

Docket Item #18
BAR CASE #2007-0060

BAR Meeting
April 18, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition
APPLICANT: Diamond Slaters, LLC.
LOCATION: 800 Slaters Lane
ZONE: RC/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the permit to demolish with the following archaeological conditions:

1. Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (canal stones, 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, and
2. The above statement must appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

(Insert sketch here)

Note: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval to demolish the existing building at 800 Slater's Lane. Once demolished, the space formerly occupied by the building will be open space for a new residential project approved by the Planning Commission on October 4, 2005 (MPA Case #2005-0004, REZ Case #2005-0006, DSP#2005-0002). The residential project will consist of 28 condominium units. The project is designed by Rust Orling Architects.

The new construction component for this project is outside the boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, and not under the purview of the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Architectural Review. However, the building currently located at 800 Slater's Lane was determined to be partially within the boundaries and its proposed demolition would need approval by the Board. From the DSP Report:

“The proposal requires that the existing Nordic Press building be demolished as part of the proposed redevelopment of the site. Because a portion of the building is within 500 feet of the George Washington Parkway, the demolition of the building requires demolition approval by the Board of Architectural Review. The commercial warehouse building, was constructed in the 1950's and has no architectural or historical significance. Consistent with the City's process for development cases where there is a fundamental land use decision such as a rezoning, the applications are first reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council with subsequent approval of the demolition by the Board of Architectural Review.”

II. HISTORY:

The trapezoidal shaped low brick building located at 800 Slater's Lane appears to have been constructed in two periods of construction, with the first being in 1951. At that time, the area at the north end of Alexandria along Slater's Lane, previously known as Poor House Road, included scattered single family dwellings on larger lots. In fact, a dwelling and associated sheds at 810 Poor House Road (later designated 820 Slater's Lane) remained behind the subject building on what is now the west side parking lot through 1958, as shown by the 1941 and 1958 Sanborn mapping. Building permit records (Permit #5110, 5/28/1951) show that the owners of the adjacent Mason Hall Apartments, located at 1420 W. Abingdon Drive, sought to build a one story building on the subject property to be used as a garage for tenants of Mason Hall. When built (c. 1950), Mason Hall was allotted a number of on-street parking slots but these were insufficient to the need, according to a letter dated 2/24/1951 from Frank Koplín, President of Mason Hall Corporation, to P. B. Hall, Director of Planning for the City of Alexandria and included in the permit record. The garage was to provide spaces for 75-100 cars. No drawings are included with the permit record, only the letter, a survey plat and structural calculations.

An inspection of the building clearly shows two periods of construction. The first is a one story building set back 30' along the length of Slater's Lane and matching the footprint of a building shown on a plat in the 1951 permit file. The 1951 letter from Mr. Koplín sought permission from the Board of Zoning Appeals to build to the property line on the Slater's Lane or north side of the building. This request was apparently not granted and the original footprint reflects the required setback. The second period of construction is a two story, 30' wide sliver appended to

the north front of the building along Slater's Lane. This construction appears to have been undertaken several years after the initial construction and was completed by 1958, based on Sanborn mapping. Staff did not locate permit records for this second period of construction, but they may be available on further investigation. Sanborn mapping shows the expanded building to be used for electronics manufacturing and warehousing. It is not clear whether the building was ever used as a garage. Since 1996, the building has housed Nordic Press, a printing business.

Staff could not locate any record of Board of Architectural Review for the property.

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?

In the opinion of Staff, because this is a mid-20th century structure, none of the criteria for demolition are met in this instance. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application. Staff also notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and has included them as a condition.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the permit to demolish with the following archaeological conditions:

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2. The above statement must appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

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:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 Historical maps indicate that this property was adjacent to the Alexandria Canal and that a late 19th-century residence was situated in this vicinity. Although it is likely that previous construction would have destroyed the remains of activities associated with these structures, it is possible that some evidence may remain buried on these lots.

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C-2 The above statement must appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.