

Docket Item # 8
BAR CASE # 2007-0080

BAR Meeting
June 6, 2007

ISSUE: Addition and alterations
APPLICANT: Caroline Murfitt-Eller
LOCATION: 415 Wilkes Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

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

1. That the fiber cement siding to be installed on the west side and rear be smooth and installed so that the nails do not show;
2. That the trim on the front of the house be wood;
3. That the window trim not be “picture frame” and that the applicant submit drawings of a more historically appropriate design for Staff approval prior to construction;
4. That the existing front windows be retained or replaced by single glazed, true-divided-light windows;
5. That the front door be retained; and,
6. That the following statements must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

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.

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

NOTE: Docket item #7 must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a certificate of appropriateness for a small addition to the west side and for various alterations. The following is proposed:

Front (South) side –

- Replace all windows on the front with simulated-divided-light, two-over-two wood windows by Barber & Ross.
- Replace all window trim with new 4” trim, assumed to be AZEK, synthetic trim.
- Replace the front door with a new mahogany front door “virtually identical” in design.
- Replace the door trim with new trim, assumed to AZEK, a synthetic trim.
- Install new metal railings on both sides of the existing brick and stone front steps.

West side –

- Two new window openings will be created, one in the first floor and one in the second. These will be located approximately midway back on the main block. The new windows will be simulated-divided-light, two-over-two wood windows by Barber & Ross.
- Existing windows will be replaced with simulated-divided-light, two-over-two wood windows by Barber & Ross.
- A new shed will be built at the intersection of the main block and the rear ell on the first story. The shed will measure approximately 3’9” wide by 3’11” long. It will appear as part of the west wall with no openings on the west side. The walls will be clad in Hardiplank lap siding. There will be a door in the north side of the shed, but this will not be visible from the public right-of-way.
- An extension to the kitchen measuring 19.4’ long and approximately 3’9” wide will project from the west wall at the back on the first story. It will have a shed roof clad in asphalt shingles. The walls will be clad in Hardiplank lap siding. There will be a bank of three two-over-two windows in the center of the west wall of this extension. The new windows will be two-over-two wood windows with simulated divided lights by Barber & Ross.
- The existing beveled masonite siding will be removed and replaced with Hardiplank siding to match the existing reveal.
- All wood trim is to be replaced with synthetic trim by AZEK.

North side -

- The HVAC unit now on the west side will be relocated to the rear wall of the house and will be screened with orthogonal lattice panels.
- An extension to the kitchen measuring 3’9” wide will project from the west wall at the back on the first story. It will have a shed roof clad in asphalt and walls clad in Hardiplank lap siding. There will be a fully glazed door in the extension on the north side.
- A new window opening will be inserted in the first story and a two-over-two window will be installed. The window will be a two-over-two wood window with simulated divided lights by Barber & Ross.

- Existing windows will be replaced with two-over-two wood window with simulated divided lights by Barber & Ross.
- The existing beveled wood siding will be removed and replaced with Hardiplank siding to match the existing reveal.
- All wood trim is to be replaced with synthetic trim by AZEK.

While the front façade and the west side are visible from Wilkes Street, the rear façade is not visible from any public right-of-way.

II. HISTORY:

As discussed in docket item #7, the frame house at 415 Wilkes Street was constructed between 1891 and 1896 as a two story main block with a short one-story rear ell. The building envelope remained essentially unchanged through the mid-20th century. A one story rear addition to the rear was approved by the BAR on September 14, 1960. On June 15, 1977, the Board approved extensive alterations and a third story addition. The present appearance of the house results almost entirely from this building campaign, begun in 1978. At this time, the siding and windows were replaced and the front door surround with hood was added. At the front façade on the first story, a c. 1960 picture window was removed and the two separate windows were restored. The mansard roof with arched dormers containing the third story was added. The one story rear ell was raised to two stories and surrounded by a deck at the second story level. More recently, the Board approved the demolition of the rear “conservatory” section of the second story which was then rebuilt on the existing footprint.

III. ANALYSIS:

The subject property is zoned RM, residential, and is a lot of record as of February 10, 1953. The proposed alterations and additions meet zoning ordinance requirements.

In general, Staff believes the proposed addition and alterations are appropriate. However, Staff is concerned by the applicant’s rationale that that the house is no longer historic because it was extensively renovated and that because the materials on the house are not original, they may be replaced with impunity. It is true that the house was extensively renovated circa 1977.

