

**ISSUE:** Addition and alterations

**APPLICANT:** St. Paul's Episcopal Church

**LOCATION:** 228 S. Pitt Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends:

1. Deferral for restudy of the new Duke Street entrance at Wilmer Hall;
2. Deferral of new two story bay window at Wilmer Hall;
3. Elimination of the proposed changes to the Pitt Street entrance at Wilmer Hall;
4. Deferral for restudy of the trash room door at Wilmer Hall;
5. Deferral for restudy of the door of the proposed addition; and,
6. Elimination of the proposed metal louvers for the basement windows at Damascus House;

If the Board should approve the plans, Staff recommends that the approval include the following conditions:

1. That the BAR approval is conditioned upon approval of an encroachment ordinance by the Planning Commission and City Council;
2. That the BAR Approval is conditioned upon approval of the Special Use Permit to waive the required off-street parking by the Planning Commission and City Council;
3. That the applicant not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology; and,
4. That the notes below be included in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will provide on-site inspections to record significant finds.

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.

(Insert sketch here)

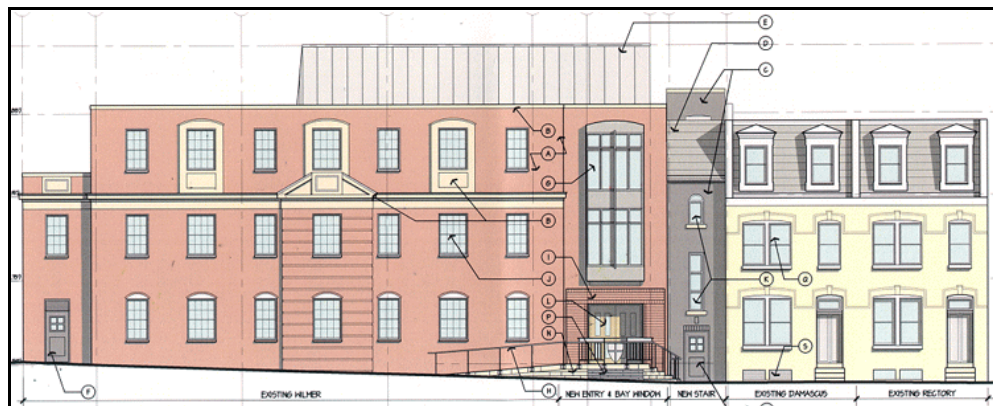
NOTE: Docket item #8 must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a number of alterations at Wilmer Hall, an education building located to the south of St. Paul's Episcopal Church sanctuary on Pitt Street and for an elevator and stair tower addition between Wilmer Hall and Damascus House, a former residence now used for church meeting space and located at 413 Duke Street. The work is part of a major renovation of those two facilities intended to improve functioning and gain handicapped accessibility. The proposed work is described in greater detail below:



**Figure 1 South Pitt Street elevation**



**Figure 2 Duke Street elevation**

**Wilmer Hall** - A new entrance will be created on the south side of the building facing Duke Street in the easternmost bay. The existing window and arched entrance vestibule will be replaced with a new, larger accessible entrance. According to the drawings, the new entranceway will have a brick surround and, recessed approximately 4' from the face of the building, a pair of wood and glass doors in a metal frame. The doors each have four rectangular lights. According to the architect, there will be down lighting within the recessed area in front of the doors. The fixtures will not be visible. The new entranceway will be accessed by both a handicapped ramp

and a set of stairs. The ramp will extend along the south wall of the building, approaching the entranceway from the west. It will be approximately 18' long, 4' wide and will have a 1/12 slope. The walls of the ramp will be faced in limestone, with a section of stacked slate in front of the doors. According to the architect, the surface of the ramp will be limestone. There will be recessed lighting in the wall for the ramp. The steps, will share the landing with the handicapped ramp and will approach the landing from the east. Like the ramp, the steps will be of limestone. A grey painted metal railing will extend along the ramp, across the landing and down the stairs. The railing will consist of widely spaced plain pickets on the ramp and more closely spaced pickets with a curved terminus on the steps. The segment of railing in front of the doors will have more detail, including a centered Episcopal shield.

A new two story metal bay window is proposed for the second and third stories above the new entrance bay. This new window will replace a tripartite Palladian style wood window on the second story and a six-over-six wood window in the third story. The bay will project approximately 3' from the face of the building. It will be approximately 7.5' wide and 20.5' tall. The bay will have a rounded top and rectangular panels below the windows on the second and third stories. The steel window unit will be manufactured by Hope's Windows and will consist of groupings of four vertical sections with four transoms above. The center mullion and top rail will project slightly forming a subtle cross form. The sides of the bay will have narrow double hung windows at each story. The window unit will have a grey finish. The applicant has provided a material sample for the bay window unit which will be available at the hearing.

