

Docket Item # 16
BAR CASE # 2007-0158

BAR Meeting
September 5, 2007

ISSUE: Additions and alterations
APPLICANT: Mark & Ann Kington by Belinda Reeder
LOCATION: 617/619 S. Lee Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007: Staff recommends restudy of the new living room addition and approval of all other alterations and additions with the following conditions:

1. Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
2. Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, 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 to record the finds.
3. The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
4. The above statements must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including erosion control, sheeting and shoring, and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

(Insert sketch here)

Note: Docket item #15 must be approved before this item may be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a comprehensive project that includes the construction of a large new addition to the south of the historic main block for a living room, a small addition to the north side of the rear ell to serve as a mudroom, a number of alterations, mostly to the rear ell, and restoration of the existing historic fabric. The project is explained in greater detail below.

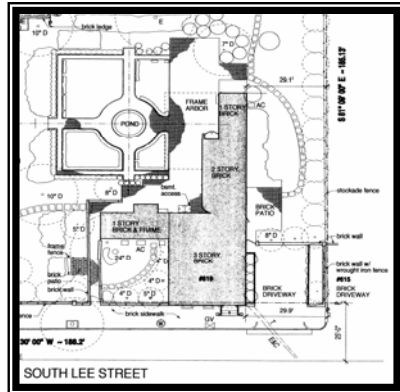


Figure 1 - Existing site plan

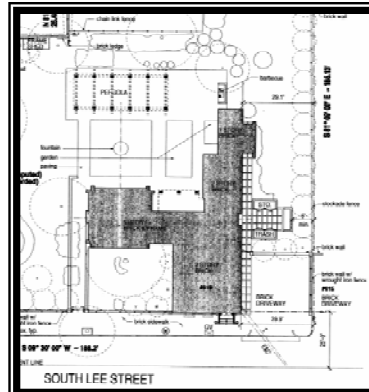


Figure 2 - Proposed site plan

New Additions:



Figure 3 - East elevation



Figure 4 - West elevation



Figure 5 - South elevation



Figure 6 - North elevation

Living Room addition – The 650 square foot living room addition will replace the existing kitchen wing on the south side of the historic main block. The single story addition will consist of a narrow 7 foot long connector and the square (28 foot by 28 foot) living room. The addition will extend out from the side of the main block 35 feet to the south and will be set back from the face of the historic main block the same distance as the existing kitchen wing (28 feet). The majority of the mass of the new addition will extend west toward the back of the property. In addition to the small connecting link at the west end of the south wall of the main block where the current kitchen connects, the new addition will also be connected to the rest of the house by an enclosed breezeway along the rear (west face) of the main block. At its highest point, the addition will be 21 feet, half the height of the historic main block. The addition will have a pavilion form with two equal intersecting gable roofs and projecting gable ends on the front (east) and south side. The walls will be brick. The roof will be standing seam copper with a molded cornice, presumed to be wood. The gables will be clad in ship lap siding and will have a circular vent in the center. The siding and vent are also presumed to be wood. There will be two long panels of fixed windows in the front (east) wall. According to the architect, all the windows will be custom wood windows. The flat roofed connector will have a single square fixed window at the south end where it connects to the living room. It will have a molded cornice matching that of the living room. On the east elevation, above the connector, will be another flat roofed element with a pair of off-center, square, fixed windows. The “back” side of the new breezeway which will run along the back of the main block is clad in siding. The south elevation of the living room addition is bisected by a large brick clad exterior chimney. There will be a narrow strip of fixed windows on the east side of this elevation and a large bank of windows in the west side. Here the windows will be both fixed and casement. As on the front, the gable will be clad in siding. The west (rear) elevation will be predominantly windows with two banks of windows extending from the cornice to just three feet off the ground. These windows will be both fixed and casement. According to the architect, all new windows will be custom wood windows. There will be a pair of French doors centered in this façade. The gable will be clad in ship lap wood siding and there will be a circular louver in the center. The living room addition will be painted white to match the already painted south wall of the rear ell.

Breezeway -

A flat-roofed, 5-foot wide breezeway connecting the new living room addition to the rear ell will run across the rear (west) of the historic main block, encapsulating an original section of wall containing two windows. The breezeway will tie in to the wall just above the stone lintels above the windows. The wall and windows will remain exposed within the breezeway. The breezeway will have a flat roof and will be clad in wood ship lap siding. The greater portion of the west wall of the breezeway, facing the garden, will be a series of full length windows flanked by fully glazed doors and capped by a transom-like row of square windows. Projecting out from the breezeway will be a painted wood pergola structure with three wood columns set on brick bases. The pergola will have a standing seam copper roof.

