

Docket Item #13
BAR CASE #2005-0038

BAR Meeting
March 16, 2005

ISSUE: Alterations to previously approved plans

APPLICANT: Steve Stylianoudis and Vallery Vandegrift

LOCATION: 508 North Columbus Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the decks and railings be painted or stained to match the trim color of the house.

ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to previously approved plans for a rear addition to the brick residential rowhouse at 508 North Columbus Street. The applicant has revised the design to include a second story deck and an elevator.

The major change from the previously approved plans is the addition of an elevator at the southern corner of the west (rear) elevation of the proposed new addition. The proposed elevator addition will extend the full height of the addition and approximately 6" beyond. The elevator addition will measure 6'2" in width and 5'4" in depth and will be covered in fiber cement siding to match the rear addition. With the elevator addition, the south wall of 508 North Columbus will extend approximately 6' beyond the end of the house at 506 North Columbus. As a result of the new elevator, the first story deck will be shortened and the spiral stair will be moved from the southern end of the west elevation to the northern end. A previously proposed window on the second story will also be eliminated. The proposed HVAC units will be located underneath the spiral stairs.

A new second story deck will be designed to match the first story deck with simple wood rails. The deck will extend from the north property line to the edge of the elevator and will project approximately 3' from the rear wall. An opening on the second story of the addition, previously shown as a window, has been changed to a door to access the deck. According to the architect, the door will be a multi-light wood door with simulated divided lights, matching those previously approved for the first story.

One further alteration is the addition of a parapet to serve as a firewall along the north side wall of the addition and above the party wall between the addition at 508 and at 510 North Columbus Street. According to the architect, the parapet height is 14".

The owner also owns 510 North Columbus Street and is seeking approval of alterations to previously approved plans for that property as well.

The rear of the house is visible from Alfred Street as well from as the public alley behind the property.

HISTORY:

508 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. 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 building has had minor alterations over the years, including new windows, doors and stoop. Recently, the Board approved new plans for a rear addition (BAR Case #2005-0002/3, 2/2/05).

ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements. Staff notes that the rear yard may not be used for parking as to do so would reduce the open space below the minimum requirement of 800 square feet.

Staff believes the proposed alterations are acceptable. The previously approved additions for 508 and 510 North Columbus Street were mirror images of each other and had the potential to read as one single elevation on the rear. While the proposed addition of the elevator does not, in the opinion of Staff, improve the appearance of the rear elevation, it does force different treatments for each building, so that they now read more clearly as two distinct buildings. The elevator addition is intended to enhance the usefulness of the house for the new owners who will occupy the house. It is treated as a simple utilitarian appendage.

While open decks tend to be suburban in character and thus are generally not appropriate in the historic district, the Board has often approved decks in connection with new additions and areas with limited visibility. Based on the prevalence of this architectural feature, its simple design and its limited visibility at the rear of the house, Staff believes that the proposed second story deck is acceptable. However, Staff does believe that the decks and railings should be painted or stained to match the trim color of the house.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the decks and railings be painted or stained to match the trim color of the house.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 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 skylights within setback distance.

- 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-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-7 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-8 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-9 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

- C-10 The handicapped elevator must comply with the requirements of USBC Chapter 11 and related requirements of the USBC.

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.