

Docket Item # 8
BAR CASE # 2007-0268

BAR Meeting
February 6, 2008

ISSUE: Demolition/Encapsulation

APPLICANT: McGuire Woods

LOCATION: 1707 Duke Street

ZONE: OCH/Office Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. That applicant work with Staff to ensure that appropriate repairs to the façade occur if needed once the planters, landings, and stairs are demolished; and
2. That any replacement front entrance stair is designed to be appropriate to the building.

(Insert sketch here)

Note: This item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish for 1707 Duke Street in order to demolish the existing raised brick planters, landings, and the existing brick front entrance steps to the building, which is designated a 100-Year Old Building. 1707 Duke Street, owned by Hooff Real Estate, is adjacent to and in the site of a new commercial building, referred to as Edmonson Plaza. The site is not located within the boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. However, designated 100-Year Old Buildings, such as 1707 Duke Street, are under the purview of the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Architectural Review for any alterations to the exterior visible from a public right-of-way and demolition or encapsulation.

The proposed development containing the new building was approved under a Development Special Use Permit, #2006-0023. During the DSUP process and the approval per Condition #6, the City Attorney's office made the determination that the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Review would have purview over any alterations or additions to 1707 Duke Street (designated 100-Year Old Building) and aspects of the setting, including the final design of the plaza area up to the face of the new building. The Board would not have purview over the demolition of the existing building adjacent to the 1707 Duke Street on its eastern side nor would the Board have purview over the design of the new building, with the exception of any lighting placed on the building within the Courtyard/Plaza Area.

The applicant is proposing to replace the planters and steps with new raised brick planters and new steps. However, as shown in the drawings and site plans, the proposed new planters and landings will be encroaching on the public right-of-way, and therefore, cannot be considered by the Board. A new front entrance stair is permissible by zoning.

II. HISTORY:

1707 Duke Street is a designated 100-Year Old Building. It received the designation from City Council in 1978. According to the survey sheet completed at the time of designation, 1707 Duke Street is a freestanding early 19th-century, 2 ½-story, 5 bay house with gable roof, pedimented dormers, and a front entry with pilaster and a pediment ensemble. The property is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a component of an Underground Railroad Thematic designation.

This area was the site of the Bruin Slave Jail in the early 19th-century. Joseph Bruin, a slave dealer, purchased the house in 1884; Bruin and his partner, Henry Hill, conducted their business from the property at 1707 Duke Street. Upon its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the site was formally recognized for its role in raising awareness about horrific conditions of slavery, about the courage and resistance of enslaved people, and about their continual struggle for freedom. In *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1854, Harriet Beecher Stowe explained how she used information about Bruin's slave jail as the background for her 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe described the escape of a number of slaves from Washington, D.C. on the ship Pearl in 1848 and their recapture for eventual sale in New Orleans. Bruin and Hill purchased the Edmonsons, a slave family, and brought them to the slave jail.

Mary and Emily Edmondson were eventually freed when their father Paul raised enough money to purchase his daughters with the help of Reverend Lyman Beecher, Stowe's father.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish or Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, Sec 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 an historic shrine?
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, none of the above criteria are met by the existing stairs, landings and raised planters. The demolition proposed is only for these items. From examining these elements, it is Staff's opinion that they are not historic and may be demolished. However, while Staff can support the demolition of the existing planters, landings, and stairs, the fact that the proposed replacement planters and landings are not supported due to issues of encroachment and functionality is problematic. Also, Staff is concerned that once the planters and stairs are removed, the lower sections of the building at the foundation may need repairs. Any re-pointing or other cosmetic work necessary once the planters are removed must be sensitive and appropriate to the building. As stated in the prior section, new entrance stairs are permissible and supported by Staff, with the understanding that the proposed stair design would need refinements and revisions due to the issues raised in this and the following reports related to encroachment and functionality.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. That applicant work with Staff to ensure that appropriate repairs to the façade occur if needed once the planters, landings, and stairs are demolished; and
2. That any replacement front entrance stair is designed to be appropriate to the building.

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 be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-2 Before a building permit can be issued on any proposed future alterations, a certification is required from the owner or owner's agent that the building has been inspected by a licensed asbestos inspector for the presence of asbestos (USBC 110.3).
- C-3 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-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 Alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit. Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application. The plans must include all dimensions, construction alterations details, kitchen equipment, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.
- C-7 The new handrails must comply with USBC for a minimum/maximum height of 30 to 34 inches. The ends must extend 12" beyond the top and bottom risers. The handgrip position must not be more than 2-1/4" in cross-sectional dimension, or the shape must provide an equivalent gripping surface. The handgrip portion must have a smooth surface with no sharp corners. The space between the wall and handrail must not be less than 1-1/2".
- C-8 Guardrail height and openings must comply with USBC 1012.2 and 1012.3.
- C-9 Sheeting and shoring shall not extend beyond the property line; except when the developer has obtained a written release from adjacent property owners which has been recorded in the land records; or through an approved encroachment process.
- C-10 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-11 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-12 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-13 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-14 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:

R-Table pending submission of text for panels, thematic statement for memorial staff discussion on spatial relationships and materials used in final decision.