A new doorway will be inserted in the westernmost bay of the south wall facing Duke Street on the first story where there is now a window. The doorway, which will be off of a trash room, will consist of a grey painted metal door with metal louvers above. The door will have a four-light window with sandblasted glass and a panel below.

The existing primary entrance on the west side of the building facing Pitt Street will be altered. The paired wood paneled doors will be removed and replaced with a 3' wide single leaf paneled wood door with fixed panels on either side. The existing diamond-paned transom will be replaced with a new clear glass transom. The existing double doors and transom are as designed by Smith and shown on in the detail sheet A-9 of the 1955 drawings.

The existing double hung, true divided light, wood windows will be replaced with new double hung, simulated divided light, wood windows to match the existing in size and configuration. According to the architect, the windows will be Heritage Series windows by Kolbe and Kolbe. These windows have an aluminum exterior muntin bar with a width of 5/8".

As part of the renovation, a new HVAC system will be installed. A roof top unit (RTU), anticipated to be approximately 8' tall, and ductwork will be located on the roof of Wilmer Hall, toward the northeast corner. The equipment will be screened by an 9' high screen wall clad in

grey standing seam metal. The screen wall will extend around all four sides of the equipment area, with a opening on the north side toward the east end. The wall will be slanted in toward the top approximately 5 degrees on the north, west and south sides. Due to space constraints, the wall will not be slanted on the east side. The screen will be 33' back from the front (west) wall, 8' back from the north wall and 5' back from the south walls of the building.

**Damascus Hall** - The existing basement level windows are currently covered with wood panels. Painted metal louvers will be placed in these openings.

**Addition** - A new three story elevator and stair tower will be constructed in the private alleyway between Wilmer Hall and Damascus House. The 32' long addition will fill the full width of the approximately 7.5' wide alley. It will be set back approximately 2' from the face of Wilmer Hall and slightly more from the face of Damascus House. Only the south facade of the addition, facing Duke Street, will be visible from the public right-of-way. The addition will be clad in brick which will be painted grey. It will have mansard-like roof form. The ridge line of this roof will be even with that of the mansard roof at Damascus House. The roof will be clad in grey metal shingles similar to those on Damascus House. The elevator shaft will rise approximately 9' above the ridge this roof, but is not likely to be readily visible from Duke Street as it will be set back approximately 23' from the face of the addition. The addition will have a grey painted metal door with a panel in the lower part and four lights above. The lights will be sandblasted glass. There will be a long window with three parts in the second story and an arched window above in the third story. These will be wood windows and appear to be fixed.

## **II. HISTORY:**

As discussed in docket item #8, St. Paul's Church was founded in 1809. The Gothic Revival style church building at 228 South Pitt Street was constructed in 1817-1818 according to plans by Benjamin Latrobe. Wilmer Hall was constructed at the corner of South Pitt and Duke Streets in 1955 according to plans by Delos H. Smith. The three story brick faced education building mixes liturgical symbolism and Colonial Revival details with a more modern aesthetic. Damascus House, located at 413 Duke Street, a two story brick building with a third story in the mansard, attained its present appearance circa 1905.

On February 10, 1955, the Board of Architectural Review approved the design for Wilmer Hall, the new educational building, as well as the design for the arcade and courtyard between Wilmer and the sanctuary and renovations to Norton Hall. A number of other relatively minor projects including signs, fencing and handicapped accessibility have been approved by the Board for St. Paul's over the years.

## **III. ANALYSIS:**

The subject property is zoned RM, residential. The proposed addition and alterations comply

with the zoning ordinance requirements conditioned upon the approval of a special use permit to waive required parking and an encroachment ordinance for the bay window, steps and ramp located in the public right-of way.

The applicant is required to obtain a special use permit approval to waive the required off-street parking because the improvements to the church will exceed 33 1/3 percent of the assessed value of the church. This case (SUP2006-0038) is scheduled for the July 6, 2006 Planning Commission hearing.

The new steps, handicapped ramp and bay window facing Duke Street are located in the public right-of-way and will require City Council approval of an encroachment ordinance. The encroachment case (ENC2006-00001) is scheduled for the June 6, 2006 Planning Commission hearing.

Section 3-1106(B) of the zoning ordinance requires each residential lot to provide open and usable space in the amount of 35 percent of the lot or amount existing on June 24, 1992. The subject property is below the 35 percent requirement (8, 239.7 square feet) and is allowed to count all existing open space on the lot, calculated at 5,198 square feet. The proposed elevator and stair tower addition is located in an area of less than 8 feet in width. Applicants are permitted to build into open space less than 8 feet in width without diminishing complying open space (defined as 8 feet by 8 feet in minimum dimension).

Section 6-403(B) of the zoning ordinance requires that all mechanical equipment be concealed by exterior architectural materials or features of the same type and quality used on the exterior walls of the building.

