

Docket Item # 8  
BAR CASE # 2007-0233

BAR Meeting  
March 19, 2008

**ISSUE:** Addition and alterations

**APPLICANT:** Katherine M. Eltzroth

**LOCATION:** 500 Jefferson Court

**ZONE:** RM/residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends deferral for restudy of the proposed addition.

**BOARD ACTION, DECEMBER 6, 2007:** Not heard because the demolition application was deferred for restudy.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends deferral for restudy of the proposed addition.

(Insert sketch here)

Update: Since the public hearing of December 6<sup>th</sup>, the architect has modified the design of some of the elements of the design and alterations. The revised overall design is discussed below.

**Note:** Docket item #?? must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a third story addition and other alterations to the existing two story freestanding house at 500 Jefferson Court. These alterations include:

Addition – the applicant proposes to remove the existing low hip roof and construct a full third story and gable roof on top of the existing two story structure. The proposed roof addition on top of the new third story will have a gable roof, sloping east and west from the ridgeline parallel to Jefferson Court.

The building will be a full three stories, totaling approximately 34'6'' high at the ridgeline. The redesigned building will be 9' higher than the highest point on the existing house. The roof is proposed to be clad in asphalt shingles and the new walls constructed of brick to match the existing brick walls in size and color. There will be a new double brick soldier course starting at the top of the existing brick façade and delineating where the new construction begins.

The new third story on the front (west) elevation facing Jefferson Court will have five double hung six-over-six windows aligned with those below. The windows will have a brick rowlock sill to match the existing.

The north elevation, facing Wilkes Street, the two first floor window openings are proposed to be elongated to accommodate new six-over-nine double hung windows; the second floor window openings will also be elongated for new six-over-six windows and two new six-over-six windows are proposed to be installed in the third story aligned over those below. The first story windows will be lengthened by approximately 2', while those on the second story will be increased by 1'.

On the rear (east) elevation there will be no openings because it is located on the property line and such openings are not permitted by the building code. Five evenly spaced, recessed brick panels with rowlock brick "sills" are proposed on the third level.

The south elevation is proposed with a new exterior end brick chimney in the middle of the wall. The fenestration on the south elevation will be completely altered. The existing fenestration consists of a window and French door on the first story and two windows on the second. New six-over-six paired windows are proposed on the second and third level on either side of the chimney.

Alterations to the existing house – All existing windows will be replaced. The existing windows are single glazed wood windows, with a six-over-six configuration. On the front (west) façade, all the existing window openings will be elongated. The first story windows will be increased by approximately 2' and the second story by 1'. The shutters will be removed. The front entryway

will be reworked with a new custom six panel door, new wider sidelights, a new transom, and a new surround with fluted pilasters and a molded entablature. There are no notes on the drawings, but the architect has clarified that the door will be a custom wood door, the surround will be wood and the sidelights and transom wood with simulated divided lights. The existing light fixtures will be replaced with new carriage style lamps.

The new windows as well as the replacement windows will be wood with simulated divided lights with wood muntins and a spacer bar, manufactured by Loewen.

The existing stockade fencing and retaining brick wall at the rear will remain. The HVAC unit is proposed to be moved to south side of the proposed chimney.

## **II. HISTORY:**

As discussed in the associated demolition BAR Case #2007-0232, the freestanding brick house at 500 Jefferson Court is one of eight houses constructed on or adjacent to Jefferson Court circa 1966 as part of the Jefferson Square Townhouse, Section II development. None of these houses have had additions. The Board previously approved alterations to 500 Jefferson Court which included elongated window openings, new wood thermal windows with simulated divided lights, new window trim, new shutters, a new door and an altered door surround (BAR Case #2006-0247, 11/15/2006). These alterations were not carried out.

## **III. ANALYSIS:**

As currently portrayed in the design before the Board, the proposed addition does not comply with the Zoning Ordinance because it is deficient in open space. The applicant has agreed to internalize the new chimney to comply with open space requirements if the Board approves the project.

The existing structure was permitted to be redeveloped under BZA case #822 in 1965. Although staff recognizes that the subject property was not constructed in accordance with the standards set forth in BZA case #822, the applicant is required to continue to meet those standards as closely as possible. The applicant has relocated the proposed HVAC unit behind the new chimney that is proposed to be added to the south elevation that will create slightly more open space than with the present AC unit location.

Staff has significant concerns regarding adding a third story plus new gable end roof to the existing two story house. The massing and form of the expanded building are at odds with the existing building and surroundings. While there are some three story houses in the immediate area, the character of Jefferson Court is small scale and intimate. The houses within the court that were constructed circa 1966 as part of Jefferson Square Townhouses Section II, are mostly two, and no more than two-and-a-half, stories in height. The houses are in scale with the narrow court and reflect a traditional development pattern of larger buildings on the exterior of blocks and smaller structures on the interior. By increasing the height of the house at 500 Jefferson Court, the scale and cohesiveness of this small enclave will be altered and adjacent buildings will be overwhelmed.

Secondly, the house itself will be negatively impacted. The proposed addition does not respect its original massing or form. It is currently exhibits a Georgian or Georgian Revival sense of massing and harmonious proportions-- five bays wide, two bays deep and two stories high, under a low hip roof. The additional story and a half will create an awkward vertical mass. The three and a half story end wall facing Wilkes Street will overwhelm the two story houses to the west along Wilkes Street. Similarly, the south end wall with its large scale glazing will overwhelm the neighboring Jefferson Court houses. In the opinion of Staff, the proposed addition does not comply with the *Design Guidelines* that state:

- Residential additions should reflect the building massing prevailing along a blockface;
- Residential additions should not overwhelm the existing structure or neighboring buildings; and,
- The existing form of a residential building should generally be retained in the expression of the addition (Residential Additions – page 6).

In the historic districts, center hall Georgian and Federal buildings, without exception, front a wide street, have street presence and an elevated entry way to provide sense of arrival. None of that is present in the redesign of this townhouse. Jefferson Court is only 30 feet wide and perhaps the narrowest public street in the historic district. As such it does not provide the type of setting that is always found for center hall houses in the historic district.

Thus, staff believes that the *parti* of the form of the proposed house is fundamentally flawed. If the Board believes that a third floor addition is warranted, staff believes that consideration should be given to a rowhouse form with primary orientation toward Wilkes Street with the Jefferson Court elevation then becoming a side elevation. As the Board is well aware, there have been numerous residential properties in the historic districts that have had one or more floors added over an existing structure some of which are unfortunate and others seamless.

Staff has no objections to the proposed alterations to windows and entrance of the house as these are similar to those approved in 2006. The new windows will be wood simulated divided light windows with wood muntins and spacer bars. While the *Design Guidelines* state a preference for true divided light windows, they allow for simulated divided light windows in specific instances (Windows- page 2). Staff believes that simulated divided light windows are acceptable in this instance as the house dates to the 1960s and is located on a court with other houses of the same date. Staff notes that the Board has previously approved thermal windows with simulated divided lights for houses on Jefferson Court on two other occasions, including one year ago for this very property as well as at the public hearing of December 6, 2007 for windows at 509 Jefferson Court (BAR Case #2007-0227).

Therefore, Staff recommends that the application be deferred for reconsideration. The applicant should know that Staff continues to have strong reservations about any substantial change in the form or height of the existing building.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends deferral for restudy of the proposed addition.

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.