

Docket Item # 12
BAR CASE #2006-0081

BAR Meeting
May 17, 2006

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Robert R. Poulin
LOCATION: 426 Wolfe Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the proposed smooth Hardiplank siding with the condition that the nails not show in the installation.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement siding for the side walls (east and west) and rear wall (south) of the two story frame addition at the rear of the house. The proposed replacement siding is beaded smooth fiber cement siding with a 7" exposure. The applicant has specified Hardiplank as the manufacturer of the fiber cement siding. The new siding will be painted the same putty/gray color as the current siding.

The rear of the house at 426 Wolfe Street is visible from the public alley at the rear. A wood fence obscures the lower portion of the first story.

II. HISTORY:

Staff research has shown that the row of buildings at 416-430 Wolfe Street was designed by George T. Santmyers in 1928 (Building Permit #745, 3/12/28). Santmyers was one of the most important architects of residential buildings in the metropolitan area during the 1920s, 30s and 40s. He designed literally thousands of individual rowhouses in Washington, DC and hundreds of apartment buildings in Washington, Montgomery and Prince Georges County. He was one of the principal architects for Harry Wardman as he developed residential complexes in numerous areas of the District of Columbia. In addition, Santmyers designed a number of shopping centers in an Art Deco style on Georgia Avenue as well as in southeast Washington. Santmyers' residential buildings often display a veritable signature - a brick soldier course separating the ground level from the first story. Such is the case with this rowhouse at 424 Wolfe Street.

The 1931 Sanborn map shows the row from 416 to 428 Wolfe Street to have two story porches of identical dimensions in the rear. Ten years later, in the 1941 Sanborn map, the porches remain the same size, but a number, including that at 426 Wolfe Street have been enclosed.

On July 21, 1972, the Board approved aluminum siding at the rear of 426 Wolfe Street. On two subsequent occasions, the Board approved alterations at 426 Wolfe Street (BAR Case #'s 88-137, 8/10/1988 and 89-127, 8/9/89). The minutes do not specify the nature of these alterations. On June 16, 2004, the Board approved the installation of fiber cement siding and replacement windows at the rear of the adjacent house at 424 Wolfe Street (BAR Case #2006-0081).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed replacement siding complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed alterations are acceptable. Although the structure of the rear frame section of the house probably dates to 1928, it has clearly undergone numerous alterations over the years, including at least one approved by the Board (aluminum siding). Originally the porch was open and it is not known what cladding was used when it was enclosed sometime between 1931 and 1941. Furthermore the rear of the house is removed a substantial distance from the public alley. Given the distance involved, the fiber cement siding is not likely to be

distinguishable from wood versions of the same.

The Board has reviewed a number of applications for the use of fiber cement siding in the last several years and has adopted the following policy with respect to the product:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
5. That smooth (not wood grained) siding be installed.
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Staff believes the use of fiber cement siding at the rear of 426 Wolfe Street would not be contrary to the policy. The application specifies smooth siding. Thus, the only remaining condition is #4 above, that the nails not be visible.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed smooth Hardiplank siding with the condition that the nails not show in the installation.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

“No comments.”

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”