

Docket Item #7  
BAR Case #2004-0007

BAR Meeting  
February 4, 2004

**ISSUE:** Permit to Demolish rear masonry wall

**APPLICANT:** Dr. Lawrence Singer

**LOCATION:** 809 Cameron Street

**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish as submitted.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant's Description of the Undertaking:

“The structural instability of the Northernmost (rear) wall requires that it be demolished & rebuilt.”

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish for the rear masonry wall at 809 Cameron Street.

The rear of the building is visible from the 20' public alley off of Mills Court and through the parking lot at 211 North Alfred Street. Staff notes that the alley directly behind 809 Cameron Street is private.

History and Analysis:

The Victorian townhouse now known as 809 Cameron Street was built as two separate but attached houses (809 & 807 Cameron Street) between 1877 and 1885, when the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps first documented this area. Between 1896 and 1902, a third floor addition was added to the westernmost building (809 Cameron Street).

A 1969 renovation of the building for use as an arts and crafts shop included among other alterations, a replacement door in the rear wall (Permit #26105, 3/17/1969). These alterations were approved by the Board of Architectural Review on February 12, 1969.

In 1990, the Board denied an application to demolish the building (BAR Case #89-231, 1/3/1990). Recently the Board approved numerous alterations to the building including a third story addition to the east front of the building and alterations to the front, rear and sides of the building (BAR Case #2003-0234/235, 12/3/03).

The proposed rear wall demolition complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

In considering a Permit to Demolish and/or Capsulate, 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, the proposed demolition does not meet the above criteria and is acceptable. Based on inspection and the permit history, the rear of the building has been subject to numerous alterations over the years and is in poor condition. In addition, the Board recently approved a porch which will obscure much of the rear wall (BAR Case #2003-0235).

Given the extent of previous alterations to the rear wall, Staff recommends approval of the demolition. Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and recommends them as a condition.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-4 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

### Historic Alexandria:

1. Save & re-use brick if possible?
2. Structural studies to show demolition is necessary?

### Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Tax records indicate that two free African American households were present on this street face in 1850, but the exact addresses are not known. The Sanborn insurance map shows a house present on the lot by 1885. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources which could provide insight into domestic activities, perhaps relating to free blacks, in the nineteenth century.
- 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.