Mudroom addition –

A small, 88 square foot addition is proposed for the west end of the north wall of the rear ell. It will be 16 feet long, 5.5 feet wide and approximately 8 foot tall. The mudroom will be unpainted brick, like the adjacent north wall of the ell. The flat roof will be standing seam copper. The

north side of the addition will be a simple rectangular slab of brick. The east side will have a glass door. The west side will be fully glazed.

Alterations:

As most of the alterations also involve either demolition or infilling these items have been preliminarily discussed in the Permit to Demolish report. As discussed in that report, the Architect expects to be able to match brick wherever necessary using brick salvaged from elsewhere on the project.

North elevation -

An existing non historic door at the west end of the main block will be removed and the opening will be infilled with brick to match. According to the architect, the doorway is a c. 1950 alteration. A new entry will be inserted in the wall, in line with the new breezeway. The entry will consist of a fully glazed wood door with full length window to the side. An existing window, dating to c. 1950, in the vicinity of this new entry will be removed and the area infilled with brick to match. The shuttered c. 1950 window above this will be restored to its original condition with a pair of two-over-two wood windows. The existing six-over-six vinyl window at the far end of the ell will be replaced with a wood two-over-two window to fit the existing opening. Above this, in the second story, two new windows will be inserted in new openings. These windows will be wood casements with nine lights.

West elevation -

There will be little alteration to the rear façade. A modern shed will be removed from the rear wall of the two story portion of the ell and new door opening will be created in this area. The door will be a fully glazed wood door.

South elevation -

The four French doors dating from a 1970s alteration will be removed and infilled. Replacing them will be four regularly spaced two-over-two windows. Above these in the second story, the existing double casement windows will be removed and two new single casements with nine lights will be installed. The easternmost of these will be in a new location.

Restoration:

The architect provided the following description of the anticipated restoration work.

Main Block -

* Clean all brick including chimneys with water and biodegradeable mild detergents such as 'Safe N' Easy' by DUMOND. Tuckpoint brick.

* Restore all windows at the first and second floors, which are original, except for first floor windows on the north facade which were added in the 20th C. Remove all paint, reglaze. Replace ropes and weights as necessary. Replace missing or damaged wood at windows and original trim with new to exactly match original. Repaint with water based paint.

* At third floor, replace vinyl windows with new to exactly match original windows. Windows shall be custom made wood with true divided lites, single pane glazing, and ropes and weights.

- * Replace slate roof and install new copper flashings, counterflashings, guttering.
- * Remove paint from all Acquia Creek stone window lintels and sills. Restore and tuckpoint stone.
- * At base of front facade and stone stoop, attempt to remove concrete parging from stone surfaces, and restore stone. If this is not possible, replace with Briar Hill sandstone, to match Acquia Creek stone. Replacement shall exactly match original profiles, thicknesses, texture and all other aspects in all respects.
- * Waterproof and underpin around all foundation walls, with Bentonite clay membrane product.

Ell -

- * Replace existing painted galvanized standing seam roof with new copper standing seam roof, flashings, counterflashings and guttering.
- * Clean and tuckpoint brick, including chimneys. At south facades reinstall existing paint finish.
- * Install new windows in existing or new openings. Most existing windows are c. 1950 or 1973 and shall be replaced with new to more closely respond to the proportion and style of the original house. Windows shall be wood casement or double hung. Restore existing openings with new steel lintel supports inside wall. Install new wood trim to respond to the original condition.
- * Install new painted wood rake boards at roof line.
- * Remove all exterior paint on wood to remain. Replace all damaged wood with new to exactly match existing. Repaint with water based paint.

Site -

The gate in the front wall/fence which is aligned with the south end of the existing kitchen wing will be shifted further south to align with the end of the proposed new living room addition. The low brick wall and iron fence will be rebuilt to match the existing in the new location. The existing garden and arbor behind the house will be removed and a new garden with pergola will be constructed to relate to the courtyard formed by the new living room wing. The new painted wood pergola will be located to the west of the new addition and will be similar in design to the pergola along the breezeway. It is possible that this structure could be partially visible in views through the yard, but it will be nearly 100 feet back from the front property line.

A new brick walled enclosure will be constructed on the north side of the house to screen mechanicals and trash and to provide storage. This enclosure will be six foot high, according to the architect and will itself be screened from the public right-of-way by an existing brick wall approximately five or six feet high at the back of the parking area.

It is difficult to know how visible much of the proposed alterations and additions will be. Heavy vegetation on the perimeter and within the property currently screens many views. The front and

sides of the historic main block are readily visible. Portions of the north wall of the rear ell are also visible. The new south side addition is likely to more visible than the current kitchen wing particularly if the area around it is cleared of vegetation. However, it seems unlikely the rear (west) elevation or much, if any, of the south elevation would be visible to the public without extensive clearing of vegetation.

