

Docket Item # 15  
BAR CASE #2008-0192

BAR Meeting  
November 5, 2008

**ISSUE:** Amendment to Previously Approved Plans

**APPLICANT:** Nels Nordquist

**LOCATION:** 408 Duke Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential

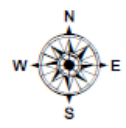
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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the consideration of relocating the arbor so as not to block the windows of 404 Duke Street.



**BAR CASE #2008-0192**

**11/5/2008**



**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for amendment to previously approved plans for the construction of an arbor at 408 Duke Street. An arbor structure had been approved by the Board in 2006, in a different location, at the southeast corner of the side yard. The original arbor was to be used as parking structure at the end of a driveway.

The current arbor is reduced in size from the prior proposed arbor. It is constructed of four columns, measuring 7'11" in height, with two beams resting on top of the columns. A series of beaver tail rafters rests on the posts, running east to west. The arbor is 11'2" in length, 9'4" in height at the top of the beams, and a depth of 5'6". The columns are squared with molding on the tops and bottom. The arbor is constructed of cedar painted white, with the post set in concrete footings. The floor of the arbor is a paving tile. A lattice screen feature is on the back side of the arbor. The original arbor was to be constructed in the southeast corner of the lot, to be approximately 18' in length, and 10'6" in width and 10' in height, with beaver tail rafters and wood Doric columns.

The arbor in its current location is on the eastern side of the side yard of 408 Duke Street, adjacent to an easement with 404 Duke Street. The columns of the arbor are 45 feet from Duke Street, and 3 feet from the neighboring property line, outside of the easement (this easement is a private property easement between the two property owners, not a City regulated easement). In this location, the arbor is in front of the kitchen window of 404 Duke Street. According to the applicant, the arbor was reduced in size and relocated in the course of the design of the landscaping master plan. The arbor was placed symmetrically in relation to the addition, directly across from the central French doors that open from the living room into the side garden. According to the applicant, the Planning & Zoning Department was contacted prior to construction to inform them of the change and whether any approvals were required. While P&Z was contacted, a BAR Staff member was not contacted. The P&Z Staffer indicated that an arbor with an open top such as this one did not require approval.

The top of the arbor is minimally visible from Duke Street.

A small shed has also been constructed in the rear of the property. However, the shed is not visible from any public right-of-way, therefore, not under the Board's purview, and does not negatively impact the open space requirements for the property.

**II. HISTORY:**

408 Duke Street is a freestanding, three and a half story, three bay brick residence. It is one of the most important buildings in the Old and Historic Alexandria District for its associative values with prominent citizens in Alexandria history. The house was built by Dr. Elisha Cullen Dick in 1795. Dr. Dick was George Washington's personal physician and attended him at the time of his death in 1799. The house was acquired by Kate Waller Barrett in 1896 and remained in her family until 1969. The Queen Street Library was named in honor of Kate Waller Barrett. She

was the co-founder of the Florence Crittenden Homes and served as the President of the American Legion Auxiliary. She was also the first woman to be honored by lowering the flag at the United States Capitol to half staff at the time of her death in 1925.

The building was constructed as a one story brick residence in 1795 and was enlarged to its present height of three stories in 1826.

Substantial additions to the east side and rear elevations were added by the Barretts in the late 19th century. In 1896, a two story wood “conservatory” was constructed on the east side of the house. This “conservatory” measured approximately 65' in length and 24' in width, nearly doubling the size of the house (Building Permit #9, 11/1/9/1896).

The present configuration of the building is the result of demolition work carried out by a previous owner of the building following purchase of the structure in 1969 until sale of the house in 2002. Much of the work that was performed on the house during this period was done without building permits and/or approval of the Board.

During that time, the east wall of the main historic block, flounder and connector section were substantially reworked and repointed. Staff inspection of the flounder wing indicated that the repointing was carried out in running bond with Portland cement mortar and that no ghost marks of the 1896 conservatory addition are visible. The reworking of the rear brick work of the flounder wing is so substantial that there is no visible brick bond pattern that would indicate a 19<sup>th</sup> century date of construction for this section.

In 2006, the Board approved a Permit to Demolish and a Certificate of Appropriateness for an Addition and Alterations (BAR Case #'s 2006-0033 and 2006-0034). In 2004, the Board approved a gate at the rear alley entrance to the property (BAR Case #2004-0137, 7/21/04). In 2002, the Board approved the conversion of an existing window on the east side of the house façade into a new entryway to permit access to the house directly from the street (BAR Case #2002-0181, 7/17/02).

