

Docket Item #16
BAR CASE #2004-0235

BAR Meeting
November 3, 2004

ISSUE: Conceptual review of addition and new garages

APPLICANT: Stephanie Dimond

LOCATION: 555 South Washington Street

ZONE: CL/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends concept approval of the additions and garages.

Note: Docket item #15 must be approved before portions of this docket item can be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting conceptual approval of alterations and new garages for the commercial building at 555 South Washington Street.

Alterations

The existing footprint of the building will not change. The one story sections of the building at the rear (west) will be raised to a full two stories in height. On the south side of the existing building the first floor porch will have new six-over-six true divided light wood windows and fiber cement siding on the first floor. The new roof will be asphalt shingle and will have three new gable dormers with windows that match those on the first level.

On the north side two pair of multi-light French doors will be installed on the first level and two pair of six-over-six true divided light windows will be installed on the second level. These windows will be separated by a new double shouldered chimney. The roof will have asphalt shingles and a pair of gable dormers on both the east and west sides. The windows will match those proposed for the windows on the addition on the south side of the building. On the west (rear) of the new additions, each section will have three gable dormers with six-over-six true divided light wood windows on the second level. The addition on the north side will have three pair of multi-light French doors; while the section on the south side will have two multi-light doors flanking smaller four-over-four wood windows.

New Garages

The main building will have four condominium units and each will have a two car garage. (south). These garages are ganged together and will be located in the interior of the block There is access to an existing alley from either South Washington Street or South Columbus Street. The garages are one story in height and will be constructed of brick with asphalt shingle roofing. Each garage has wood panel doors with a glass and wood transom above. The rear (west) elevation facing the residential properties on South Columbus Street will be blank. At the south side of the garages there will be brick fence to provide security.

II. HISTORY:

555 South Washington Street is generally know as the Old Club and for many years was a tea room. It has been vacant since the 1980s. The proposed demolition for a new addition is to allow the entire building to be converted to residential condominiums. The nucleus of the building, that is the two first rooms on both the first and second levels at the front, dates from the 18th century. According to Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street*, tradition holds that this section was an 18th century tavern, Broomlawn, that was moved to this site in the early part of the 19th century (p. 186). In the 20th century that have been a number of alterations and additions to the building which have substantially changed the exterior appearance of the building. The rear addition, which is the subject of this application, is cinderblock faced with brick and was

constructed between 1921 and 1941 according to information on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. The porch facing Washington Street on the south side of the building was enclosed in 1969 (Building Permit #26203, 4/14/69). The rearmost addition is a walk-in cooler and was constructed in 1975 (Building Permit #9579, 10/1/75). In 1987 the Board approved a number of alterations to this building when it was going to be converted into a restaurant for Clyde's Restaurant Group (BAR Case #87-26, 4/1/87). However, that proposal was not developed and the alterations were not undertaken.

III. ANALYSIS:

These rowhouses require approval of a Development Special Use Permit and are being brought before the Board on a conceptual basis for comments when the design is presented to the Planning Commission and City Council.

The architectural style of the additions mimics the design of the existing one story additions. The existing additions and the new second story additions both use Colonial Revival forms and, in the opinion of Staff, are appropriate.

The new garages are automobile oriented utilitarian structures that are set well back from Washington Street and are, in the opinion of Staff, acceptable.

Staff believes that the level of ornamentation proposed as well as the materials that are specified are appropriate to the historic district. Additional information regarding materials and finishes will be required for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Because this lot front on Washington Street it must meet the Washington Street standards set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

Washington Street Standards:

The Washington Street Standards were created to maintain the memorial and historical character of Washington Street. The Standards were established to ensure design of new buildings would be based upon existing buildings of historic merit.

The key Washington Street Standards that pertain to a conceptual review of this application are listed below:

- *Construction shall be compatible with and similar to the traditional building character, particularly mass, scale, design and style, found on Washington Street on commercial or residential buildings of historic architectural merit.*

The additions are designed in a traditional Colonial Revival design vocabulary similar to numerous buildings found along Washington Street.

