

Docket Item # 10  
BAR CASE # 2008-0116

BAR Meeting  
September 17, 2008

**ISSUE:** Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening

**APPLICANT:** Tony Chan, Falston Development

**LOCATION:** 532 N. Washington Street

**ZONE:** OC/Office Commercial

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval for a Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement provided that a Certificate of Appropriateness is approved by the Board for the infill construction and alterations.



**BAR CASE #2008-0114,0115,0116 9/17/2008**

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting a Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for 532 North Washington Street. The HVAC equipment is proposed to be located on the proposed addition at 532 North Washington Street. The proposed roof plan indicates the placement of three HVAC units on the middle portion of the addition.

**II. HISTORY:**

532 North Washington Street is a freestanding, two-story brick building at the southwest corner of North Washington and Pendleton streets. It is a Washington-style rowhouse that was originally constructed as a residence approximately in the late 1920s. The building first appears on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1941, but not on the 1921 edition. The 1941 map depicts the building as a dwelling with a one-story front porch and a one-story rear porch, as well as depicting several two-story dwellings with one-story front porches on the west side of the 500 and 600 blocks of North Washington Street. An undated photograph confirms the presence of a one-story front porch with a standing seam metal porch roof. The building retains its original one-over-one double hung wood windows and concrete sills. The front elevation of the building is notable for its use of a textured brick set in deeply recessed mortar joints.

In 2002, the Board approved an application with conditions for alterations to the windows and doors (BAR Case # 2002-00224, September 4, 2002). In this case the Board conditioned that the applicant retain and repair the existing wood windows. In 2004, the applicant made an application for demolition/encapsulation and an infill addition (BAR Case # 2004-00244 and BAR Case # 2004-00245). The application was deferred from the November 17, 2004 hearing due to unresolved zoning issues. The cases were determined inactive by March 9, 2006. BAR files include a letter of opposition from the property owner at 528 North Washington, citing concerns that windows would be blocked.

The initial recent submission was reviewed by the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC). On July 25, 2008, Sally Ann Greer, chair, provided comments from UDAC regarding the project and requesting that the Board defer the application. UDAC was concerned about the waiver of the rooftop screening requirement for HVAC equipment, as well as the parking reduction and encroachment on Washington Street. The latter two concerns will be addressed through the development review process.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The zoning ordinance requires screening of rooftop HVAC equipment. However, Section 6-403(3) allows the BAR to waive or modify the screening requirement of section 6-403(B)(1) if the board deems such a requirement to be architecturally appropriate.

When considering the request for a Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement, one must consider the visibility of the HVAC equipment and/or screening from the public right-of-way. The *Design Guidelines* advise that “HVAC equipment should be located in a visually inconspicuous area of a building” and that “HVAC equipment should not disrupt the architectural character of a structure.” Staff finds that the proposed placement of the rooftop HVAC units will be minimally visible from the public right-of-way. The applicant has submitted sight lines that illustrate the minimal visibility of the proposed rooftop equipment.

Staff recommends painting the equipment in a color that will further allow the equipment to recede. Staff notes that in certain circumstances screening can actually increase the visibility of the rooftop equipment. Staff has no objections to the proposed Waiver of Rooftop Screening Requirement should the Board approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the infill construction.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval for a Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement provided that a Certificate of Appropriateness is approved by the Board for the infill construction and alterations.

## **V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The proposed project impacts on existing window openings for the adjacent property on the north interior lot line. The applicant shall meet with Code Enforcement Engineering section to resolve this conflict. Proposed construction shall comply with C-1 below.
- F-2 Verification is required from the adjacent property owner affected in F-1 above that the existing windows are not Code requirements for ventilation or emergency egress.
- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. (USBC 704.5).
- C-2 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-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- 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 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-7 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-8 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-9 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.
- C-10 Required exits, parking, and accessibility within the building for persons with disabilities must comply with USBC Chapter 11. Handicapped accessible bathrooms shall also be provided.
- C-11 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-12 A demolition permit is required for the proposed project (USBC 108.1).
- C-13 Where appliances are located  $\leq 10'$  from a roof edge or open side with a drop  $\geq 24"$ , guards shall be provided (USBC 2801.1)

Historic Alexandria:

Approve.

