

**BAR Case# 2006-0070**  
**April 19, 2006**

Docket Item # 9  
BAR CASE #2006-0070

BAR Meeting  
April 19, 2006

**ISSUE:** Demoliton/encapsulation

**APPLICANT:** Robert Bentley Adams

**LOCATION:** 513 S. Fairfax Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish for partial demolition and capsulation at the back of the two story brick house at 513 South Fairfax Street to allow for the construction of a two story rear addition and an extension at the attic level. The existing circa 1910 rear addition will be partially demolished. That which will remain of this addition will be capsulated by the new addition. The proposed new two story addition will result in the capsulation and/or demolition of the entire rear wall of the 19<sup>th</sup> century main block.

Approximately 2/3 of this rear wall was already capsulated by the circa 1910 addition. Lastly, the proposed new third story addition will entail the demolition of approximately 1/2 of the rear slope of the gable roof of the 19<sup>th</sup> century main block.

The house backs up to the Safeway building in the 500 block of South Royal Street. The alley behind the house is private and there is a 7' high brick wall at the back of the property. Views to the rear of the house are very limited.

**II. HISTORY:**

According to Ethelyn Cox in Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street, the two story brick house at 513 South Fairfax Street was constructed circa 1817 along with its twin, 511 South Fairfax Street. The modest two bay brick federal townhouses retain a high degree of integrity on the street facade. Based on historic mapping, the current two story rear brick ell at 513 South Fairfax Street appears to have been constructed between 1907 and 1912. The twin at 511 South Fairfax Street was extended to the rear before 1907 and then again more recently. In 1967, the Board approved the restoration of the windows at 513 South Fairfax Street (7/12/67). Staff could not locate any other approvals for this property.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinances requirements.

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic

place or area of historic interest in the city?

(6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

This request for demolition presents a difficult dilemma. Staff believes Criteria 1, 3 & 5 may be applicable. The c. 1910 rear addition is largely unaltered and is a good example of brick construction and of the rear ell form at the turn-of-the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rear wall and rear slope of the gable roof of the c.1817 main block contribute to the form of the building which is representative of Alexandria's early history. According to the *Design Guidelines*, "[t]he Boards actively seek to retain the existing historic fabric of the historic districts and strongly discourage the demolition of any portion of an 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century structure." (Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 3). On the other hand, the building is modest in character and the rear of the building was not designed to be on public view and is therefore even more utilitarian in character. Due to the existing large additions on either side, at 511 and 517 South Fairfax Street and the presence of the Safeway building to the west, the rear of the house is not readily visible from any public right-of-way and thus can not be appreciated by the public.

Lastly, Staff notes that, according to the *Guidelines*, "the Boards are also sympathetic to the needs of building owners to make contemporary 20<sup>th</sup> century use of a property." (Demolition - Page 1). The existing house is relatively small, even by historic district standards. The existing rear ell is extremely narrow: 9.4' where it joins the main block, widening to 12.8' at the back, limiting its utility according to the architect.

Given the mitigating factors of the lack of visibility of the rear of the house, the small size of the house and narrowness of the lot, Staff reluctantly recommends approval of proposed demolition and capsulation, acknowledging that to do so will obliterate any remaining historic integrity at the rear of the building.

Staff notes that the Board recently approved demolition/capsulation of similar extent for other small early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings such as those at 605 South St. Asaph Street (BAR Case #2005-0088, 6/1/2005), 508 North Columbus Street (BAR Case #2005-0002, 2/2/2005) and 510 North Columbus Street (BAR Case #2004-00067, 7/21/2004).

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 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 be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Historic Alexandria:

The proposed re-design of the facade, especially the lower elevation, is incompatible with the early 19<sup>th</sup> century date of the house- too elaborate with railings, lattice, double stoop steps and doors.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 Tax records indicate the presence of free African American households on this street face in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but the exact addresses are unknown. According to *Historic Alexandria, Virginia, Street by Street* by Ethelyn Cox, the house on this property probably dates to around 1817, when the lot was purchased by Levi Pickering. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities, perhaps relating to African Americans, in 19<sup>th</sup>-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 all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

R-1 City Code Section 8-122 requires that roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services.

R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity.

- R-3 Any improvements to the city rightof-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design.
- C-1 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T & ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)
- C-2 Roof drains and sub-surface drains shall be connected to the city storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. (Sec. 8-1-22)
- C-3 Change in point of attachment or removal of existing overhead utility services will require undergrounding or a variance. (Sec. 5-3-3)