

Docket Item #7  
BAR CASE # 2007-0232

BAR Meeting  
March 19, 2008

**ISSUE:** Demolition/encapsulation

**APPLICANT:** Katherine M. Eltzroth

**LOCATION:** 500 Jefferson Court

**ZONE:** RM/residential

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

**BOARD ACTION, DECEMBER 6, 2007:** On a motion by Mr. Neale, seconded by Mr. Smeallie the Board deferred the application for restudy. The vote on the motion was 7-0.

**REASON:** The Board agreed with the staff analysis and believed that another design should be considered.

**SPEAKERS:** James Noel, project architect, spoke in support  
Edward Crocker, 505 South Royal Street, spoke in opposition  
John Hynan, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, spoke in opposition

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

(Insert sketch here)

Update: Since the public hearing in December, the architect has revised the design of the proposed addition in an attempt to respond to the comments of the Board. However, the extent of demolition that would be required to construct the revised addition and alterations to the existing house has not changed substantially: the roof and its supporting structure as well as large portions of the façade and the elevations will be demolished.

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 as well as other portions of the freestanding residence at 500 Jefferson Court in order to permit the construction of a third story and other alterations. 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 is proposed to 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 five bay wide, hipped roof house at 500 Jefferson Court is a modest scale two story center hall Colonial Revival style house built in 1965. It is one of the houses that make up the Jefferson Square Townhouse, Section II development, centered around Jefferson Court opening off the south side of the 400 block of Wilkes Street. The development was approved by City Council and built as a result of a number of variances approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals in 1965 (BZA Case #865, 6/29/1965). The development includes eight houses: five fronting Jefferson Court and three facing Wilkes Street.

The houses in the development were constructed with modest neo-Colonial detailing, most notably exhibited in the front door surrounds which are quite varied. The adjacent house at 508 Jefferson Court is virtually similar. The other houses in the development have substantially different massing and orientation.

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 would not *help to preserve and 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 intervention.

**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 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: