

Docket Item #9
BAR CASE #2004-0068

BAR Meeting
August 18, 2004

ISSUE: Alterations and addition
APPLICANT: Steve Edson and Kelly Worthington
LOCATION: 510 North Columbus Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

BOARD ACTION, JULY 21, 2004: On a motion by Mr. Wheeler, seconded by Ms. Quill the Board deferred the application for restudy of the mass of the addition and for reconsideration of replacing the existing metal roof. The vote on the motion was 4-0.

REASON: The Board expressed concern about the mass of the proposed addition and asked that alternatives that did not completely encompass all of the rear be considered. The Board also suggested that additional modeling of the rear elevation should be considered and that it might be unwise to replace the existing front roof because it matched the roofs of all the other houses in the row.

SPEAKERS: Gabriel Romero, project architect, spoke in support
Charles Ablard, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, spoke in opposition

BOARD ACTION, JUNE 2, 2004: No action was taken on this docket item because the demolition was not approved.

UPDATE:

At the July 21, 2004 hearing, the Board approved the Permit to Demolish for the rear wall of the structure with the extent of demolition to be based on the design parameters approved for the new addition. In response to the Board's comments at the July 21 hearing concerning the addition, the applicant has revised the design to reduce the height of the addition as it meets the roof of the main block, to modulate the rear elevation and to eliminate the long run of stairs on the rear deck. In addition, portions of the existing rear wall will be retained and capsulated within the proposed addition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends: deferral for restudy of the size of the proposed addition. In the alternative, if the Board determines to approve the addition, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the front windows be wood without cladding and be either true divided light or simulated divided light with internal spacer bars;
2. That if the metal roof is replaced, it match the existing and adjacent roofs as closely as possible;
3. That the existing chimneys be retained;
4. That the fiber cement siding is smooth and the nails do not show in the installation; and,
5. That the following statement appears in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:
Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations and an addition to the brick residential rowhouse at 510 North Columbus Street.

Alterations

A number of alterations to the front of the house are proposed. These include:

- Repair or in-kind replacement of the existing standing seam metal roof;
- New six-over-six wood simulated divided light windows with 7/8" wide wood muntins will replace the existing wood two-over one windows;
- The existing wood windows sills will be replaced with new wood sills;
- A new three-light wood transom will replace the existing two light transom over the front door;
- A new six -panel wood door will replace the existing four-light and three panel wood front door;
- New metal steps with simple metal picket railings will be installed in place of the existing wood front entry steps;
- A new metal picket guard rail, approximately 36" in height, will be installed next to the stairs leading to the basement level; and,
- A new six-panel wood door will be installed at the basement entrance in place of the

existing door.

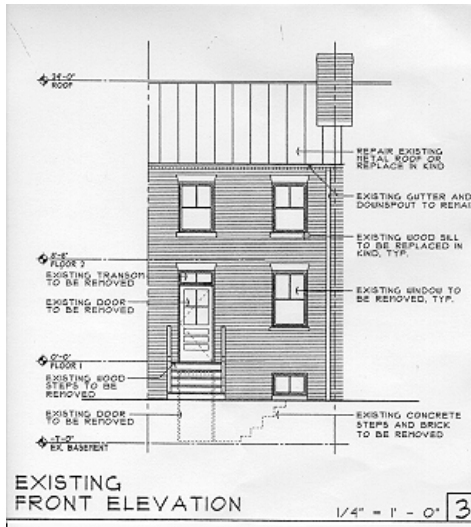


Figure 1 - Existing Front Elevation

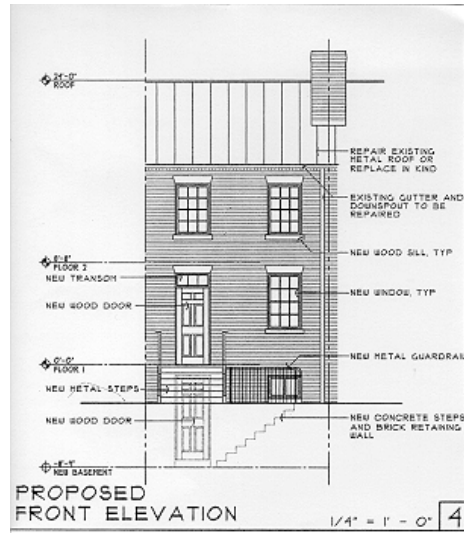


Figure 2 - Proposed Front Elevation

Addition

An addition is proposed to be constructed at the rear (west) of the existing house. The flat roofed addition will be 19'8" in length, with a center bay projecting 1'10" beyond for a total length of 21'6". The addition will run lot line to lot line. Since the lot falls away from east to west, the rear addition will be three stories in overall height. The addition will be clad in new shiplap cement fiber siding. The projecting bay is the visually dominant element of the west (rear) elevation. It will extend above the roof of the addition by several feet and is mostly glazed while the wall of the addition beyond has no features and is clad in shiplap siding. The bay will have a shed roof sloping up to the rear. On the third level of the bay there will be three new casement windows with transoms above. The second level will have a pair of single light french doors with a fixed window to the left. A fiber cement spandrel panel will be located between the third and second level window and door openings. The second level doors will lead to a painted metal deck. The deck will be 6' in depth and will extend across the width of the projecting bay. It will have a metal picket railing and a spiral metal staircase with metal pickets to allow access to the rear yard. The deck will have wood framing and Trex (synthetic wood) decking. The lower level of the west elevation will have the same fenestration configuration as on the second level. All windows and doors on the rear elevation will be from Marvin's Integrity line. These windows are made of Utrex,, a polymer of glass fibers and polyester resins.

