

Docket Item #4
BAR CASE # 2006-0279

BAR Meeting
March 7, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation

APPLICANT: Andrew Macdonald by Cathleen Curtin

LOCATION: 217 North Columbus Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application for the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate the rear of the house with the following conditions:

1. Large scale 4" x 5" negative black and white record photographs to Historic American Building Survey Standards are to be made of the facade and rear of building as well as interior and exterior of the area to be demolished. These photographs are to be approved by staff prior to the issuance of a building permit. Two sets of these photographs together with the one set of negatives are deposited at both the Special Collections, Alexandria Pubic Library as well as the Alexandria Archives and Record;
2. Measured drawings prepared to Historic American Building Survey Standards of the interior and exterior of the area to be demolished are to be made and approved by staff prior to the issuance of a building permit. The drawings are to be deposited at both the Special Collections, Alexandria Pubic Library as well as the Alexandria Archives and Record; and,
3. Physical design detail elements that are to be removed may be retained by the City of Alexandria to be determined at the discretion of the Director of the Lyceum and deposited in the collections of the Lyceum in consultation with Staff of the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Staff also recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish the garage.

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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 the rear elevation of the residential rowhouse at 217 North Columbus Street in order to permit the construction of a new rear addition and a Permit to Demolish the existing automobile garage at the rear.



Figure 1 - View of east (rear) elevation



Figure 2 - View of garage

II. HISTORY:

217 North Columbus Street is a two story, two bay frame residential rowhouse that was constructed as part of a row of three similar townhouses (215, 217, & 219) in 1886 in a Queen Anne style. The architect for the houses was Glenn Brown. The style of these houses bespeaks Brown's competence working in a variety of popular late 19th century revival style residential design vocabularies. Brown (1854-1932) was an Alexandria native and one of the most influential architects of the early 20th century.

The façade of 217 was altered in 1972 (approved by the Board 9/20/1972). The rowhouse immediately to the south at 215 North Columbus Street was substantially remodeled also in 1972 (approved by the Board 4/19/1972). The architect for both the remodelings was James Wade. The façade of 219 immediately to the north is largely intact from its original construction.

The remodelings of 215 and 217 essentially obliterated the Queen Anne styling of the rowhouses.

At the rear of the property, a one story frame outbuilding that may be the antecedent structure to the present one story brick automobile garage was constructed sometime between 1896-1902 according to information on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. Staff could find no record of BAR review or a building permit for the transformation of the structure from a one story frame shed to a brick automobile garage. However, staff would generally date the construction of this structure from the mid-20th century.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, 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 house?
- (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?

Even though this is a residence constructed in the late 19th century, the construction materials and techniques are not substantially different than those of today. The house thus does not generally fall within the criteria that would prevent the issue of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate. Furthermore, the alley behind these rowhouses is private and the view of the rear of the townhouse and garage is an extremely limited one from the 700 block of Cameron Street on the north side of Christ Church.

Nevertheless, staff believes that this is a significant residential structure within the historic district by one of the most important architects to have worked in Alexandria. It is also one of only a handful of Queen Anne style frame residential buildings in the historic district. The rear is substantially unaltered from its original Queen Anne design origins. It is the work of Glenn Brown and is the only extant frame residential Queen Anne style building designed by Brown of which staff is currently aware.

Based upon the narrow criteria set forth in the ordinance, staff believes that none of the criteria for demolition and encapsulation are met in this instance and that the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate the rear of the house should be granted. Staff, however, believes that the rear deserves recording and that approval of the Permit should include such recording conditions.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application for the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate the rear of the house with the following conditions:

1. Large scale 4" x 5" negative black and white record photographs to Historic American Building Survey Standards are to be made of the facade and rear of building as well as interior and exterior of the area to be demolished. These photographs are to be approved by staff prior to the issuance of a building permit. Two sets of these photographs together with the one set of negatives are deposited at both the Special Collections, Alexandria Public Library as well as the Alexandria Archives and Record;

2. Measured drawings prepared to Historic American Building Survey Standards of the interior and exterior of the area to be demolished are to be made and approved by staff prior to the issuance of a building permit. The drawings are to be deposited at both the Special Collections, Alexandria Public Library as well as the Alexandria Archives and Record; and,
3. Physical design detail elements that are to be removed may be retained by the City of Alexandria to be determined at the discretion of the Director of the Lyceum and deposited in the collections of the Lyceum in consultation with Staff of the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Staff also recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish the garage.

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.

Historic Alexandria:

Request seems appropriate.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 The lot at 217 N. Columbus Street has potential to yield significant archaeological resources. The property is on the city block that contains the Lloyd House, built around 1798 by John Wise at the corner of Queen and Washington Streets. This house was leased to Charles Lee (Attorney General under the administrations of Washington and Adams), James Marshall (brother of Chief Justice John Marshall), and Nicholas Fitzhugh (a circuit court judge) during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the current development lot could contain artifacts associated with these early residents. In 1810, Wise sold the property to Jacob Hoffman, a merchant and former mayor of Alexandria. Hoffman built a sugar refinery and warehouse on the block that fronted on N. Washington Street. The current development lot would have been located in the rear yard of the sugar refinery structures. By 1832, Benjamin Hallowell, a Quaker educator, had adapted the structures for use as the Alexandria Boarding School, which served as a hospital during the Civil War. A Civil War Quartermaster's map shows a dead house and other structures in the vicinity of the development lot.

R-1 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-2 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-3 The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

R-4 The requirements stated in R-1, R-2, and R-3 above, must be included in the General Notes of all site plans, as well as on all site plan sheets that include ground disturbing actions. Additional statements may be required to be included on the Final Site Plans by Alexandria Archaeology.

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- R-1 City Code Section 8-1-22 requires that roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system. The building permit plans shall include information on the location of down spouts and/or sump pump discharge along with connections to a public storm sewer if within 100 feet of the property. If a connection is not available, other approved methods to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services may be used. [Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- 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)