In June of 2008, BAR Staff became aware of the change in the arbor's location, and its visibility from Duke Street. The applicant was contacted to discuss the situation and the change. The applicant has been responsive to Staff and filed this current application.

### **III: ANALYSIS:**

The arbor meets the requirement of the Zoning Ordinance.

Arbors or pergolas fall under the category of “Accessory Structure and Outbuildings” in respect to the Design Guidelines. In the initial approval for the arbor in 2006, the Staff report read “Staff has no objection to the pergola which is similar to a number of other pergolas that have been approved by the Board in recent years.” There does not appear to have been much discussion by the Board regarding the arbor or pergola at the 2006 hearing.

When the applicant made the decision to change the location of the arbor, they attempted to make sure any review requirements were met. It is unfortunate that a BAR Staff member was not contacted to assist in determining the appropriate process reviews.

According to the Design Guidelines, “free standing accessory structures should complement, not compete with, the architecture of the main building. The materials of accessory structures should follow the historic usage of materials. For example, accessory structures were often constructed of simpler materials than the main building. The materials of accessory structures should not detract from the materials of the main building. Exterior finishes for accessory structures should be selected to complement the main building. For examples, accessory structures constructed of wood should be painted to match or complement the predominant color of the main structure.”

On the merits of the design and materiality of the arbor, Staff believes the arbor meets the requirements of the Ordinance and is appropriate and compatible to the historic house at 408 Duke Street. Furthermore, as constructed, the arbor really functions as a garden structure, rather than a parking structure, as was the traditional function of arbors and other garden elements. Also, the arbor is only minimally visible from Duke Street.

However, the issue of concern is the placement of the arbor in front of the kitchen window of 404 Duke Street. It is unfortunate that this is the location selected for the placement. While Staff support’s the design of the arbor, Staff would recommend that consideration should be given to relocating the arbor to a location that does not block the adjacent windows of 404 Duke Street.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the consideration of relocating the arbor so as not to block the windows of 404 Duke Street.

**V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Enforcement:

No comments received.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

R- Approve subject to input from neighboring home whose window is block by lattice screen.