The HVAC unit is not shown, but must be located in such a way that it does not reduce the open space as the addition leaves exactly the required amount. If located on the roof, a waiver of vision clearance will be necessary.

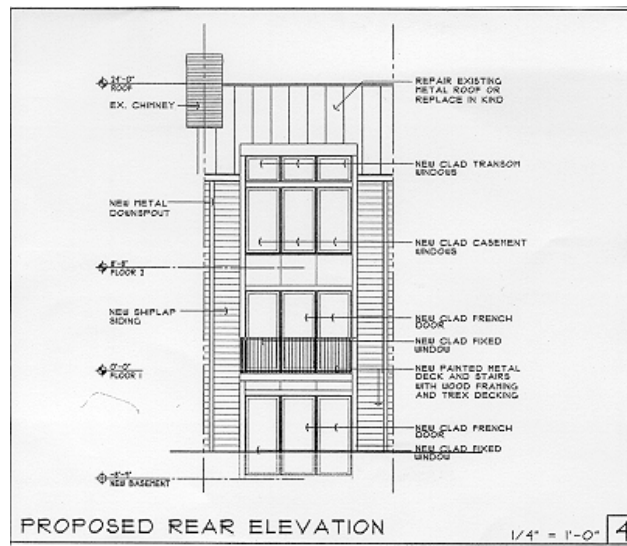


Figure 3 - Proposed Addition Rear Elevation

Although only the north elevation is shown, it is assumed that the north and south side elevations will be identical. They will be clad in fiber cement shiplap siding. The projecting bay will extend above and beyond the main block of the addition and will have narrow windows on the first and second stories.

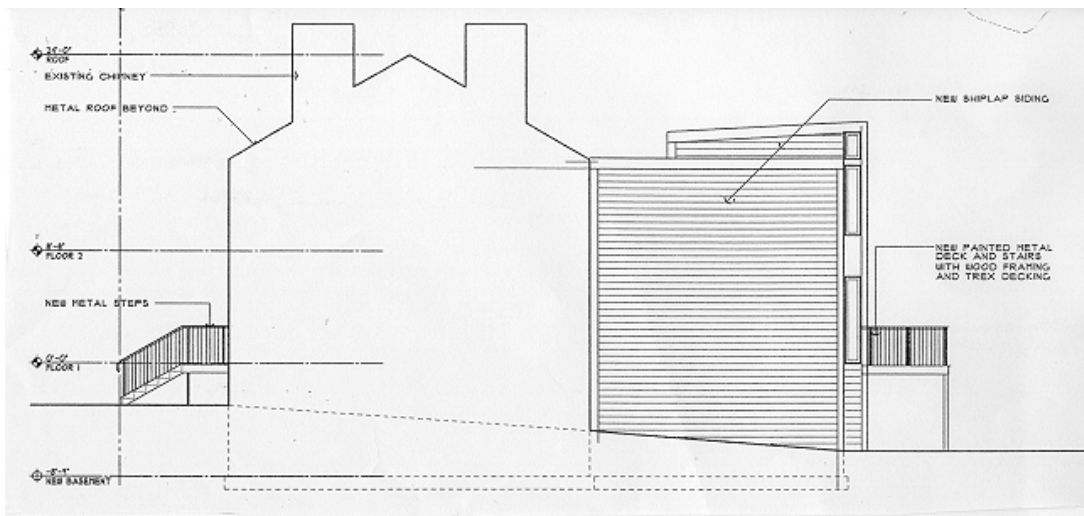


Figure 4 - Proposed Addition North Elevation

HISTORY:

510 North Columbus Street. is a two story, gable-roofed, brick rowhouse that is located in a row of eight similar houses that were constructed together as a row (506-520 North Columbus Street). The houses were constructed prior to 1863, as they appear in a birds eye view of Alexandria with that date.

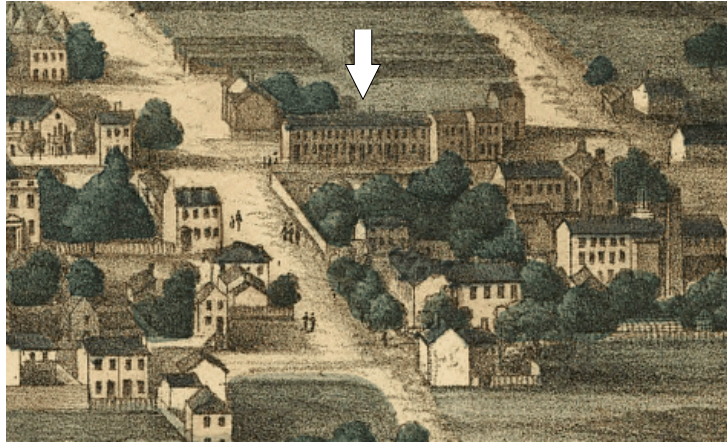


Figure 5 - 1863 Birds Eye View (row in center of picture)

