

Docket Item #5
BAR CASE #2004-0106

BAR Meeting
March 2, 2005

ISSUE: After-the-fact replacement windows

APPLICANT: Steve Wharton

LOCATION: 1308 Michigan Avenue

ZONE: RB/Residential

BOARD ACTION, JUNE 16, 2004: On a motion by Ms. Neihardt, seconded by Dr. Fitzgerald the Board approved the Staff recommendation which was:
deferral of the application 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.

The motion passed on a vote of 5-0.

REASON: The Board agreed with the Staff recommendation and believed that the windows that had been installed were inappropriate.

SPEAKER: Steve Wharton, real estate agent, spoke in support
Barbara Bordeau, 1314 Michigan Avenue, spoke in opposition
Pat LeDonne, 1324 Michigan Avenue, spoke in opposition
Katherine Moore, 1310 Michigan Avenue, spoke in opposition

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the following:

1. That all windows on the front, side and rear of the house (excluding the one story rear addition) be replaced with Marvin aluminum clad wood casement windows with simulated divided lights (as defined in this report) that replicate the appearance of the original windows as closely as possible;
2. That by April 2, 2005, the applicant submit to BAR Staff a detailed proposal indicating the configuration of each new window for approval prior to placing the order;
3. That the approved replacement windows be installed by July 2, 2005.

Update - 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. On June 16, 2004, the applicant requested after-the-fact approval for the installed windows and was denied. The Board instructed the applicant to return to the Board at the July 21, 2004 hearing with 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. In addition, the applicant was instructed to provide information documenting the appearance of the windows prior to replacement and the specific configuration of the proposed new replacement windows. The applicant was unable to respond by July 21, 2004, as the Board had requested. Considerable time passed, the restudy materials were not submitted and the unapproved windows remained in place, a violation of the zoning ordinance. Therefore, the Department of Planning and Zoning issued a notice of violation and citation on December 1, 2004 and again on January 10, 2005. The applicant provided restudy materials at the end of January 2005.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of one of three alternatives (option #2 is split into two options). For all alternatives, the applicant proposes to retain the existing windows on the one story rear addition. According to the applicant, the windows on the addition were always plate glass, without any muntins. For all three alternatives, the applicant proposes to retain the existing side and rear (upper story not covered by rear addition) vinyl windows and replace the insulated glass units within the sash with new insulated glass units with sandwich muntins. Thus, the three alternatives differ only in the type of replacement window proposed for the front of the house.

Alternative #1 - Replace front windows with sliding windows similar to the windows at 1306 Michigan Avenue. The applicant is not certain, but believes these windows are vinyl with sandwich muntins.

Alternative #2 - Replace front windows with new vinyl casement windows (Rusco ProWeld II) with sandwich muntins, similar to those at 800 and 801 Devon Place.

Alternative #2A - Replace front windows with new vinyl casement windows (Vinylite 700 Series) with sandwich muntins.

Alternative #3 - Replace the front windows with Marvin Aluminum Clad “Casemaster” windows with sandwich muntins.

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. Today, the attractive Tudor Revival style houses are now well over 60 years old and are considered by many to comprise a neighborhood that is itself architecturally and historically significant, not unlike the Yates Garden neighborhood located at the south end of the historic district.

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. In recent years the Board has reviewed several other project types in the immediate vicinity of 1308 Michigan Avenue, including a stone wall at 708 Devon Place (2004-0220, 10/10/2004), an addition and alterations at 706 Chetworth Place (BAR 2003-0146 & 0147, 7/16/2003) 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 (BAR Case #2004-0013, 10/20/2004). The Board denied the replacement door, believing it to be inappropriate for the style of the house. The applicant appealed the Board’s decision to City Council. On February 12, 2005, City Council upheld the Board’s denial of the door.

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. Fortunately, many of the window replacements, though unapproved, attempt to replicate the appearance of the original multi-light casement windows.

