

Docket Item #6
BAR Case #2003-0119

BAR Meeting
October 15, 2003

ISSUE: Permit to Demolish
APPLICANT: Robert Langston
LOCATION: 132 North Payne Street
ZONE: RB residential

BOARD ACTION, SEPTEMBER 17, 2003: The Board combined the discussion of docket item # s 15 & 16. The Chairman called the question on the Staff recommendation which was: deferral of the application for restudy for an addition which is more sympathetic to the existing footprint of the historic house. The vote on the motion was 6-0.

REASON: The Board agreed with the Staff analysis. While the Board agreed that the narrowness of the lot presented a difficult design problem, they nevertheless believed that an addition which was more sympathetic to the historic footprint was appropriate.

SPEAKER: Robert Langston, project architect, spoke in support

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends denial of the Permit to Demolish. However, should the Board approve the demolition, Staff recommends that the approval be for the more extensive demolition proposed in the previous submission.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant s Description of the Undertaking:

Remove a two story section of the house at the rear, measuring 7 feet by 17 feet and add a two story addition measuring 11.45 feet by 32 feet.

Update:

Since the September 17, 2003 meeting, the applicant has worked with Staff and the property owner to explore adding to the house in a way that is more sympathetic to the existing footprint of the historic house. The present submission is the result of that effort. Those portions of the rear wall of the main block and of the walls of the rear ell which would be retained are shown on the current plans in crosshatching.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish portions of the existing house to construct a new two story rear addition. The revised plans preserve small sections of the rear wall of the main block and north wall of the rear rear ell as well as the party party wall with 130 North Payne to the south.

The rear of the house is visible from Cameron Street. The alley behind the house is private.

History and Analysis:

The house at 132 North Payne Street is a 100 Year Old Building, designated by City Council in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Located in a strip lying between the Old and Historic and Parker-Gray Districts, the north end of the 100 block of North Payne Street includes numerous mid- to last quarter 19th century buildings, also designated as 100 Year Old Buildings. 132 North Payne Street is one in a row of nine nearly identical two story brick townhouses extending from 118 North Payne Street to 134 North Payne on the corner of Cameron Street. Only two bays wide, these simple, modest houses are distinguished by their handsome Italianate cornices. Six of the nine houses appear on the 1877 Hopkins Atlas and are believed to have been constructed circa 1875. The last three houses, 130 through 134 North Payne, extended the row to the northern corner with Cameron Street. Based on their appearance, they probably were constructed at the end of the 1870s, shortly after the first six. They do appear on the 1891 Sanborn Map, the first such map to show the area after the 1877 Hopkins map.

While basically identical in the front, the houses were built with varying conditions in the rear. The first four of the houses in the row (118 through 124 North Payne Street) were built without any rear appendage. 126 & 128 North Payne Street had one story ells. The last three houses, 130

through 134 North Payne Street, were constructed with two story rear ells. The ells at 130 and 132 North Payne were constructed back to back. The ell at 134 North Payne Street was constructed several feet longer than the others. As constructed, this row illustrated the evolution of the urban rowhouse form from the main house block with separate or appended kitchen building, typical of the early and mid-19th century, to the fully integrated two story rectangular main block and two story ell that came to prominence in the latter part of the 19th century.

The row retains a high level of integrity on the Payne Street side and presents a unified appearance. The variety that was extant at the rear of the row from the beginning has been accentuated over the years with the construction of many rear additions of varying size and appearance. Only the two story rear ell at 132 North Payne and one story rear ell at 128 North Payne Street remain unaltered. The ell at 130 North Payne, which undoubtedly was once a twin to that at 132 North Payne, has been extensively altered and now extends some feet beyond 132 North Payne Street and rises well above it.

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

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating 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, Criteria #1 and #5 are applicable. The proposed demolition, while not quite as extensive as in the previous submission, leaves intact only disconnected remnants of the original rear ell and rear wall of the main block. The original footprint of the house is not retained in any appreciable sense. According to the *Design Guidelines*:

It is the policy of the Boards that the absolute minimum demolition of an existing structure should take place. For example, in the case of an addition to the rear of a property, the Boards prefer that the amount of demolition be limited to that necessary to accommodate access to the addition rather than wholesale demolition and replacement of the rear facade. (Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 1)

The Guidelines also state that:

The Boards actively seek to retain the existing fabric of the historic districts and strongly discourage the demolition of any portion of an 18th or early 19th century structure.
(Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 2)

While the house at 132 North Payne Street is not an *early* 19th century structure, Staff believes it is of considerable significance as an intact example of working class housing of the immediate post Civil War period. The rear of the house appears have an unusually high level of integrity. Not only is the original footprint retained, but the original door and window openings and roofline remain.

Therefore, Staff recommends denial of the Permit to Demolish. However, should the Board approve the Permit to Demolish, Staff recommends that the approval be for the more extensive demolition requested in the previous submission. The present plans, retaining small remnants of the historic structure within the new addition, does not satisfy the preservation objective and adversely affects the applicants interior plan.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Prior to the issuance of an construction permit, demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Historic Alexandria:

F-1 This takes up a greater amount of open space. Project as built is already well below the requirement.

Alexandria Archeology:

F-1 The Hopkins Insurance Map indicates that a structure was present on this property by 1877. The lot therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources which would provide insight into life in 19th-century Alexandria.

R-1 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.

R-2 The above statement must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.