

Docket Item #11
BAR Case #2004-0033

BAR Meeting
April 7, 2004

ISSUE: Permit to Demolish

APPLICANT: Harambee Community and Economic Development Corp.

LOCATION: 1323 Duke Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate the east wall of the residence, the sleeping porch and the existing outbuilding with the following conditions:

1. Large scale 4" x 5" negative black and white record photographs to Historic American Building Survey Standards be made of the exterior elevations of the house and outbuilding. Two sets of these photographs together with the one set of negatives are deposited at both the Special Collections, Alexandria Library as well as the Alexandria Archives and Record Center prior to the issuance of a building permit;
2. Physical design detail elements to be determined at the discretion of the Director of the Lyceum are to be removed and deposited in the collections of the Lyceum in consultation with Staff of the Department of Planning & Zoning;
3. The iron fence at the front of the east side yard is to be carefully disassembled and reinstalled in an appropriate location on the property, either at the rear of the new addition or along the new garden wall on the west side of the property.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant's Description of the Undertaking:

"Applicant requests permission/approval to remove an existing one story rear addition and to build a new two story addition."

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate the following portions of the building at 1323 Duke Street:

- Capsulate the entire east elevation of the existing two story residence and demolish sections of same;
- Demolish the existing two story rear porch at the north end of the residence and capsulate the north wall;
- Demolish the shed at the rear (north) end of the property; and,
- Remove iron fence at front of east side yard.

Background:

The applicant, Harambee Community and Economic Development Corp., is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization whose purpose is to provide affordable housing in the City. This project is the first that the organization has undertaken and involves the construction of affordable housing units for the elderly at 1323 Duke Street. The Shiloh Baptist Church will lease the land and building at 1323 Duke Street under a long term lease to assist Harambee in accomplishing its goal.

Last year, the applicant came before the Board with a proposal to demolish all of the buildings on the site (BAR Case #2003-0142 9/3/03). At that time the Board denied the proposed demolition

of the residence, consistent with Staff's recommendation. The Board's decision was subsequently appealed by the applicant to City Council but, at the request of the applicant, has been deferred pending examination of a preservation design solution that would save the existing two story residence. It is this revised scheme that is now before the Board for consideration. While the revised design is a preservation related scheme that preserves the existing building, some demolition and capsulation of the existing building is necessary in order to construct an addition.

Description of Site and Building:

In the early 19th century, the land at 1323 Duke Street was part of the Alexandria Slave Pen. The main building of that use was located at 1315 Duke Street and is now a National Historic Landmark. The area at South West Street was apparently used primarily for storage to support the operations of the slave pen.

Later, during the Civil War, the property was part of the L'Overture Hospital and Contraband Barracks complex . The lot contained some of the ward tents for the hospital complex.

The extant house at 1323 Duke Street is a two story, slightly asymmetrical two bay, side hall Victorian Italianate style freestanding brick residence dating from ca. 1890. It is first shown on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1902, the first year the company mapped the area, and was in residential use from that time until 1990. The building was acquired by the Shiloh Baptist Church in 1990 and has served church administrative functions since then.



Current condition photograph of 1323 Duke Street

Over the course of the last century, the building has had two additions. A two story brick addition at the north (rear) was added probably within ten to twenty years of the original construction date of the historic main block. A rear two story wood frame sleeping porch was added in 1931 (Building Permit). The sleeping porch was enclosed in 1994 and this enclosure was approved by the Board (BAR Case #94-0127, 9/21/94). Prior to the construction of the sleeping porch there was a one story frame addition on the east side at rear. According to information on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps this frame addition was constructed between 1912 and 1921 and was demolished by 1941.

The building retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity. Along the Duke Street frontage the brick work is seven course American bond with an elaborate corbeled brick cornice and arched brick window lintels. The icicle style corbeled cornice appears to be unique within the Alexandria historic district. The windows have been changed out from (likely) two-over-two to inappropriate six-over-six wood Pella windows (there was no BAR approval of this change out). The door opening has been modified with the transom panel bricked in and an inappropriate metal door installed. The doorway is accessed from decorative cast iron steps with decorative railings.

The South West Street frontage also has seven course American bond on the historic main block and eight course American bond on the first addition. The windows all have arched brick lintels; two on the second level of the historic main block and three on the first level. The first addition has one window on each level. The enclosed rear frame addition has one-over-one windows. On the north elevation the two story enclosed frame sleeping porch has sets of one-over-one windows on each level. On the east (side) elevation there are no window openings on the first floor of the historic main block and two windows with brick arch lintels on the second level. The window configuration of the first addition and the sleeping porch enclosure mirrors that on South West Street.

