

Docket Item # 22
BAR CASE # 2007-0252

BAR Meeting
December 6, 2007

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Harbor Terrace of Old Town, Condominium Association
LOCATION: 501 Bashford Lane
ZONE: RA/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends deferral for restudy.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations in order to remove the existing terra cotta coping and replace it with an aluminum/metal coping material on several buildings within the Harbor Terrace condominium development at 501 Bashford Lane, on North Washington Street. Seven flat-roof buildings with brick parapet walls will be impacted by the proposal (513/515, 527/529, 605/607 Bashford Lane, 1303/1305, 1311/1313, 1409/1411, 1417 E. Abingdon Drive.) The other buildings in the complex have gray slate gabled roofs.

The proposal for removing the terra cotta coping and replacement with a metal coping is a component of the roof repairs underway, in which the membrane materials are being replaced. The applicant had contacted Staff regarding the roof repairs and replacement on the seven flat-roof buildings. Originally, only the membrane materials were to be replaced, which are hidden from public views by the brick parapet. According to the applicant's contractor and engineer, the existing terra cotta coping is in poor repair and contributes to the leaking roof situation and recommends its removal and replacement. When the applicant informed staff that they desired to remove the existing terra cotta and replace it with metal coping, staff informed the applicant this would require a Certificate of Appropriateness application and review and approval by the Board.

The proposed new metal coping will have a four-inch exposure and be colored to blend with the brick walls of the building. The color of the metal coping will be dark colonial red. The re-roofing of the flat-roof buildings at Harbor Terrace is to occur in phases.

II. HISTORY:

Harbor Terrace Apartments complex (1301-1417 East Abingdon Drive and 509-607 Bashford Lane) was constructed ca. 1943-1944 and was one of many garden apartment type complexes constructed in Alexandria beginning in 1939 and continuing through the war years as the city struggled to accommodate the swelling population resulting from the buildup in governmental and defense industry employment. The southern, and somewhat later, northern end of Washington Street became the focus of apartment complex development. The northern end of town where Harbor Terrace was constructed had been characterized by undeveloped land and miscellaneous industrial concerns, but rapidly developed into a locus of garden style apartment complexes, including Bashford Hall Apartments (402-418 Bashford Lane, 1942-1943), Locharbor Gardens Apartments (500-614 Bashford Lane, 1939-1940) and Mason Hall Apartments (1420 West Abingdon Drive, 1949).

Alexandria's garden apartments were almost always designed in the Colonial Revival style and many took the names of historic sites in the area. Per the information on the 1958 Sanborn maps, the buildings in the Harbor Terrace development were constructed out of cinderblock with dark red brick facing.

Staff did not locate any prior approvals for alterations to Harbor Terrace. The Board has reviewed alterations to other similar garden-style apartments that are now condominiums in this vicinity of North Washington Street, including some alterations to Potomack Crossing this year and Riverton across Bashford Lane from Harbor Terrace in 2005. Staff did not locate any approvals for coping replacement.

III. ANALYSIS:

Proposed replacement of terra cotta with metal coping meets Zoning Ordinance requirements.

Staff is concerned about the proposed removal of the existing and original terra cotta coping and replacement with metal. A central tenet of the philosophy of historic preservation is that original historic materials should be retained and repaired rather than replaced. An informed and careful analysis of the existing condition should be made before any decision to replace historic materials is allowed. In Staff's opinion, the existing terra cotta is a historic and character-defining feature of these buildings in Harbor Terrace. While Staff recognizes that there are sections of the terra cotta that are in need of repair or replacement, Staff does not feel that cause for the wholesale replacement has been demonstrated or is warranted. In addition, due to Harbor Terrace's location on Washington Street, along the George Washington Memorial Parkway, special regard should be given to alterations visible from the public-right-of-way to any of its buildings. Staff recommends deferral for restudy in order to allow the applicant to pursue other means of dealing with the roof leaks and inkind repairs to the terra cotta coping.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral for restudy.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Rooftop anchorage/installation details must be submitted (USBC 109.1).
- C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-3 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-4 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.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.