- *New buildings and additions to existing buildings shall not by their style, size, location or other characteristics, detract from, overwhelm, or otherwise intrude upon historic*

buildings which are found on the street.

The new additions do not detract from or overwhelm the existing surrounding historic building.

- *The massing of new buildings or additions to existing buildings adjacent to historic buildings which are found on the street shall closely reflect and be proportional to the massing of the adjacent historic buildings.*

The proposed additions meet this criterion.

- *New buildings and additions to existing buildings which are larger than historic buildings which are found on the street shall be designed to look separate and shall not give the impression of collectively being more massive than such historic buildings. This design objective shall be accomplished through differing historic architectural designs, facades, setbacks, roof lines and styles. Buildings should appear from the public right-of-way to have a footprint no larger than 100 feet by 80 feet. For larger projects, it is desirable that the historic pattern of mid-block alleys be preserved or replicated.*

This criterion is not applicable because the existing footprint will not be altered.

- *Facades of a building generally shall express the 20 to 40 foot bay width typically found on early 19th century commercial buildings characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, or the 15 to 20 foot bay width typically found on townhouses characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Techniques to express such typical bay width shall include changes in material, articulation of the wall surfaces, changes in fenestration patterns, varying roof heights, and physical breaks, vertical as well as horizontal within the massing.*

The bay spacing of the additions reflects the existing bay spacing.

- *Elements of design consistent with historic buildings which are found on the street shall be emphasized.*

The designs of the additions is consistent with historic buildings along Washington Street.

- *New or untried approaches to design which result in new buildings or additions to existing buildings that have no historical basis in Alexandria or that are not consistent with an historic style in scale, massing and detailing, are not appropriate.*

The approach being proposed with this development is appropriate to the historical context of the historic district and represents traditional design styles.

- *Construction shall reflect the traditional fenestration patterns found within the Old and*

Historic Alexandria District. Traditional solid-void relationships exhibited within the district's streetscapes (i.e ratio of window and door openings to solid wall) shall be used in building facades.

The current design of the additions exhibits traditional the solid-void relationships that are found on the existing historic buildings

Staff concludes that the design of the proposed additions meets the Washington Street Standards set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology, but has not included them as a condition at this early conceptual stage of review.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends concept approval of the proposed additions and garages.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The proposed 3 townhomes along Gibbon Street shall have the proper fire separation distance from the existing property at 719 Gibbon Street. The existing 2 ½ foot wide alley provides inadequate fire separation distance. The applicant should schedule a meeting with Code Enforcement at the earliest opportunity to look at fire separation alternatives in order to meet code compliance.
- F-2 The existing Emergency Vehicle Easement located off South Columbus Street fronting the proposed set of two townhomes shall be preserved in order to provide sufficient access to these structures.
- F-3 The proposed 2 townhomes along South Columbus Street shall have the proper fire separation distance from the existing property properties at 601-605 S. Columbus Street. The applicant should schedule a meeting with Code Enforcement at the earliest opportunity to look at fire separation alternatives in order to meet code compliance.
- C-1 All exterior walls within 3 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to porches with roofs and skylights within setback distance.
- C-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- R-1 An automatic sprinkler system is recommended.
- R-2 Based on a history of sound transmission complaints, it is recommended that all dwelling units have a STC rating of at least 60 for interior shared walls.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- C-2 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.
- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.

- C-6 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.
- C-7 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.
- C-8 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Historical documents indicate that Thomas White, a prominent local merchant, purchased property on South Washington and Gibbon Streets in 1804. This property remained in the White family until 1925. Family tradition has indicated that the original portion (north end) of the extant house on the corner lot (555 S. Washington Street) was part of Broomilawn, an early tavern owned by the Whites near Hunting Creek, but there is no evidence to verify this theory. Architectural historians have indicated that portions of the house may date to the 18th century. The current development project focuses mainly on the lots (711-717 Gibbon Street) west of the house, which do not appear to have been part of the White property. The *G.M. Hopkins City Atlas of Alexandria* shows structures on these lots by 1877. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources which could provide evidence into domestic life in the 19th century.
- 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 (in R-1) must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.