Survey information in the Office of Planning and Zoning indicates that the row was constructed in the Federal period, prior to 1830. An early- to mid- 19th century date is supported by the massing of the houses, the brick coursing and the brick cornice. The houses were constructed as relatively simple, vernacular worker housing. Each of the houses has a side hall plan, two bays in width, two stories plus high basement, a continuous standing seam metal roof and shared front and back chimneys. Staff believes the row is unusual for the number of units built simultaneously. Smaller rows of four or less were more typically constructed in Alexandria in the 19th century.

The early date of the houses is supported by the fact that the houses were constructed without rear service wings. The service functions may have been housed in the basement. Due to a change in grade from front to back, the basement level is fully exposed at the rear of the houses and the basement level has both a door and window. Based on Sanborn mapping and BAR records, the row of eight remained without rear additions until the early 1950s and possibly until the early 1980s. In the subsequent years, there have been a number of changes to these houses. However, four of the eight, 508, 510, 512 and 520 remain without additions. The rear wall of the entire row appears to have been reconstructed in the early- to mid-20th century. The front of the row retains a substantial degree of integrity, despite minor alterations. 510 North Columbus has had its windows, door and stoop replaced on the front.

ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations and addition comply with zoning regulations.

Alterations

Staff has no objections to the alterations proposed for the front facade. With some clarifications, Staff believes the alterations are appropriate and will improve the historic appearance of the house. Staff can support simulated divided lights in this instance only because the new windows will be replacing the existing inappropriate non-historic windows and will not be readily accessible to the public as the house is set back from the sidewalk by over 8'. The manufacturer's cut sheets provided by the applicant were not entirely clear as which of the divided light options would be used. It is assumed that the windows will be wood with fixed wood muntin bars on the exterior and interior *and an internal spacer bar*. In addition, the rear elevation drawing in the current set includes a note calling for the removal of the existing chimney. It is assumed that this is an error. The applicant had previously proposed removing the chimney, which is original and shared with the neighboring house, but was dissuaded by Staff. Lastly, at the July 21, 2004 hearing, Board members noted that the metal roof on the row is continuous and requested that the existing roof be retained if at all possible. The applicant now proposes to "repair existing metal roof or replace in-kind." Obviously, if replacement is necessary, great care will be required to match the appearance of the existing row as closely as possible.

Addition

In general, Staff is supportive of a rear addition to this rowhouse and believes that the design vocabulary of the rear elevation is appropriate because the front facade and the rear elevation cannot be seen together. The design of the addition is clearly differentiated from the historic main block of the house, an approach recommended by the *Design Guidelines* (Residential Additions - Page 5). Moreover, Staff believes the revised design is an improvement over the previous in a number of ways. The revisions have reduced the perceived mass of the addition somewhat. The height of the main block of the addition has been reduced so that it no longer extends onto the roof of the historic house. The pop-up projecting bay section of the addition provides some modulation to the rear (west) elevation and adds interest to the north and south side elevations as well. In addition, portions of the rear wall of the existing main block will now remain intact, although encapsulated by the new addition and thus not visible.

Despite these improvements, Staff remains troubled by the overall size of the addition. As currently proposed, the addition represents an increase in the size of the existing house of nearly 77%. In the opinion of Staff, the addition is so large that it overwhelms the existing relatively small historic house. Although the projecting and fenestrated bay does provide some visual relief for the side elevations somewhat, the side walls remain as before, 21'6" in overall length and three stories high, overwhelming the adjacent houses which have no additions. The *Design Guidelines* note that "[g]enerally, additions should not overwhelm the existing structure or neighboring buildings" (Residential Additions - Page 6). There are several additions in the row of eight that are of similar or even greater length. However, all were approved over a decade ago. On a more practical note, Staff has concerns about the fact that the proposed addition leaves only 800 square feet of open space, exactly what is required by zoning. This leaves virtually no

margin for error in the construction process. Based upon all the above, Staff believes that the application should be deferred for restudy for an addition that is more appropriate to the size of the existing house and its immediate neighbors.

While the Board generally prefers wood windows, Staff does not object to the proposed use of Ultrex for the rear windows. These windows will be well removed from the public access and will be on a clearly modern structure. The Board has adopted the following policy with respect to fiber cement:

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).

As fiber cement siding is proposed only for the new construction, its use will conform to the Board's policy if the siding is smooth and the nails do not show in the installation.

Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and has included them as a condition if the Board approves the addition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends: deferral for restudy of the size of the proposed addition. In the alternative, if the Board determines to approve the addition, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the front windows be wood without cladding and be either true divided light or simulated divided light with internal spacer bars;
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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.

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Tax records indicate that development on this street face had begun by 1810 and that two free African American households were located on the block in 1830. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources which could provide insight into domestic activities, perhaps relating to free blacks, in early 19th-century Alexandria.
- R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
- R-2 The above statement must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.