

Docket Item # 11
BAR CASE #2004-0294

BAR Meeting
January 4, 2006

ISSUE: Alterations to previously approved plans

APPLICANT: 601 South Washington Street, LLC by William Cromley

LOCATION: 601 South Washington Street

ZONE: CL/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following condition:

1. That an HVAC enclosure be built around the HVAC unit at the rear and that Staff review and approve the plans prior to construction.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for after-the-fact alterations to the previously approved plans for changes to the two story brick building at the southwest corner of Washington Street and Gibbon Street. The project, which involved alterations on the rear (west) and south side elevations was approved by the Board on October 20, 2004 (BAR Case #s 2004-0221 & 222). The project was completed in 2005. Staff noted several minor changes to the approved plans when inspecting the project for the Certificate of Occupancy. The changes, which are confined to the rear (west) and south side elevations, are discussed below:

Rear elevation:

Exterior stairs - The original drawings showed the exterior metal stairs as a straight run. However, as constructed there is a switchback and landing near the bottom of the stairs, adjacent to the north property line.

Door at top of stairs - The original drawings appeared to show a fully glazed door at the top of the stairs. However, when Staff sought clarification from the applicant about the door type, the applicant described the proposed door as a four-panel wood door and this description was included in the 2004 Staff report. This door is now a flush metal door with no window.

HVAC enclosure - The original drawing indicated that the existing painted board HVAC enclosure would remain. Apparently, the enclosure was removed during construction of the rear stairs and was not rebuilt.

New first story window - The original drawings showed an existing metal door on the right side of the building to be removed and replaced with a window, but did not provide any information about the window type. When Staff sought clarification on the window type, the applicant described the window as a single glazed, six-over-six, wood window with true divided lights to match the existing windows and this description was included in the 2004 Staff report. As constructed, the window is double glazed rather than single glazed. However, according to the applicant, it is a true divided-light window.

New first story door - The original drawings appeared to show a fully glazed door on the south end of the elevation in place of an existing, non-functioning metal door. When Staff sought clarification on the door type, the applicant described the door as a four-panel wood door and this description was included in the 2004 Staff report. As constructed, the existing metal door was retained, rather than replaced.

South side elevation:

The original drawings showed three new openings on the south elevation: a door on the first story to the left of an existing door and two windows directly above the doors. A note on the drawing stated that the windows would be “wood windows to match existing single glazed true divided lights.” As constructed, the new door and windows match the existing in all respects except that they are double glazed instead of single glazed. According to the applicant, they are true-divided light windows.

The rear (west) and south sides and are visible from Gibbon and Washington Streets respectively.

II. HISTORY:

The building at 601 South Washington Street was originally two buildings, 601 and 603 South Washington Street. At least a portion of the Italianate style buildings may date from before 1877. They long served as a grocery and residence and most recently functioned as an antique shop. Over the years, the buildings have undergone a variety of alterations, most significantly in 1964, when the storefront windows were added and the buildings were combined into a single commercial building.

On October 20, 2004, the Board approved as submitted the applications for demolition and alterations as part of a project to convert the building from retail to office use (BAR Case #s 2005-0221 & 0222).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed alterations are generally acceptable. The applicant has explained that the alteration to the design of the exterior stairs was necessary to meet building code requirements. The switchback at the bottom does not substantially alter the appearance for this feature. The *Design Guidelines* state that single glazed true divided light windows are the “preferred window type,” with double glazed true divided light windows being an “acceptable window type.” (Windows - page 2) The applicant maintains that the new windows are true-divided light rather than simulated divided light. While Staff believes that single glazed true divided light windows would have been a better match for the existing windows, the new double-glazed windows do not have a significantly different appearance from the existing windows. In addition, they are located on secondary elevations and in new rather than historic openings. While Staff would prefer the wood four-panel doors that were specified in the 2004 report, the use of the flush metal doors is acceptable on this rear elevation. The applicant has explained that the door at the top of the stairs must be metal to meet building code requirements. The door on the first story was simply retained rather than replaced.

On the other hand, Staff believes the HVAC screen should be rebuilt. The *Design Guidelines* state that:

HVAC equipment which must be located in the front or in a visually prominent area of a

building should be screened. HVAC equipment screening should be painted so that it does not detract from the architecture of the building. (HVAC equipment - page 2).

The HVAC unit is readily visible from Gibbon Street and was screened prior to the start of the project. Staff believes a painted wood board enclosure similar to the previous enclosure is acceptable, but would be willing to consider any other appropriate screen the applicant might propose.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following condition:

1. That an HVAC enclosure be built around the HVAC unit at the rear and that Staff review and approve the plans prior to construction.

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. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.

- C-2 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-3 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-4 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.

Historic Alexandria:

No comment.