VI. IMAGES

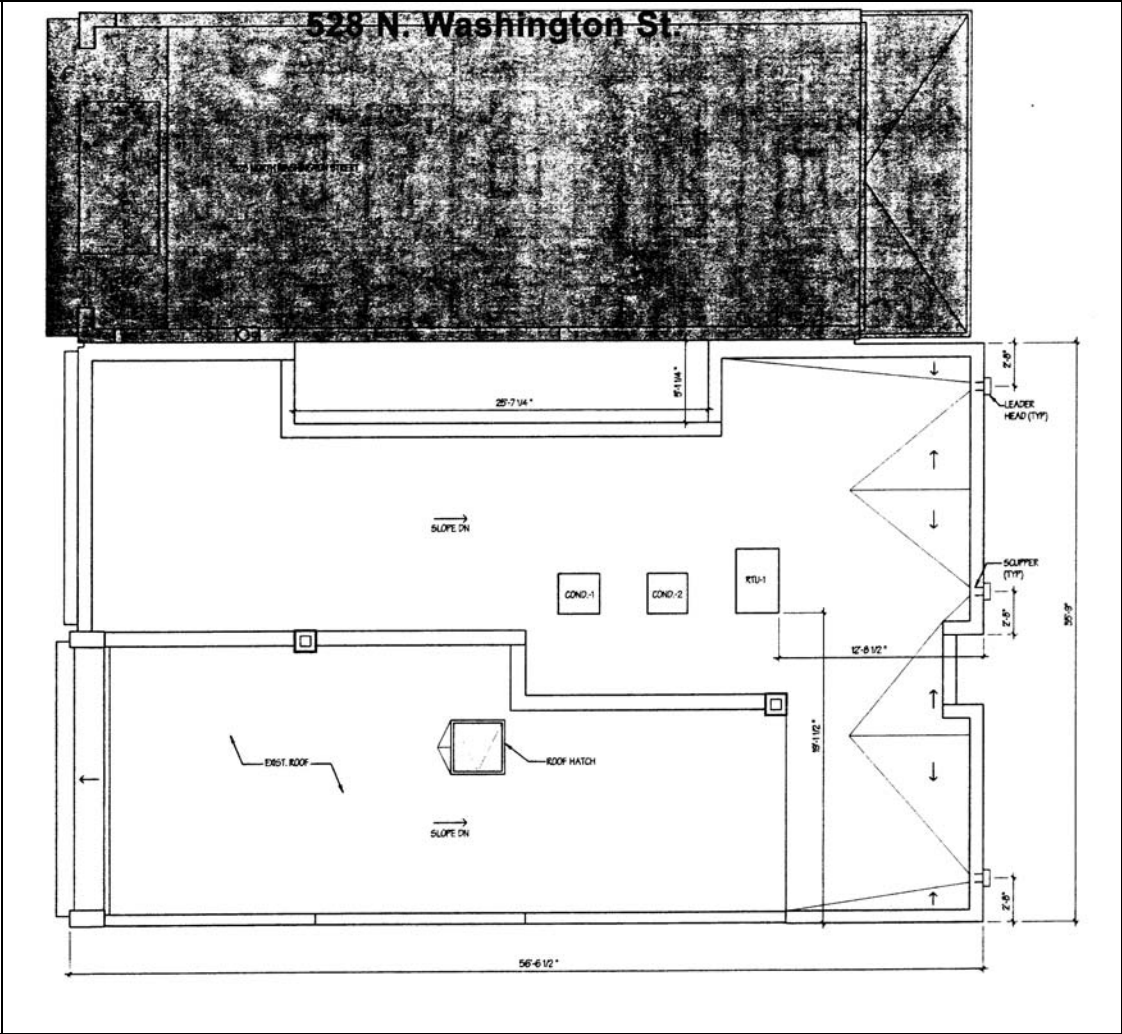


Figure 1. Proposed roof plan.

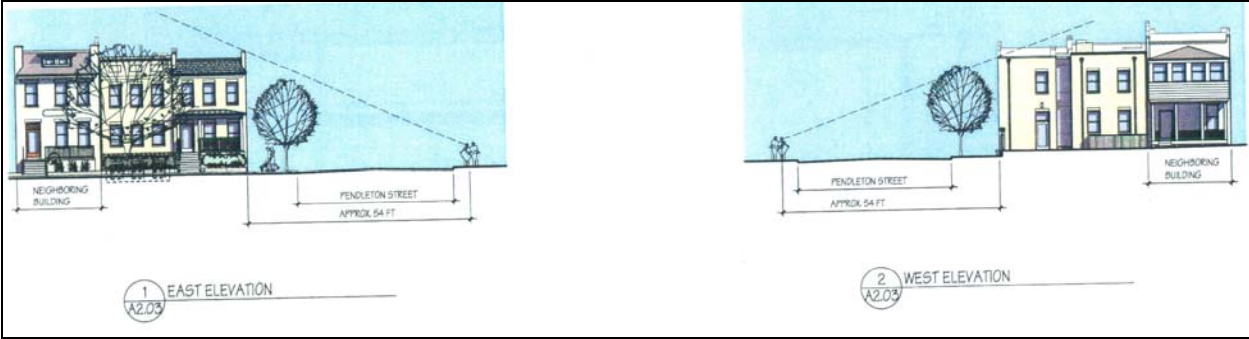


Figure 2. Sight line of HVAC equipment across Pendleton Street.

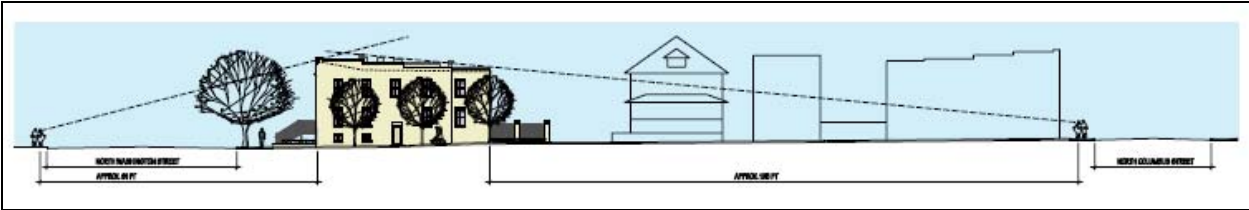


Figure 3. Sight lines of HVAC equipment from North Washington and North Columbus streets.