

Docket Item #4
BAR CASE# 2004-0115

BAR Meeting
June 16, 2004

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Martin Walsh
LOCATION: 424 Wolfe Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
2. That smooth siding be installed

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the two story frame section at the rear of the two story brick house. The applicant proposes the following:

- 1) Replace the existing rubber membrane roof with a new standing seam metal roof;
- 2) Replace the existing aluminum siding with Hardiplank siding;
- 3) Replace trim with Hardiplank trim;
- 4) Remove two east side windows on second story and infill with siding; and,
- 5) Replace the four double hung six-over-six wood windows on the rear elevation in the second story with Pella Architect Series, double hung six-over-six aluminum clad wood windows.

The proposed work is intended to renovate a portion of the house that has been subject to persistent water damage.

A Permit to Demolish is not required for the window removal as it constitutes less than 25 square feet of area, the threshold for requiring a Permit.

The rear of the house at 424 Wolfe Street is visible from the public alley at the rear. A six foot wood fence obscures the lower portion of the first story.

II. HISTORY:

Staff research has shown that the row of buildings at 416-430 Wolfe Street was designed by George T. Santmyers in 1928 (Building Permit #745, 3/12/28). Santmyers was one of the most important architects of residential buildings in the metropolitan area during the 1920s, 30s and 40s. He designed literally thousands of individual rowhouses in Washington, DC and hundreds of apartment buildings in Washington, Montgomery and Prince Georges County. He was one of the principal architects for Harry Wardman as he developed residential complexes in numerous areas of the District of Columbia. In addition, Santmyers designed a number of shopping centers in an Art Deco style on Georgia Avenue as well as in southeast Washington. Santmyers' residential buildings often display a veritable signature - a brick soldier course separating the ground level from the first story. Such is the case with this rowhouse at 424 Wolfe Street.

The 1931 Sanborn map shows the row from 416 to 428 Wolfe Street to have two story porches of identical dimensions in the rear. Ten years later, in the 1941 Sanborn map, the porches remain the same size, but a number, including that at 424 Wolfe Street have been enclosed. Over time, these structures have continued to evolve, with some, like 422 Wolfe Street, being extended into longer rear additions.

On July 21, 1972, the Board approved aluminum siding at the rear of 424 Wolfe Street. Building Permit records include a photograph showing that, prior to the aluminum siding, the rear was clad in bricktex siding. In 1995, the Board approved alterations to 424 Wolfe Street (BAR Case #95-81, 9/6/95). These alterations involved closing a door on the right side of the rear elevation and installing a set of french doors on the left side.

III. **ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed alterations are acceptable. While wood windows without cladding and wood siding would be preferable, Staff believes the specific circumstances and history of this property permit the use of less historically authentic materials. Although the structure of the rear frame section of the house probably dates to 1928, it has clearly undergone numerous alterations over the years, including several approved by the Board. The windows are not original and the exterior has been clad in at least two non-historic siding materials. Originally the porch was open and it is not know what cladding was used when it was enclosed circa 1936. Furthermore the rear of the house is removed a substantial distance from the public alley. Given the distance involved, the proposed aluminum clad windows and Hardiplank siding are not likely to be distinguishable from wood versions of the same. Staff is not concerned by the removal of the two east side windows as these are barely visible. Lastly, the use of standing seam metal on the rear roof is historically appropriate.

With respect to the Hardiplank siding, the Board has reviewed a number of applications for the use of fiber cement siding in the last several years and has adopted the following policy with respect to the product:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
5. That smooth siding be installed.
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Staff believes the use of fiber cement siding at the rear of 424 Wolfe Street would not be contrary to the policy. Staff notes items 4 & 5 above and recommends that they be included as conditions to the approval.

IV. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
2. That smooth siding be installed

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.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”