

Docket Item #6
BAR CASE #2006-0213

BAR Meeting
October 18, 2006

ISSUE: Demolition and capsulation

APPLICANT: St. Paul's Episcopal Church

LOCATION: 228 S. Pitt Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

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

BAR CASE #2006-0213
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(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate portions of Norton Hall and the main sanctuary of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, on South Pitt Street. The proposed demolition and encapsulation is related to proposed alterations to enclose the existing light well or garth located between Norton Hall and the main sanctuary of St. Paul's Church.

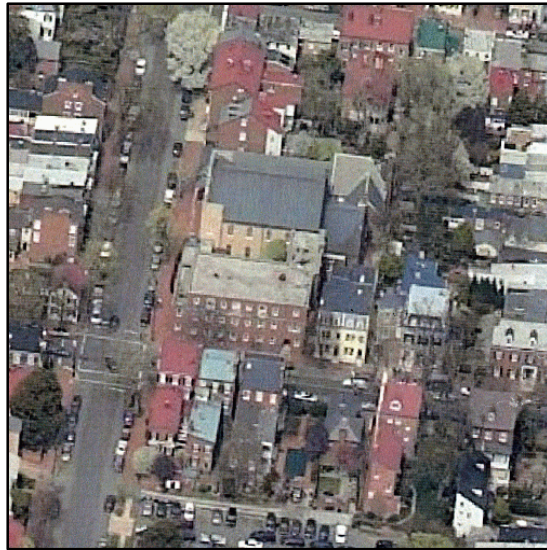


Figure 1 Aerial view of St. Paul's Church looking north

The proposed demolition includes the following: the partial demolition of the exterior east wall of the connector between the main sanctuary and Norton Hall to allow for greater access and new ADA ramps into the proposed enclosed light well area, removing the brick within the arch on the exterior west wall to allow access into the garth from the main entry area of Norton Hall, partial demolition of the south slope of the existing hipped roof of Norton Hall, facing the garth and the construction of a new dormer and gutter system, and the encapsulation of the north wall of the main sanctuary facing the garth, with a new glazing roofing system, which will enclose the light well or garth.

The alterations are proposed in order to convert the underutilized light well or garth area between Norton Hall and the main sanctuary to a more functional, enclosed space, with new ADA ramps and stairs. The light well is not visible from any public rights-of-way. The proposed alterations, including the new sloping glazed roof and the new gable on Norton Hall, will only be minimally visible from South Pitt Street.

II. HISTORY:

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. It has been described by Talbot Hamlin as the first Gothic Revival structure in the United States.

Norton Hall, located to the north of the sanctuary, was built in 1899 and expanded and renovated in 1955 and again in 1986. Wilmer Hall was constructed at the corner of South Pitt and Duke Streets in 1955 according to plans by Delos H. Smith. 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 demolition of an unnamed building and the old rectory at 417 Duke Street to allow for the construction of Wilmer Hall and approved the design for the new educational building as well as the design for the arcade and courtyard between Wilmer and the sanctuary and renovations to Norton Hall. Past reviews by the Board for the St. Paul's property concern signs and a fence (sign, 3/20/1974; sign, BAR Case #89-137, 8/9/1989; fence, BAR Case #86-197, 11/19/1986). The South Pitt Street facade was resurfaced and exterior accessibility modifications were approved by the Board in 1997 (BAR Case #97-0121, 6/18/1997).

More recently, in 1996 as part of a major renovation, the Board approved a request for a fence and access ramp for the parish hall and sanctuary (BAR Case #96-0163, 9/18/1996). This ramp was not constructed and an alternative ramp was approved by the Board in 1997 (BAR Case #97-0121, 6/18/1997). Alterations to the transom above the main entry doors to the sanctuary were also approved in 1996 (BAR Case #96-0223, 10/02/1996).

On June 7, 2006, the Board approved a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to Wilmer Hall and the adjacent Damascus House, facing Duke Street (BAR Case #s 2006-0052 and 2006-0053).

III. ANALYSIS:

With respect to demolition, the *Design Guidelines* note that “[t]he Boards are extremely conscious of the need to preserve the existing building resources of the historic districts,” but go on to explain that “the Boards are also sympathetic to the needs of building owners to make contemporary 20th century use of a property.” Recognizing this balance, the *Guidelines* conclude that “[i]t is the policy of the Boards that the absolute minimum demolition of an existing structure should take place” (Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 1).

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?

In the opinion of Staff, both buildings are significant, with the main sanctuary being exceptional due to its association with Benjamin Latrobe. Staff believes that Criteria #s 1 and 6 could be considered to be applicable for both buildings. However, the extent of the proposed demolition/capsulation is relatively minor for both buildings, with most areas to be demolished being on Norton Hall and confined to secondary elevations not readily visible to the public rights-of-way. Furthermore, the fact that the demolition/capsulation is in support of retrofitting the buildings to make them accessible may be considered a mitigating factor.

In respect to the impact on the main sanctuary's north wall, Staff believes the applicant has made significant efforts to minimize the impact of the method of attachment of the new roof system, and primarily impacts the 1955 era pebble gravel stucco exterior.

Staff believes the project meets the recommendation of the Design Guidelines "that the absolute minimum of demolition of an existing structure should take place" (Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 1) and recommends approval of the application.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, 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 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:

No comments were received.