

Docket Item # 7
BAR CASE #2006-0214

BAR Meeting
October 18, 2006

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: St. Paul's Episcopal Church
LOCATION: 228 S. Pitt Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following condition:

1) That the applicant agrees to bring any future alterations to the existing exterior walls of Norton Hall and the main sanctuary to the Board for review and approval.

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: Docket item #6 must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to enclose an exterior light well (referred to as the garth on the drawings) located between the main sanctuary building of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Norton Hall on South Pitt Street. Norton Hall is located to the north of the main building. The exterior light well is not visible from any public rights-of-way. This underutilized space will provide additional internal ADA accessible ramps between Norton Hall and the main sanctuary building. The work is part of a major renovation of church facilities intended to improve functioning and gain handicapped accessibility.

As described in Docket item #6, the propose alterations include the partial demolition of the exterior east wall of the 1955 connector segment between Norton Hall and the sanctuary. This wall is not visible to the public right-of-way. The removal of the wall and the existing concrete slab will allow for new ADA ramps and stairs to be inserted into the space to allow improved circulation between the spaces. As also, mentioned in Docket item #6, the currently enclosed arch on the west wall in the light well will be re-opened, to allow internal circulation from the main entry hall into Norton into the garth area. The major component of the proposed alteration is the enclosing of the light well with a new roofing system and a new gable element to the roof of Norton Hall.

The proposed skylight roof over the light well will be sloped glazing, with clear 1" insulated glass with low E coating. The roofing system will be framed with a matte grey painted aluminum metal. The new roofing will be attached to both the main sanctuary and Norton Hall.

On the main sanctuary, the new roof will be attached to the building below the lintels of the third floor windows. The roof glazing and frame will rest on a continuous 4"x4"X 3/8" bent plate, that will be attached to the exterior of the building using 1/2" x 8" long anchor bolts set in epoxy mortar at 24" on center through the 1955 pebble gravel stucco exterior masonry wall.

The roof will slope towards Norton Hall and will be attached to the building at the new gutter system located beneath the new side gable roof. The new gable roofing will intersect with the existing hipped roof on the south side of the building, facing the light well or garth. Grey metal will be used to clad the dormer. The dormer will have membrane roofing. The gutters will be 8"x8" stainless steel gutters.

The existing HVAC units to the rear of the light well will remain in that general location, but will be raised on a new platform, to accommodate new roofing and insulation. The existing downspouts on the main sanctuary exterior wall will be removed, while the headers will remain.

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II. HISTORY:

As discussed in docket item #6, 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:

The subject property is zoned RM, residential. The proposed alterations, handicapped landings, elevator/stair and rooftop air conditioning complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

The proposed alterations discussed in this report occur primarily within the light well or garth area between the main sanctuary and Norton Hall. The light well itself is not visible from any public rights-of-way. The new roof system will be located below the lintels of the historic windows on the main sanctuary and will be only minimally visible from the public right of way views on South Pitt Street. Similarly, the new roof gable and gutter system on Norton Hall will only be at most minimally visible from South Pitt Street. However, staff is concerned about how the proposed alterations impact the exterior north wall of the main sanctuary, which is a

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component of Latrobe's design. While the current pebble gravel stucco was applied in the 1955 renovations of the church, the historic side window configurations appear to be part of the original Latrobe design. The applicant has made every effort not to impact these character-defining features, by locating the new roofing system between the rows of windows, and particularly below the lintels of the top rows of windows.

One of the central tenets of historic preservation in respect to alterations to historic buildings is to do the minimal which negatively impacts historic fabric. Another consideration is the reversibility factor of the alteration; that is, if the alteration is removed in the future, how will that impact the historic fabric of the building and the integrity of the resource? Staff has discussed with the applicant the method of attaching the roofing system to the main sanctuary and feels that the attachment approach is the most appropriate manner to satisfy the scope of the project while minimally impacting the historic building's integrity.

An additional concern staff has regarding the alterations is that should the alterations be approved, what are now exterior walls on both the main sanctuary and Norton Hall become internal walls, and thus, outside the purview of the Board. Thus, a future project could potentially lead to the demolition of these walls, and not only further diminish the integrity of Latrobe's design on the main sanctuary, but jeopardize the overall historic character of the building.

While staff support's the proposed enclosure of the light well and feels the applicant has gone to great lengths to minimally impact the integrity of the buildings, particularly the main sanctuary, staff is concerned about the possibility of future alterations to the walls of these buildings. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that the applicant agrees to bring any future alterations to the existing exterior walls of Norton Hall and the main sanctuary to the Board for review and approval.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the following condition:

- 1) That the applicant agrees to bring any future alterations to the existing exterior walls of Norton Hall and the main sanctuary to the Board for review and approval.

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.