have public access easements and all building elevations are, therefore, under the Board's purview. While the new private streets on the interior of the blocks of this project will function like typical streets in the district -- with houses fronting onto the street, sidewalks and street trees -- the alleys will not function as typical alleys found in the district because there are no rear yards or rear doors. In addition, there are no windows on the first floor of the rear elevations, only garage doors. Finally, the alleys are not through-ways, nor are they adjacent to historic properties. Therefore, although the alleys in this project are considered the public way with respect to visibility and BAR review, they are not generally representative of other alleys throughout the district.

As part of the Window Policy, the Board created a set of standard performance specifications for new and replacement windows. The originally approved wood windows for Phases I and II do not meet the newly adopted criteria. These windows do not have muntins with a putty glaze profile and generally lack the historical muntin depth. The specifications also stipulate that the vinyl portion of the wood window jambs be minimally visible but in the installed windows the entire jamb is vinyl. In addition, the dimensions and proportions of these windows do not match historical window proportions (e.g., the meeting rail is exceptionally narrow.) Staff, therefore, recommends that the windows in future phases of this project meet the Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications.

In conclusion, Staff cannot recommend approval of CPVC windows on any units in Phase I, as the proposed material is not considered appropriate in accordance with the Window Policy and the *Design Guidelines*. However, the Board has the ability in the Window Policy to contemplate the circumstances of each application on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the age of the building, the location of the proposed change, the economics of the different material, and the exploration of alternate materials that may be appropriate in certain specific circumstances in some defined areas of the district.

While the Window Policy does allow for flexibility in the type of material allowed for new construction, Staff encourages the applicant to consider a different product for the previously approved windows Phase II and Staff will recommend windows meeting the Alexandria Performance Specifications for future phases in James Bland.

STAFF:

Catherine Miliaras, Urban Planner, Historic Preservation Section
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Previous Comments from Phase I:

Planning & Zoning (Development):

The applicant must comply with DSUP condition #17 related to architecture/site planning. (The applicant has complied with many of these conditions already).

The applicant shall provide the following building refinements to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z:

General

- a. All HVAC units shall be located on the roof and not visible from public or private streets.
- b. All at-grade utilities shall be screened with landscaping or a fence/wall.
- c. The primary exterior materials for each unit shall be limited to masonry, precast, stucco, wood or cementitious siding. Secondary trim and accent elements may include composite materials if approved by the BAR. Samples of all materials shall be provided.
- d. Porches shall be wood and stoops shall be brick or metal and porch railings shall be a single material, either wood, or metal. Composite materials may be used in lieu of wood where specifically approved by the BAR.
- e. Chimney enclosures shall be brick, and watertables, exposed foundations shall be brick.
- f. Fireplace vents, flues, vent stacks and other similar protrusions shall not be permitted on any public street or private street frontage including corner units. Furnace vents shall discharge through the roof or the rear facade. HVAC vents or associated elements shall not be visible from a public street. Roof penetrations shall be confined to the rear of the building.
- g. Pitched roofs shall be standing seam metal (painted, galvanized or terne coated) and shingles shall be slate or metal, or a comparable high quality material approved by the Board of Architectural Review. (City Council)
- h. Fences located within the front and/or side yards shall be made of painted wood or metal with a maximum of 30" to 42" height with a minimum of 50% openness.
- i. All retaining walls shall be brick or stone.
- j. Fixed plantation shutters shall be installed for all windows within the townhouse tandem garages facing the public or private street.

Townhouse

- k. Continue to work with Staff to enhance the side and rear elevations of the townhouse units and ARHA flats.
- l. Continue to work with Staff to reduce the actual or perceived height of the south facing facades of the market rate and ARHA units on Wythe Street.
- m. Useable front porches shall be added to 10-12 of the townhouses and/or ARHA triplex flats with the locations to be determined in consultation with Staff. All porches shall be 6 - 8 feet deep.

Alley Houses

- n. Continue to work with Staff to address the perceived mass and scale and refine details of these buildings.

Multifamily Buildings

- o. Continue to work with Staff to enhance elevations of the multi-family buildings.
- p. North multifamily building: This building shall be refined by breaking its expression into subunits so that each of the architectural expressions has a consistent relationship to the geometry of the curved street, without modifying the footprint of the building.
- q. Architectural expression, multifamily buildings: the three proposed multifamily buildings shall be redesigned to the satisfaction of the Director, P&Z, such that each building expresses a clear and identifiable architectural style; further, the two south buildings shall be redesigned not to appear as twin buildings, and the north multifamily building shall be redesigned to express a smaller scale through subdivision of its mass into three visually distinct units.
- r. Entries at multifamily buildings: Building entries shall be designed to create a prominent and welcoming presence for all three buildings.
- s. The design of the multi family buildings shall be subject to the requirements herein to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z and the issues shall be addressed prior to public hearing before the Parker-Gray BAR. (P&Z) (PC)

Code Administration:

- F-1 The applicant must comply with the Code Administration conditions and comments set forth under DSP2007-00013.

V. IMAGES



Figure 1. Model unit, 735 North Columbus Street, with painted CPVC window on left and painted wood window on right.