As discussed above, at the June 16, 2004 hearing, the Board approved the Staff recommendation which was 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 and to provide documentation of the original window type for each opening and a scale

drawing showing the configuration of the proposed replacement window for each opening. The applicant has only minimally complied with the Board's request. The applicant has provided no documentation of the former windows and only proposes that the replacement windows have grids of unspecified configurations.

Of the applicant's three proposed alternatives, only Alternative #3 comes close to the Board's request. Alternative #3 proposes aluminum clad wood casement windows by Marvin. However, as proposed, these replacement windows would have sandwich muntins and would be used only on the front of the house. Sandwich muntins, which are encased in the glass and have a flat, unrealistic appearance, are clearly discouraged by the *Design Guidelines* (Windows - Page 2).

Staff believes that, due to house's location at some remove from the public right-of-way, true divided light windows would not be necessary. However, Staff does believe that simulated divided light windows are necessary to more accurately replicate the three-dimensional appearance of the original windows. As the applicant uses the term "simulated divided light" loosely in the submitted materials, using it interchangeably with sandwich grid, Staff here provides the definition of simulated divided light as it is understood by BAR Staff and the Board:

Simulated divided light glazing systems give the appearance of true divided light while using a single sheet of insulated glass within each sash. Spacer bars in an aluminum, mill finish color are installed within the insulating glass unit. Then, wood or aluminum muntin grids are adhered to the exterior of the insulating glass unit and unfinished wood muntin grids are typically adhered to the interior of the unit. Together these bars create the illusion of true divided lights. The muntin grids are similar in profile to true muntins and are raised from the glass.

Staff notes that Marvin, the manufacturer cited in Alternative #3, makes a simulated divided light casement window with 7/8 inch muntins. In addition to the "Casemaster" window type cited by the applicant, Marvin makes a paired casement, called the "French Casemaster." The French Casemaster would be required for several of the window openings at 1308 Michigan Avenue to replicate the original double casement window configuration. To conclude, Staff believes the Marvin aluminum clad wood casement window with simulated divided lights with either wood or aluminum exterior muntins is an acceptable replacement window for the existing vinyl windows. However, given the visibility of the north side of the house from the Michigan Avenue and the rear (west) from Seaport Lane, Staff is of the opinion that all vinyl windows on the front, side and rear of the original house should be replaced by aluminum clad wood windows with simulated divided lights. Staff is willing to accept the retention of the vinyl windows on the one story rear addition. The addition is of a later date and its large windows have a more modern appearance, making the vinyl windows acceptable.

Staff continues to believe the applicant must provide some form of submission showing the proposed configuration for each window prior to final approval. The submission should include scale drawings of the proposed replacement window types and a key showing the location of each window type. As the applicant apparently does not have any pre-replacement photographs of the house at 1308 Michigan Avenue, the original window configurations must be inferred from a study of similar end-unit houses in the development which retain the multi-light steel

windows. Photographs should be provided of the original window that serves as the model for each replacement window type. Staff notes that the larger of the original windows are composed of fixed transoms and operable casements, either single or pairs. Optimally, the fixed and operable combination would be replicated in the replacement window. However, given that the aluminum clad wood window will not be able to fully replicate the delicate proportions of the original steel windows and could become overly bulky if the fixed transom were included, Staff is willing to forgo the exact replication of a combination fixed and operable window for a simpler multi-light casement configuration that closely approximates the number and arrangement of panes and the single or double casement configuration of the original window.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends the following:

1. That all windows on the front, side and rear of the house (excluding the one story rear addition) be replaced with aluminum clad wood casement windows with simulated divided lights (as defined in this report) that replicate the appearance of the original windows as closely as possible;
2. That by April 2, 2005, the applicant submit to BAR Staff a detailed proposal indicating the configuration of each new window for approval prior to placing the order;
3. That the approved replacement windows be installed by July 2, 2005.

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.”