However, in the opinion of Staff, it remains an historic structure and a contributing resource in the historic district. The *Design Guidelines* call for the use of traditional materials in the historic district, encouraging their use even for new construction, in an effort to maintain the authentic feel and unique character of the historic district.

While for the most part, the existing finishes, windows and doors appear to date to the circa 1977 renovation, they conform in almost all respects to the *Design Guidelines* and are appropriate to the late 19th century house. For example, the windows are true-divided-light wood windows and the front door appears to be an historic wood door (although probably reused). These elements appear to be in fair condition or, if deteriorated, repairable. To the extent possible, Staff recommends retention of appropriate traditional materials rather than replacement with new synthetic materials.

With respect to the use of Hardiplank or fiber cement siding, Staff is willing to recommend its use on the west and north sides for a number of reasons. The Board has adopted the following policy for the use of fiber cement siding:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding;
5. That smooth siding be installed; and,
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

In accordance with criteria above, Staff believes that Hardiplank fiber cement is appropriate in this case on the west and north sides. Unlike on the front, which is clad in cedar siding, the side and rear are entirely clad in masonite and thus comply with Criterion 3. Moreover, the rear façade is completely non-historic, dating to circa 1977, and is not visible from the public right-of-way. A small portion of the west side (the first and second stories of the main block) dates to circa 1894 and could be considered an historic structure under Criterion 1. However, the wall was extended up and back with the circa 1977 renovation leaving the historic portion a remnant embedded in the expanded wall. It appears unlikely that any historic material remains on this small area under the masonite. If the Board approves the use of fiber cement siding, it should be smooth and installed so that the nails do not show, in conformance with Criteria 4 & 5.

While Staff is willing to accept alterations and the use of synthetic materials on the much altered and less visible west side and rear, Staff believes the front of the house should retain as much historic character as possible. This façade is highly visible and accessible to the public and it currently retains a level of authenticity that the other facades do not. Staff believes that the authenticity of this façade would be further diminished through the alterations proposed in the current project. Staff understands that the existing wood siding on the front (south) façade of the house will be retained and commends the applicant for this. However, the applicant is proposing to replace the existing trim, apparently with AZEK (synthetic) trim. Staff believes AZEK should be used only on the west and north (rear) sides. Moreover, Staff is willing to support the alteration of the window trim to from the existing circa 1977 trim which gives the effect of a window hood to a consistent 4" flat trim. However, the new trim should not be "picture-frame" style, with mitered corners and no sill. Rather, the window head should extend to the outer edges of the side pieces and there should be a traditional sill as is found on mid- to late-19th century buildings throughout the districts.

The applicant is proposing to replace the existing circa 1977, single-glazed, true-divided-light wood windows with new double-glazed, simulated-divided-light wood windows. Staff notes that the *Design Guidelines* state a preference for single glazed, true-divided-light windows because they have the most authentically historic appearance (Windows – Page 2). Double glazed windows, whether with true-divided or simulated-divided-lights, have an unauthentic appearance due to the thickness of the glass and the distended appearance of the muntin bar. Staff recommends that either the existing windows be repaired and retained or be replaced with new single glazed true-divided-light windows. Staff notes that, in accordance with the *Guidelines*, storm windows are acceptable.

Staff recommends that the front door be repaired and retained. According to the applicant, the door was salvaged from elsewhere and installed circa 1977. While the door may not be original to this house, it is an historic door and is entirely appropriate in its style.

Lastly, Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and recommends that they be included as a condition to the approval.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the fiber cement siding to be installed on the west side and rear be smooth and installed so that the nails do not show;
2. That the trim on the front of the house be wood;
3. That the window trim not be "picture frame" and that the applicant submit drawings of a more historically appropriate design for Staff approval prior to construction;
4. That the existing front windows be retained or replaced by single glazed, true-divided-light windows;
5. That the front door be retained; and,
6. That the following statements must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

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.

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

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides of the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.
- C-2 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-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 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-8 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.
- C-9 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 According to Ethelyn Cox's *Historic Alexandria, Street by Street, A Survey of Existing Early Buildings*, a house owned by William Hunter and occupied by Ludwell Lee may

have been present on this street face by 1789, probably located at 413 Wilkes, adjacent to the current development lot. By 1810, tax records show two houses on the block.

Although these early known structures may not be within the development area, it is possible that archaeological resources that could provide insight into late 18th and 19th - century residential activities in early Alexandria may remain buried on this property.

- R-1 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-2 The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
- R-3 The above statements in R-2 ad R-3 must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

“No comments.”