

Docket Item # 12
BAR CASE # 2007-0232

BAR Meeting
December 6, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation

APPLICANT: Katherine M. Eltzroth

LOCATION: 500 Jefferson Court

ZONE: RM/residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends deferral of the permit to demolish to reconsider the project.

(Insert sketch here)

Note: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a permit to demolish to remove the existing hip roof in order to permit the construction of a third story and a new single slope roof. In addition, nine window openings in the first and second stories of the front and two in the second story of the north side will be elongated, requiring demolition of the exterior walls. Lastly, the south wall will be extensively altered with demolition to create large new door/window openings and encapsulated with the construction of a new exterior chimney.

II. HISTORY:

The Jefferson Square Townhouse, Section II, development, located around Jefferson Court opening off the south side of the 400 block of Wilkes Street, was constructed circa 1966 and includes 9 houses, with six facing Jefferson Court and three facing Wilkes Street. The five bay wide, hipped roof house at 500 Jefferson Court is very similar to the house at 508 Jefferson Court. The other houses in the development have substantially different massing and orientation. The houses in the development were constructed with modest Neo-Colonial detailing, most notably exhibited in the front door surrounds which are quite varied. In 2006, the Board approved alterations to 500 Jefferson Court that included elongation of the front and side windows and the addition of new trim, shutters and front door. However, this work was never undertaken. The previous year, the Board approved replacement windows at 508 Jefferson Court (BAR Case #2005-0296, 1/4/2006). None of the other houses in the development appear to have had additions of any kind.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with the 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 notes that, according to the *Design Guidelines*, “It is the policy of the Boards that the absolute minimum demolition of an existing structure should take place” (Demolition of Existing Structures – Page 1). This project is troubling for the extent of demolition required and the fact that the demolition is largely required to accommodate cathedral ceilings rather than to add functional living space. Staff is opposed to the demolition of the roof because it will allow for what we believe is an unacceptable alteration of the building; one that will have a negative impact on the surrounding area. The house at 500 Jefferson Court was designed to fit into the neighborhood and to complement the other houses on the court. The demolition of the roof to allow for a substantially taller building with an entirely different form would not *help to preserve or protect the character of the historic district*. Thus, Staff believes that Criteria 5 is met and that the permit to demolish should be deferred for restudy to consider a substantially less aggressive addition and alteration.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the permit to demolish to reconsider the project.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 A Construction permit will be required for the proposed project.
- C-3 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-4 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-5 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully details the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-6 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-7 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-8 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-9 Provisions shall be made to prevent the accumulation of water or damage to any foundation on the premises or adjoining property (USBC 3303.5).
- C-10 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-11 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-12 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:

Not enough information was submitted. Request photographs of the existing conditions.