

Docket Item #13
BAR CASE #2004-0039

BAR Meeting
April 7, 2004

ISSUE: Demolition
APPLICANT: Adams Architects
LOCATION: 529 South Fairfax Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

NOTE: This item requires a roll call vote.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant's Description of the Undertaking:

“Request approval on minor modifications to rear (west) elevation of townhouse including relocation of windows and doors and addition of new stair to rear yard, from 1st floor. Modifications are necessary due to interior renovation work that is proposed.”

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate for alterations on the first, second and third stories of the rear (west) elevation of the house. The single window on the first story would be replaced by a set of three french doors, entailing the removal of a section of the rear wall approximately 9' wide and 7.5' high. The two windows on the second story will be replaced by a larger window grouping consisting of a window flanked by sidelights. This window grouping will entail removing an area approximately 5.5' wide by 6.5 high. The door and window on the third story will be replaced by two evenly spaced windows. This will entail both capsulation and removal of small areas of the rear wall in an area approximately 6.5' wide and 5.5' high. In total, approximately 139 square feet of wall area will be either capsulated or demolished.

The upper portion of the rear of the building is visible through the block from Royal Street. The alley on the north side of the property is private.

History and Analysis:

529 South Fairfax Street is one of a row of four attached frame Victorian style residential buildings constructed ca. 1900. The buildings were all originally two stories in height. However, three of the four, at 529, 531 and 535 have been raised in height to three stories. On February 18, 1979, a fire originating in 529 South Fairfax Street caused substantial damage to the entire row of four. Code Enforcement records report that the exterior walls and structure of 529 South Fairfax Street sustained substantial damage. Following the fire, on May 16, 1979, the Board approved the third floor addition and extensive renovations. In 1998 Staff approved a building permit to replace siding at 529 South Fairfax Street (BLD98-02454, 8/19/1998). In 2003 the Board approved replacing the windows on the north side of the house (BAR Case #2003-0275, 12/17/2003).

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

Staff believes none of the above criteria are met. The proposed demolition/capsulation will affect the rear wall only. The entire third story and much of the present exterior appearance of the first and second stories dates to the 1979 renovation following an extensive fire. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Capsulate as submitted.

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.”