

Docket Item # 9
BAR CASE # 2007-0071

BAR Meeting
May 2, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition
APPLICANT: Sergio Rojo
LOCATION: 703 King Street
ZONE: KR/King Retail

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. That the reconstructed wall match the historic configuration and design, including window placement;
2. That the existing historic materials including bricks and sills be salvaged and re-used to the extent possible in the reconstruction; and,
3. That the exterior brick work pattern be replicated to match the existing.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish portions of the rear (north elevation) wall of 703 King Street due to extreme structural issues, and rebuild the wall to the existing configuration. The portion of the wall to be reconstructed is between the second floor up to the roof and between the windows. The applicant has submitted a report from a structural engineer which includes photographs, exterior and interior, demonstrating the problematic areas of the wall. The City's Department of Code Enforcement has declared the building unsafe for occupancy due to the lack of structural stability of the rear exterior wall of the building.

The rear alley behind 703 King Street is a private alley, not a public right-of-way. The north wall is not visible from any public views. Only the Permit to Demolish is under the Board's purview.

The structural engineers have recommended that a portion of the rear wall above, below and between the windows be removed and rebuilt (as shown in Sketch 4 as an attachment). In the engineer's opinion, the existing severe misalignment of the brick coursing above and below the windows is due to settlement, and that reconstruction will reestablish the continuity of the characteristic coursing, reestablish the bond between the three wythes of brick, and provide rectangular openings for the repaired or replaced windows to function properly.

II. HISTORY:

The three story, three bay brick rowhouse at 703 King Street was probably constructed by Benjamin Baden ca. 1816-1817 according to Ethelyn Cox in *Historic Alexandria Street By Street*. As built it was a prototypical early 19th century side hall Alexandria rowhouse with a Flemish bond facade.

In the 20th century, the first floor of the building has been altered a number of times. In 1949 the Board approved adding flanking small metal bay retail windows on either side of the center door. In 1965 the Board approved a new design for the first floor of the building which included the removal of the 15 year old bay windows and infilling the existing openings with brick as well as changes to the entrance threshold. Subsequently, the Board has approved numerous signs for a succession of retail tenants and restaurants that have occupied the first floor of the building. Within the last ten years the Board has approved an awning and signage for a restaurant tenant in 1998 (BAR Case #98-0156, 9/16/98) and in 1996 the Board had approved signage for a previous restaurant (BAR Case #96-0104, 6/5/96).

The Board approved an awning with signage for the current applicant at the public hearing on September 6, 2006. On October 4, 2006 the Board approved alterations to the front of 703 King Street which consisted of two new fixed windows on either side of the front entrance (BAR Case #2006-0157).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed rear wall demolition complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

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?

Staff certainly recognizes that 703 King Street is an important representative of the City's 19th-century building stock and that all care should be demonstrated in any alterations to the building. Staff also recognizes the extreme structural deterioration that has occurred to the rear wall and the importance of correcting this situation as delicately as possible to ensure that the integrity of the building is maintained. Staff has had an opportunity to view the exterior of the wall.

As stated above, the applicant has retained the services of Woods Peacock, structural engineers. The plan set forth in the proposal appears sound and sensitive to the character of the building. Staff has shared the report submitted by the applicant with Richard Bierce, preservation architect, who concurred that the proposal appears sound.

Thus, staff supports the Permit to Demolish, emphasizing that all care and attention should be given to reconstructing the wall in such a manner that the character-defining features of brick pattern and window placement, as well as historic materials, are retained.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. That the reconstructed wall match the historic configuration and design, including window placement;
2. That the existing historic materials including bricks and sills be salvaged and re-used to the extent possible in the reconstruction; and,
3. That the exterior brick work pattern be replicated to match the existing.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Additions and alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit (USBC 108.1). Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application (USBC 109.1).
- C-3 A construction permit is required for the proposed project.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 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-6 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.