

Docket Item # 5
BAR CASE # 2007-0001

BAR Meeting
September 5, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation

APPLICANT: Amy & Brien Biondi

LOCATION: 833 South Lee Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

BOARD ACTION, MARCH 21, 2007: The Board combined the discussion of docket item #'s 11 & 12. On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. Wheeler, the Board deferred the applications for restudy. The vote on the motion was 6-0.

REASON: The Board had concerns regarding the size of the proposed additions to the house including extending the front of the house and the increased height. The Board also expressed reservations about a number of design details. The Board concluded that the overall composition of the reworking of the house needed to be reconsidered.

SPEAKER: Rebecca Bostick, project architect, spoke in support

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, MARCH 21, 2007: Staff recommends approval.

BOARD ACTION, FEBRUARY 7, 2007: Deferred at the request of the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, FEBRUARY 7, 2007: Staff recommends deferral of the application to restudy the amount of proposed demolition/encapsulation, particularly on the east elevation along South Lee Street.

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

UPDATE: Since the previous hearing in March, the applicant has revised the proposal, decreasing the amount of demolition/encapsulation on the east elevation facing South Lee Street, while the portions to be demolished on the roof remains the same.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a permit to demolish for demolition and encapsulation of major portions of the end unit residential rowhouse at 833 South Lee Street. The portions to be demolished are the east elevation and the roof in order to permit the construction of a new addition on the east of the house and a new third story addition.



Figure 1 - View of south and east elevations



Figure 2 - View of west and south elevations

II. HISTORY:

833 South Lee Street is a two story, three bay residential rowhouse that was constructed as part of the Yates Garden subdivision in ca. 1954. It is an end unit rowhouse, one of a continuous row of 2 and 3 bay townhouses with alternately projecting and set back facades. As a corner end unit, the Green Street elevation houses the front entrance to the unit. The east elevation is distinguished from its neighbors primarily by its slightly projecting bay window at the first level. The house has an unusual roof line, with a side gable pitched roof facing South Lee Street, transiting to a flat roof on the majority of the Green Street elevation. The construction of these rowhouses was approved by the Board on 3/12/1953. A garden wall was approved for this house by the Board on 11/12/1958.

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 house none of the criteria for demolition and encapsulation are met in this instance. However, Staff has been concerned about the proposed amount of demolition and encapsulation in prior submittals, particularly on the east elevation, which would alter the existing recess and projecting pattern established on South Lee Street. In staff's opinion, this pattern of facades is a character-defining trait of this section of Yates Garden and should be preserved if possible. Previously, the applicant had proposed to encapsulate the east elevation with an addition that would be flushed with the adjacent property to the north. The last submittal was revised so that the addition on the east would project approximately 2' past the façade of the adjacent townhouse to the north.

In this proposal, the applicant maintains the eastern addition's projection of approximately 2' from the adjacent building to the north, which may be construed as preserving the pattern but altering the rhythm. The applicant has also revised the proposal so that the addition on the east elevation is set off on each of the corners of the original house by approximately 1'4", lessening the amount of demolition/encapsulation on the eastern elevation. Staff is less concerned with the proposed demolition and encapsulation of the roof. Also, staff does note that last year the Board approved the demolition of the roof and the rear elevation of the end unit rowhouse at the north end of this row of townhouses (BAR Case #2006-00001, 2/15/06). Because this unit is an end unit, staff believes that there are challenges to constructing any form of an addition, and that the proposal of the applicant may be the most viable option.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

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 were received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 Tax records indicate that there was a free African American household on this street face by 1810, but the exact address is not known. Quartermaster maps from the Civil War era show that the block bounded by Lee, Green, Fairfax and Jefferson streets was the site of the kitchen, mess room, and barracks for Battery Rogers. While ground disturbance associated with this project is not extensive, particularly in the backyard area where there is greater potential, there is a possibility for development activities to uncover archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities in 19th-century Alexandria, perhaps relating to African Americans, and into military life during the Civil War.

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 & Environmental Services

R-1 The applicant shall submit an annotated house location plat must meet the following criteria:

- No reduced, enlarged or faxed copies will be accepted.
- The footprint area of the proposed improvements must be drawn to scale.
- The additional 10' perimeter, construction access and other areas as described above must be shown to scale.

- The overall dimensions of the proposed improvements must be shown.
- The actual square footage of the disturbed area must be shown.

The applicant shall be required to provide this information to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, Construction and Inspection Division and/or Engineering Division prior to any applications for building permits. (T&ES)

- R-2 The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 8-1-22 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. 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.]
- R-3 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity.
- R-4 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design.