ISSUE: Alterations

APPLICANT: Soonja Purdy

LOCATION: 600 South Washington Street

ZONE: CL / Commercial

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:
   1. That the new fencing be painted or stained;
   2. That the existing rail fence be removed; and
   3. That the existing through-the-wall AC unit on the rear elevation be removed and the siding patched to match the existing.
I. ISSUE:
The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for screening two new HVAC condenser units at the rear of 600 South Washington Street. This property is located at the corner of South Washington and Gibbon streets. The rear of the property is highly visible. The proposed screening is a closed picket wood fence measuring six feet in height. The proposed fence is a flat 1 x 4 board fence with pickets at the top. The fence will extend from the rear of the building north to the property line and along the north property line adjacent to Gibbon Street. There will be a gate near the rear of the property.

II. HISTORY:
The two-story frame building at 600 South Washington Street was constructed before 1877 as it appears on the G.M. Hopkins City Atlas of Alexandria from that year. Early Sanborn maps indicate it was initially used as a dwelling. The building has been extensively altered over the years, including the addition of a show window at the front corner.

In 1995, the Board approved a sign for “Young’s Beauty” salon (BAR Case #95-0171, 11/16/95). In 1998, the Board approved the existing signs for “InVision Salon” (BAR Case #98-0153 10/7/98). In 1999, the Board approved two new signs for “Young’s Beauty” salon (BAR Case #98-0228, 4/7/99). In 2005, the Board approved new signage at this property (BAR Case #2005-0031, 5/18/2005).

III. ANALYSIS:
The proposed HVAC units and screening comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

The Design Guidelines state that “HVAC equipment which must be located in the front or in a visually prominent area of a building should be screened.” The Guidelines also state that “wood is a traditional material for fences and dates;” and “wood fences must be painted or stained.”

Staff approved a mechanical permit last August to replace failed thru-wall HVAC units with a central system, but required screening for the new ground mounted condensing unit. In this case, Staff suggested, and the applicant agreed, that the required HVAC screening be a solid wood fence, so that it could also screen the existing concrete parking pad and garbage cans in the rear of this highly visible corner lot on the GW Parkway. The proposed simple wood picket fence is in line with the rear ell and extends to the rear property line. As this application suggests that central AC has been installed, Staff recommends that the existing through-the-wall unit be removed and that the void be patched with siding to match the existing.

The Design Guidelines also state that “Split rail type fences, horizontal board fences and other types of fences associated with the rural countryside are not appropriate in the historic districts.” With construction of the new fence, Staff recommends that the existing split rail fence be removed and the applicant has agreed with this condition.

STAFF:
Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning
V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Administration:
C-1 Where appliances are located ≤ 10' from a roof edge or open side with a drop ≥ 24", guards shall be provided (USBC 2801.1)

C-2 A mechanical permit is required.

C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully details the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

VI. IMAGES

Figure 1. Plat showing location of proposed fence.
Figure 1. Front elevation.
Figure 2. Existing conditions at rear elevation.

Figure 3. Specifications for proposed fence/screening.