

Docket Item #11  
BAR CASE #2004-0106

BAR Meeting  
June 16, 2004

**ISSUE:** After-the-fact replacement windows

**APPLICANT:** Steve Wharton

**LOCATION:** 1308 Michigan Avenue

**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the application be deferred for restudy with the applicant to return to the Board on July 21, 2004 with:

1. A proposal to replace the vinyl windows with new wood or aluminum clad wood casement windows that replicate the appearance and operation of the original windows as closely as possible;
2. Documentation of the original window type for each opening and a scale drawing showing the configuration of the proposed replacement window for each opening; and,
3. The manufacturer's cut sheet with specifications and sections for the proposed replacement window type.

### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of replacement windows at 1308 Michigan Avenue. In early May 2004, the original multi-light metal casement windows were replaced with vinyl one-over-one windows on the east (front), north side and west (rear) facades.

### **II. HISTORY:**

1308 Michigan Avenue is a stone and brick end unit rowhouse dating from circa 1939. The area, including Avon Place, Chetworth Place, Devon Place and Michigan Avenue was constructed as a cohesive residential development with all the houses sharing a similar appearance and materials. This area was included within the original boundaries of the 1946 historic district in order to protect the George Washington Memorial Parkway. However, much of the area, including 1308 Michigan Avenue, is currently visually screened from the Parkway by the Mason Hall Apartments on West Abingdon Drive which were constructed in 1951.

Staff searched BAR records and was unable to locate any cases involving window replacement in the area. Clearly however, a number of houses have had replacement windows installed without the approval of the Board. The Board has recently reviewed several other project types in the immediate vicinity of 1308 Michigan Avenue, including an air conditioning unit and screening at 1314 Michigan Avenue (BAR Case #2002-0134, 6/19/2002) and air conditioning unit screening and fence at 1326 Michigan Avenue (BAR Case #2002-0281, 11/20/2002). Most recently, the Board reviewed an after-the-fact replacement door at 1302 Michigan Avenue, deferring the matter for restudy (BAR Case #2004-0013, 2/18/2004).

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The window replacement complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

Windows are prominent features of any building, and particularly so for these houses. The small rowhouses are designed in a vaguely Tudor style vocabulary, including the use of brick and masonry veneers, steep gables and casement windows. Although a relatively modern technology at the time, metal casement windows were used in the Tudor style houses from the 1920s through the 1940s to evoke the multi-light leaded windows of Tudor England. Here casements of varying sizes and configurations are combined in a variety of ways, including with transoms, to lend visual interest to the relatively simple houses. While there has been considerable unapproved

window replacement, the majority of the houses in this development still retain their original windows.

Staff does not believe that the vinyl replacement windows recently installed at 1308 Michigan Avenue are acceptable. First, as discussed in the *Design Guidelines*, it is always preferable that original historic materials be retained and repaired rather than replaced. With the wholesale replacement of the windows at 1308 Michigan Avenue, the Board has been deprived of this option. In addition, the *Design Guidelines* clearly discourage the use of vinyl windows (Windows - Page 2 ). The double hung one-over-one replacement windows do not respect the original appearance. They are about as different from the original windows as is possible. Not only is the operation of the windows entirely different, but the sash has a substantially heavier profile and simpler appearance.

Thus, Staff believes the vinyl windows must be replaced with windows that replicate the original metal casement windows as closely as possible. While the Board has not addressed window replacement in this part of the historic district, it has dealt with the matter a number of times in the 400 block of Gibbon Street. The Gibbon Street buildings were designed in a modern vocabulary and use the metal casement windows for a different effect. However, they provide a model for the Board's response to replacing this historic window type. The Board has reluctantly accepted the replacement of the metal casement windows on Gibbon Street with the condition that the replacement windows be either wood or aluminum clad wood and that they replicate the appearance and operation of the original windows to the greatest extent possible. Thus the replacements must be casements with the same light patterns as the original. Where there were transoms and fixed sections in the original windows, these features must be replicated in the replacements. The exterior muntins must be fixed and of a narrow profile.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Therefore, Staff recommends that the application be deferred for restudy with the applicant to return to the Board on July 21, 2004 with:

1. A proposal to replace the vinyl windows with new wood or aluminum clad wood casement windows that replicate the appearance and operation of the original windows as closely as possible;
2. Documentation of the original window type for each opening and a scale drawing showing the configuration of the proposed replacement window for each opening; and,
3. The manufacturer's cut sheet with specifications and sections for the proposed replacement window type

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 Based upon the submitted information, it appears that structural changes were made to install the replacement windows. The following conditions apply:
- 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.

### Office of Historic Alexandria:

“Recommend a fine. Windows are in the rear and not entirely visible.”