Staff believes the project goals are appropriate. The addition and alterations seek to upgrade the historic facility to allow for more efficient functioning well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and do so with relatively minimal intervention. Staff's major concern is with the addition of the two story bay window and the unwarranted prominence given to the Duke Street entrance through the cumulative weight of alterations concentrated in this area. This and other minor concerns are discussed in detail below.

**Wilmer Hall entrance alterations**- Staff believes the new wider entranceway with combined steps and handicapped ramp is an appropriate solution to provide accessibility for Wilmer Hall. This should allow the Pitt Street entrance, which was designed as the primary entrance, to remain unaltered. Staff also believes this new entrance should not usurp the design prominence of the Pitt Street entrance and should be residential in character to relate to the character of the blockface which is entirely composed of single family dwellings, with the exception of Wilmer Hall. In addition, the entrance should be compatible with the relatively small-scale Colonial inspired detailing of Wilmer Hall. As currently designed, the entranceway is both too prominent

and too institutional in character. The wide brick surround of the new entrance is massive and modern in its appearance. The shield motif in the railing and slate embellishment in the ramp wall together with the new bay window above further serves to accentuate the prominence of this new entrance and give it an institutional appearance. Staff recommends:

- Redesign of the brick surround;
- Elimination of the shield motif in the railing; and,
- Use of a single material, preferably limestone in the ramp wall.

Therefore, Staff recommends restudy of the entrance design and notes that the approval of the new ramp and stairs must be conditioned on the approval of an encroachment ordinance by City Council.

**Wilmer Hall bay window** - Staff finds the proposed new two story metal window to be visually overwhelming and incompatible with the building and surrounding residential neighborhood. The metal window appears overscaled in relation to the domestic sized, multi-light, wood windows of Wilmer Hall. There is no similar use of metal on this building or neighboring buildings. The wide and flat metal frame and flat metal panels of the bay window are incompatible with the relatively fine scale and varied textures of Wilmer Hall and its neighbors, which include a number of high style, mid-19th dwellings with richly detailed door surrounds, window hoods and cornices (see 414, 416 and 418 Duke Street). The proposed extensive reworking of the second and third stories together with the changes to the entrance on the first story results in a totally new appearance in this easternmost bay to the extent that it could easily appear to the uninformed observer as an addition, rather than part of the original design.

Staff is concerned that the entry way alterations and the introduction of the new bay window are the imposition of a modernist aesthetic into an 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century core area of the historic district and an unwarranted accretion to a work of ecclesiastical architecture that established the Gothic Revival in this country. As Dell Upton at the University of Virginia, one of the premier architectural historians of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, reminds us in a recent article: "...modernist architects deny symbolic function while seeking meaning in an unacknowledged way, through their 'heroic and original' expressivist massing. But such abstract architecture is barren because it rejects architecture's rich heritage of symbolically charged conventional forms (meaning applied visual elements) that tap into deeply rooted social and cultural references and associations." (Dell Upton, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Visible Language," [www.looksmartgradschools.com](http://www.looksmartgradschools.com) 2003).

This is exactly what staff fears is happening with this proposal for modifications to Wilmer Hall. The past is being deliberately left behind and the symbolic ramifications of the existing architecture are being wholly ignored. The new entry way and bay window are, in the view of staff, merely utilitarian without a concomitant layering of historicism of either the city, this



church or the denomination. Staff believes that more needs to be accomplished through references to the rich past of the historic district in the design of both the new entry and the proposed bay window. The Wilmer Hall as designed by Smith clearly was part of the “rich heritage” of symbolism that Upton makes reference to. The modernist expression of the bay window is the “expressivist massing” decried by Upton that turns its back on the associational richness of the historic district through its use of an abstracted, reductivist design. The proposed production type metal storefront material of the bay window is the type of window that one would generally expect on K Street, N.W. rather than in the midst of a block with brick buildings with punched windows. Further, the extroverted commercial machine made form of the metal bay window is severely at odds with the traditional hand assembled buildings of the immediate vicinity and, indeed, the overall historic district. The bay window does not appear to be anchored to the earth but rather to float away from the stolid buildings of this blockface and the intentions of Smith in the design of Wilmer Hall.

Staff recommends that the two story bay be eliminated or at least substantially revised including the materials, overall scale and scale of the component elements to be more compatible with Wilmer Hall and its neighbors. Staff notes that a projecting bay on this facade will require the approval of an encroachment ordinance by City Council.

**Wilmer Hall window replacement** - Staff has no objection to the proposed replacement of the existing 50 year old windows, providing the replacement windows closely replicate the appearance of the existing windows. The Board’s *Design Guidelines* discourage the use of simulated divided light windows on windows that are readily visible from the public way, as is the case here (Windows - page 2). However, the Board has been somewhat more flexible in approving the use of simulated divided light windows for more recent buildings. Staff does note the relatively recent date of construction for Wilmer Hall (1955) and suggests that simulated divided light windows may be acceptable in this instance.