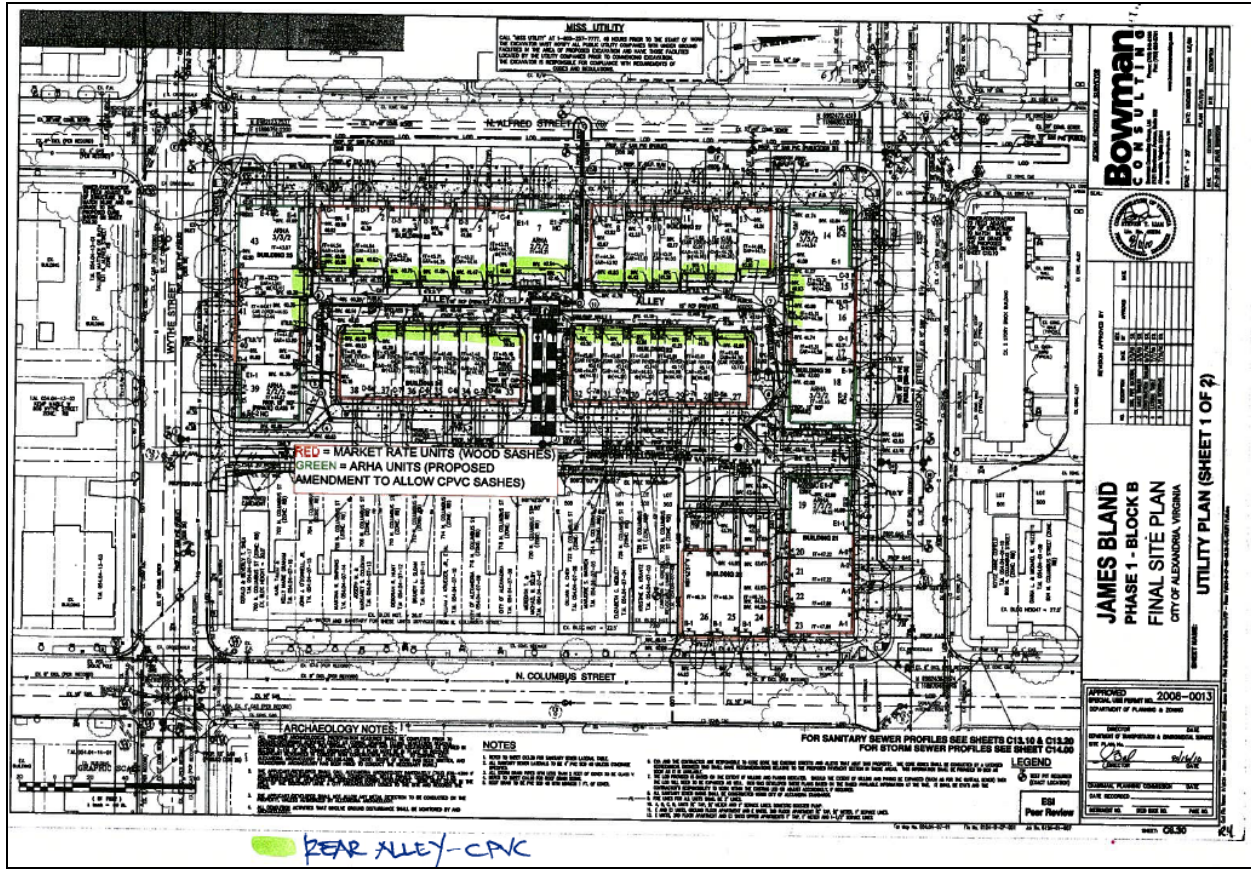


Figure 2. Diagram illustrating which elevations are proposed to have vinyl windows.



400 DOUBLE HUNG





STANDARD FEATURES

- Low-maintenance cellular PVC sash and exterior components ready to accept acrylic latex paints
- Traditional wood designed stile and rail construction
- Low-maintenance cellular PVC exterior brick mould
- Energy-efficient warm edge insulating glass for enhanced energy performance
- Robust interlock design for enhanced structural performance
- Both sash tilt in and remove for safe and easy cleaning of exterior glass
- 4 3/8" jambs eliminate need for drywall work; custom jamb extensions to 8 3/8"
- Foam-filled bulb weatherstripping on bottom rail to create an efficient weather barrier



OPTIONS

GLASS OPTIONS:
Low-E, HP (Low-E/argon), tinted, Low-E tinted, tempered and obscure

BALANCE OPTIONS:
Compression (standard), Easy-Tilt (optional)

EXTERIOR CASING:
180 Brick Mould (standard), 3 1/2" Williamsburg, 3 1/2" Flat, 5 1/2" Flat, 4 1/2" Wide Back Band, standard Sill Nose and Bull Sill Nose

GRILLE OPTIONS:
1/8" or 1 1/8" simulated-divided-lite (SDL), grilles-between-the-glass (GBC) in 1/8" flat, 1/8" sculptured styles

PRODUCT CONFIGURATION:
Twins, side lites, fixed, combinations, bays, circle heads, quarter circles, ellipticals, transoms, true radius, arches and a wide variety of architectural shapes

COLOR:
Exterior casing and sash are available in paintable white




THERMAL PERFORMANCE

	R Value	NFRC CERTIFIED		
		U Value	SHGC	VT
3/4" Clear	2.22	0.45	0.58	0.61
3/4" Low-E	3.13	0.32	0.27	0.51
HP Glass ²	3.45	0.29	0.27	0.51

All units tested in accordance with ASTM standards; rated in accordance with International Residential Code; and witnessed by an independent AAMA accredited lab. Performance values reflect the performance of units tested with the following configuration: 3/4" IGU, 3mm glass and no grilles.

R VALUE: Restrictive ambient air flow; U VALUE: Rate of heat loss; SHGC: Solar Heat Gain Coefficient; VT: Visible Transmittance



WHITE

NOTE: Colors shown are close approximations and may not be accurate representations for color matching. Please request color swatches from your Ply Gem sales representative to do so.



PLY GEM
BUILDING PRODUCTS. BUILDING SUCCESS.

1: Available option.
2: HP glass option combines Low-E with argon gas fill for high performance.

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Figure 3. Specifications for CPVC windows.