The interior of the historic main block has very high degree of integrity and is little changed from the original period of construction. The original room configuration and partitions as well as fireplace mantel and stair are extant. In addition, the first addition has a high degree of integrity. As noted above, the rear porch has been extensively modified.

The existing outbuilding apparently post-dates 1958 according to information on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. This two story, stucco covered, cinderblock building adjoins the west wall of 1319 Duke Street.

There is a highly elaborate and decorative cast iron fencing on Duke Street on the east side of the house.

Proposed Demolition

The applicant's proposal is to build a new addition to the east of the existing two story residence and include the existing house as part of the overall redevelopment scheme.

In order to carry out the current redevelopment scheme, the following areas of the site are proposed to be demolished:

- Capsulate the entire east elevation of the existing two story residence and demolish sections of same;
- Demolish the existing two story rear porch at the north end of the residence;
- Demolish the shed at the rear (north) end of the property; and,
- Remove iron fence at front of east side yard.

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §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?

Response: The building is not being demolished and the portion that is proposed to be encapsulated will not be a detriment to the public interest. The current proposal involves minimal loss of historic fabric. All of the important materials and craftsmanship of the existing house will be retained under the proposed redevelopment scheme.

As to the two story rear porch, as Staff noted above, it was constructed in 1931 and substantially remodeled in 1994. It, therefore, is not part of the original architecture of the residence and its removal will not be detrimental to the public interest. Similarly, it is not detrimental to remove the rear utilitarian outbuilding which also dates from the mid-20th century.

- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?

Response: This vernacular background building does not lend itself to historic house museum use.

- (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?

Response: All of the important materials and craftsmanship of the existing house will be retained under the proposed redevelopment scheme. For example, the highly articulated corbelled brick decoration on the front of the house is unusual in the historic district and provides definite visual interest to the house. Therefore, Staff is very supportive of the applicant's efforts to retain and reuse the building. Under the applicant's proposal, the original building configuration will be retained along with the current fenestration pattern

providing a clear sense of the original construction of the house. Therefore, this criteria is not met.

(4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?

Response: This criteria is not applicable because the building is not located on 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?

Response: 1323 Duke Street represents the type of substantial vernacular residential building form that was present in this section of the historic district prior to the major rebuilding programs that took place in the 1970s and 1980s and helps define the architectural evolution of residential building types in Alexandria. Overall 1323 Duke Street has a great deal of architectural integrity and is little changed in outward appearance from its original construction over 100 years ago. Therefore, this criteria is not met as to the demolition and capsulation that is proposed.

(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?

Response: The historic main block of the house and the first addition is a good example of a substantial vernacular urban rowhouse that shows knowledge of high style Victorian design elements and is, thus, of considerable interest to the citizens of the City. However, given the fact that the vast majority of the building will be preserved under the present scheme, encapsulating the east wall of the residence is acceptable. The current development scheme involves minimal loss of historic fabric. The east elevation of the building will be encapsulated and will become an interior wall in the new redevelopment scheme. The primary character defining features of the building will be retained in the new scheme.

Thus, Staff does not believe that any of the criteria are met in this instance with regard to the existing historic main block of the residence and supports the demolition/capsulation request.

Staff believes that the Board should condition its approval of the capsulation and demolition so that the building is recorded to the standards recommended in the Demolition section of the *Design Guidelines*, including

1. Large scale 4" x 5" negative black and white record photographs to Historic American Building Survey Standards be made of the exterior elevations of the house and outbuilding. Two sets of these photographs together with the one set of negatives are deposited at both the Special Collections, Alexandria Library as well as the Alexandria Archives and Record Center prior to the issuance of a building permit; and,
2. Physical design detail elements to be determined at the discretion of the Director of the Lyceum are to be removed and deposited in the collections of the Lyceum in consultation with Staff of the Department of Planning & Zoning;

The decorative iron fence and gate at the front of the east side yard are an important visual element of the entire parcel. Staff believes that they can easily be reused as part of the overall redevelopment scheme by carefully disassembling and reinstalling it in an appropriate location on the property, either at the rear of the new addition or along the new garden wall on the west side of the property, and recommends that a condition to effect be incorporated as a third condition to the approval of the Permit to Demolition.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

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

Historic Alexandria:

Very fine looking addition. Need open space calculations.