**Wilmer Hall rooftop HVAC and screening**- Staff understands the need for the installation of a modern HVAC system and is pleased that the multiple window air conditioning units in Wilmer Hall will be eliminated by this upgrade. On the other hand Staff finds the rooftop alterations unfortunate. At the request of Staff, the applicant worked to reduce the footprint of the HVAC area and Staff believes that it is now as minimal as possible. As noted above, Section 6-403(B) of the zoning ordinance requires that all mechanical equipment to be concealed by exterior architectural materials or features of the same type and quality used on the exterior walls of the building. The ordinance also allows the Board to waive this requirement if it determines no screening to be more appropriate. In this case, Staff believes screening is preferable to no screening, given the size of the mechanical units. Staff does not believe the use of an architectural screen that is more closely related to the material and style of the building, such as a brick wall, would be a better solution. A 9' high brick wall would be more noticeable than the proposed grey metal which will visually recede into the sky. Therefore, Staff believes the HVAC

and screening as proposed are acceptable. Staff does encourage the architect to continue to attempt to shrink the footprint of the HVAC area and lower the height of the screen wall, if at all possible.

**Wilmer Hall west end door** - Staff has no objection to the proposed alteration of a single window at the west end of the south facade to a door. Staff does recommend the use of a more compatible door. The metal door with four lights as proposed is a modern, utilitarian door type and is not acceptable for such a prominent location on a traditionally detailed building. Staff recommends that the door be a wood paneled door without lights or with a light pattern that is compatible with the Colonial Revival style.

**Wilmer Hall front entrance** - Staff recommends that the existing double doors and diamond-pane transom which are original to the building and as designed by Smith, should be retained if at all possible. If not possible, the replacement elements should match the existing as closely as possible.

**Elevator and stair tower addition**

Staff has no major objection to the proposed addition. The footprint and height of the addition have been kept to the minimum required to fulfill the desired function. The addition is set back slightly from the faces of the adjoining building and is respectful in its design. The materials and massing of the addition relate to the residential architecture of the block, particularly to the adjacent Damascus house at 413 Duke Street. However, Staff does recommend the use of a more compatible door. The metal door with four lights as proposed is a modern, utilitarian door type and is not acceptable for this addition in this location. Staff recommends that the door be one that is appropriate to the late Victorian design traditions referenced by the addition, such as a four panel wood door or a half glazed paneled wood door.

**Damascus House windows**

Staff recommends that the metal louvers be eliminated from the proposed plans for Damascus House. Preferably, the basement windows should be restored. If that is not possible, they should be left as they are until such a time as they can be restored.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Therefore, Staff recommends:

1. Deferral for restudy of the new Duke Street entrance at Wilmer Hall;
2. Deferral of new two story bay window at Wilmer Hall;
3. Elimination of the proposed changes to the Pitt Street entrance at Wilmer Hall; and,
4. Deferral for restudy of the trash room door at Wilmer Hall;

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5. Deferral for restudy of the door of the proposed addition; and,
6. Elimination of the proposed metal louvers for the basement windows at Damascus House;

If the Board should approve the plans, Staff recommends that the approval include the following conditions:

1. That the BAR approval is conditioned upon approval of an encroachment ordinance by the Planning Commission and City Council;
2. That the BAR Approval is conditioned upon approval of the Special Use Permit to waive the required off-street parking by the Planning Commission and City Council;
3. That the applicant not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology; and,
4. That the notes below be included in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will provide on-site inspections to record significant finds.

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.

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 taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-3 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- 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 Required exits and facilities shall be accessible for persons with disabilities.

Historic Alexandria:

St. Paul's is a significant structure, designed by Benjamin Latrobe and built in 1817 after a Gothic Revival style. Proposed plans for an ADA ramp near the sanctuary seem appropriate. Although plans for the new entry on Duke Street have a contemporary appearance, they seem compatible with the simplicity of the original design.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Designed by architect Benjamin Latrobe, St. Paul's Church was constructed on this lot in 1817. During the Civil War, the property was used as a hospital by the Union army. The property contained a mess house, dead house, pump (well), two sinks (privies), a wood house, and the surgeon's quarters. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into religious activities in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Alexandria and into military use during the war. However, the ground disturbance associated with this project is minimal, and there has been previous disturbance

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associated with expansions of the church. None of the known resources on the lot are located in the areas of the proposed ground disturbance.

- 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 Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will provide on-site inspections to record significant finds.
- R-3 The applicant should not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
- R-4 The above statements in R-1, R-2, and R-3 must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.