

Docket Item #6  
BAR Case #2004-0006

BAR Meeting  
February 18, 2004

**ISSUE:** Alterations to previously approved plans

**APPLICANT:** Old Colony Associates, LLC

**LOCATION:** 615 First Street

**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

---

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the following:

1. Approval of the alteration to the piers on Unit #61;
2. Approval of the alteration to the north side doorway on Unit #62 with the condition that the door surround be simplified;
3. Approval of the addition of a gate in the south side of the wall at Unit #62;
4. Approval of the extension of the garage for the Manor House property (Unit #63) by 1' in the length;
5. Approval of the request that the Board delegate to Staff administrative approval of future minor modifications for the Liberty Row development; and,
6. Denial of the extension of the fence across the west side of the Manor House property (Unit #63).

DISCUSSION:

Applicant's Description of the Undertaking:

“Minor alterations to previously approved plans and request to delegate approval of future minor modifications to staff.”

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the two new townhouses, one Victorian and the other Colonial Revival in style, and to the former motel registration building, now known as the “Manor House.” The houses are part of the Liberty Row Development located on the former Old Colony Motor Lodge site. The plans for the three buildings were approved on June 19, 2002. The construction is well underway and several of the units have already been purchased. The proposed alterations are described below:

Victorian Townhouse (Unit 61):

The applicant is requesting approval of a change to the piers at the third story deck on the south side of the house from brick, as previously approved, to wood. The piers will have the same dimensions as the brick. There will be a panel in the center of the face of the pier which will have a fluted detail. There is no change proposed for the railing, which will remain wrought iron as previously approved. This change appears only on the Victorian townhouse and can be seen on Sheets A5 and A6 of the townhouse plans.

Colonial Revival Townhouse (Unit 62):

The applicant is requesting approval to change the entry door and sidelight configuration of the north side (rear) door to a pair of multi-light french doors. The change was requested by the purchaser of this unit. This change can be seen on Sheet A6.

In addition, the applicant is requesting approval to add a wrought iron gate to the rear yard of this unit.

Absent the gate, the only way to get from the rear yard to the front of the house is through the house. The gate will be located on the south side of the wall adjacent to the house. The gate will

be simple in design with a series of straight pickets. The gate location is shown on the site plan on sheet WD-1 and the detail drawing on the same sheet titled, Wall Elevation #5.

#### Manor House (Unit 63):

The applicant is requesting approval to continue the fence at the south end of the property across the rear (west) side of the house to meet the serpentine wall and effectively enclose the rear yard. The change is requested by the purchaser to provide a buffer between the busy street and the property. The new fence will match the existing fence that surrounds the south end of the property. The 1 ½' high brick fence is surmounted by a 3' high metal picket fence and punctuated by 5' high brick piers set approximately 8' apart. The applicant proposes to remove an 11' section of the existing brick and metal fence, where it turns east to join the southwest corner of the house. The removal of this portion of the fence and extension of the fence to the north would create a continuous yard around the south and west sides of the house. The plans show the new fence turning east to meet the west wall of the house midway between the first and second bay of the house on the north side of the door. The existing serpentine wall ends just to the north of this point. Thus, the fence and wall do not join, but parallel each other to end side by side in the west yard of the property. There will be a metal picket gate in the new brick and metal fence on axis with the rear door.

In addition, the applicant is requesting approval to add 1' in depth to the new garage which is to be at the north end of the house. The increase in size is to accommodate larger vehicles. The extra foot will be added to the back (west end) of the garage and will result in the mudroom connection to the house being a foot shorter. There will be no appreciable change in the appearance of the garage/ mudroom addition.

#### History and Analysis:

The two new townhouses and renovated motel registration building (Unit #s 61, 62 & 63) are part of the Liberty Row development which will also include two new condominium buildings and various site improvements on the site of the former Best Western Old Colony Motor Lodge, located on the east side of the George Washington Memorial Parkway between First and Second Streets. The Motor Lodge was designed by the architectural firm of Joseph Saunders and Associates with Charles A. Pearson, Jr. as project architect. The Board approved the plans for the motel on May 14, 1958 and the building permit was issued the following year (Building Permit #6887).

The Board approved the demolition of the Motor Lodge (excluding the registration building) in 1999 and re-approved the Permit to Demolish in 2002 (BAR Case #98-0147, 1/20/1999 & BAR Case #2002-142, 6/19/2002). The Board approved the plans for the Liberty Row development in 2001 and 2002 (BAR Case #2000-269, 5/2/2001 & BAR Case #2000-270, 7/19/2002). In addition, the project required a Development Special Use Permit (DSUP2001-00001) which was approved in July 2001.

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements. Section 7-202(A)(1) of the zoning ordinance permits in a front yard open fences not exceeding 3.5' in height. Section 7-200 (C) of the zoning ordinance permits the BAR to modify or waive the fence requirements if

the Board finds that a proposed fence will be architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

For the most part, Staff has no significant objection to the proposed alterations. The alterations are minor and are compatible with the character of the houses and the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, Staff believes the alterations meet the Washington Street Design Standards which seek to ensure that new construction and renovation fronting the George Washington Memorial Parkway “be compatible with and similar to the traditional character, ...mass, scale, design and style, found on Washington Street on commercial or residential buildings of historic architectural merit.”(*Design Guidelines, Washington Street Standards - Page 3*).

Staff does however have two concerns. First, Staff believes that the french doors proposed for the north side (rear) door in the Colonial Revival Unit (Unit #62) appear somewhat incongruous in the rather heavy and elaborate frame was designed to hold a solid panel door with sidelights. Staff recommends simplifying the treatment of the door surround to make it more compatible with the informal character of the french doors. A jack arch with keystone and simple trim similar to that of the adjacent windows might be more appropriate. Second, with respect to the Manor House, Staff is concerned that the “meeting” of the serpentine wall from the north and brick and metal fence from the south will be awkward. The two are different in character and height and will meet at an illogical point in relation to the west elevation of the Manor House. More logical meeting places could be at the end of the house or at the end of the property, but each of these presents its own set of design problems and requires demolition of a segment of the serpentine wall. Furthermore, Staff is concerned that the extension of the brick and metal fence across the west (rear) yard of the Manor House further encloses and delineates the site. The retention of open space, or at least visually accessible space, was an objective of the Planning and Zoning Department throughout the planning for the Liberty Row project.

Staff believes the applicant’s request that Staff administratively approve minor alterations to the approved plans for the Liberty Row development, including the two new townhouses and renovated Manor House, which are nearing completion, as well as the two new condominium buildings and associated site improvements, which have not yet commenced, is reasonable. Minor alterations to plans are routinely reviewed and approved by the Department of Planning and Zoning through the Minor Amendment process. This arrangement saves the Board from reviewing of a series of cases on insignificant issues as the project progresses. As always, Staff would require that any alterations which could significantly affect the appearance of the project be brought to the Board for review.

## 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.

### Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”