II. HISTORY:

As explained in docket item #15, the late federal townhouse, including the main block and a detached two story dependency to the rear, was constructed c. 1798. It has been home to several figures of importance in local and national history. The main block appears substantially as built. However, the dependency, which was later connected to the main block to become an ell, has been subjected to a series of modest alterations over the years. Similarly, the kitchen wing, located on the south side of the main block is the result of a number of building campaigns. According to Board of Architectural Review records, the Board has previously approved alterations and additions at the property in 1970, 1974, 1975 and 1981.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed additions and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources holds an easement on the property and has agreed to the proposed alterations, per a letter dated July 23, 2007.

The applicant is to be commended for the thorough and careful restoration that is planned. Staff believes the proposed alterations are acceptable. They are almost entirely confined to the oft-altered rear ell and will be in keeping with its original vernacular character and history of somewhat random alterations. As previously noted, where infilling will occur, the brick will match the existing and all windows and doors will be wood. Staff does not believe any significant historic features will be lost through these alterations. As noted above, many of the proposed alterations are outside the Board's purview as they will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Staff has no objections to the proposed mudroom addition on the north side of the rear ell. The addition is minimalist in design and its visual impact is expected to be minor, if at all visible.

On the other hand, Staff does have significant concerns about the proposed living room addition on the south side of the house. Although set back from the front of the historic main block by 28 feet, it will be considerably more visible than the existing kitchen wing. As proposed, it is at least 5 feet higher at its peak than the existing wing. Although brick, it is proposed to be painted white, which will enhance its visibility. The visibility of the proposed new wing requires that it be viewed with a higher level of scrutiny than other aspects of the project.

There is much to appreciate about the proposed design: the way the wing is held off the historic main block by the smaller connector, the articulation of the 28 foot wide facades of the new wing and the attempt at blending of traditional materials and forms with modern design elements. However, Staff is concerned that the addition is still not sufficiently compatible with the historic house. The proportions and massing of the addition seems to clash with the historic house. At 28 feet wide, it is the same width as the main block. The projecting gable ends were intended to

break up the width of the facades, but may actually contribute to its horizontal feel. The addition seems squat in relation to the elegant verticality of the historic house. This is not to propose that the addition should be taller. The addition must be both subservient to the historic main block and compatible with it in its proportions. As its current height is already half that of the historic house, the addition should not be any taller. Moreover, Staff understands that the height of the addition has already been reduced in response to concerns expressed by the easement holder. It may be that the width of the east elevation must also be reduced to achieve a more harmonious form. While appreciating the intent to distinguish the new construction from the old by utilizing modern design elements, Staff is concerned that the effort requires further refinement on the front façade of the addition. The addition should relate more closely to the front façade, without mimicking it. The windows on the front of the addition contrast too strongly with the finely detailed and highly regular federal fenestration of the main block. In addition, the solid to void relationship of the addition seems to be less than compatible with the historic façade. Lastly, the portion of the breezeway that projects above the connector appears awkward with its flat roof and off-center windows. It may be that this section will not be visible from the public right-of-way, something that could be demonstrated through sightline drawings or other means.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends restudy of the new living room addition and approval of all other alterations and additions with the following conditions:

1. Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
2. Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, 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 to record the finds.
3. The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
4. The above statements must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including erosion control, sheeting and shoring, and grading) 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.
- C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-3 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 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-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 comment.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 According to *Historic Alexandria, Virginia, Street by Street* by Ethelyn Cox, the house on this lot was constructed around 1800 by Thomas Vowell, Jr., a prominent merchant. When it was advertised for sale in 1817, the lot included a covered way, pantry, large kitchen, smoke house, brick stable and carriage house. Edgar Snowden, editor and owner

of the *Alexandria Gazette*, purchased the property in 1842. In the 20th century, it served as the residence of Hugo Black, Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. The property has the potential to yield archaeological resources into residential life in Alexandria during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

- R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
- R-2 Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, 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 to record 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 above statements in R-1, R-2 and 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 erosion control, sheeting and shoring, and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- F-1 An approved Plot Plan must be attached to the building permit application. This determination is based on the land disturbance associated with the project exceeding 2,500 square feet in area. The disturbed area is determined by adding a minimum of 10' to the perimeter of the footprint of the structural and site improvements and calculating the area within the increased perimeter. In addition, a 10 foot wide access path from the edge of the disturbed area to the street or paved driveway must be included in the disturbed area calculation. Provision must also be made for stockpile, staging, dumpsters and material storage areas within the limits of disturbance. (TES)
- R-1 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.]. (TES)
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (TES)
- R-3 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (TES)
- R-4 No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (TES)

R-5 Compliance with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control is required for any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (TES)