VI. IMAGES

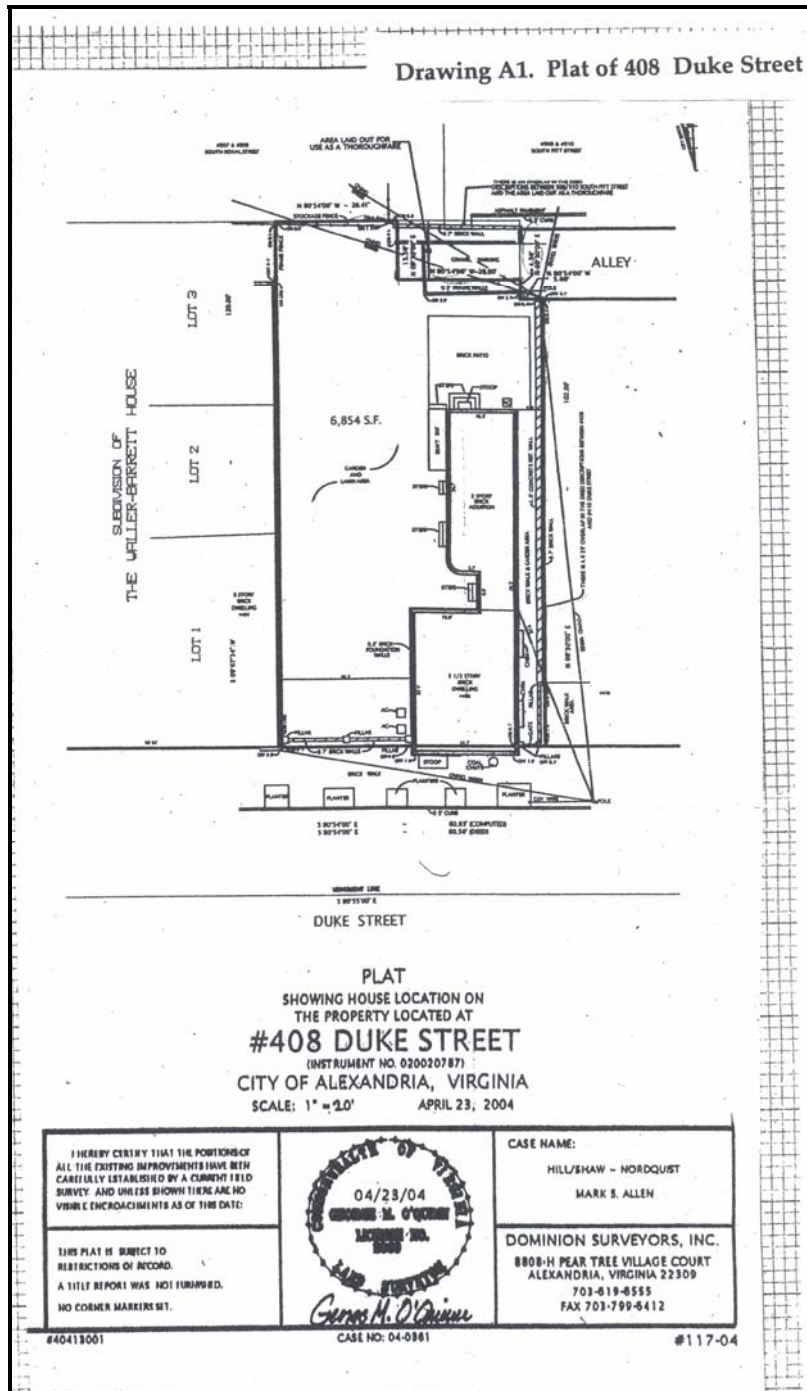


Figure 1: Plat of 408 Duke Street

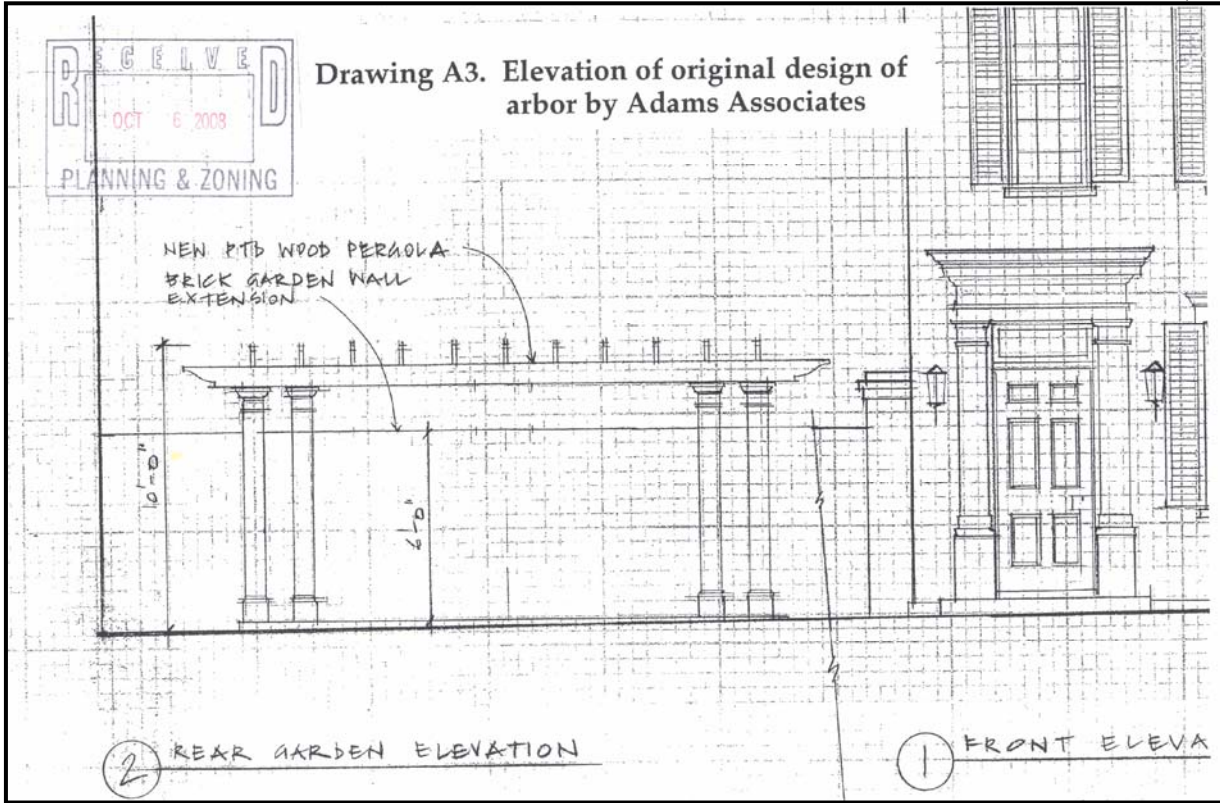


Figure 2: Original Arbor Design



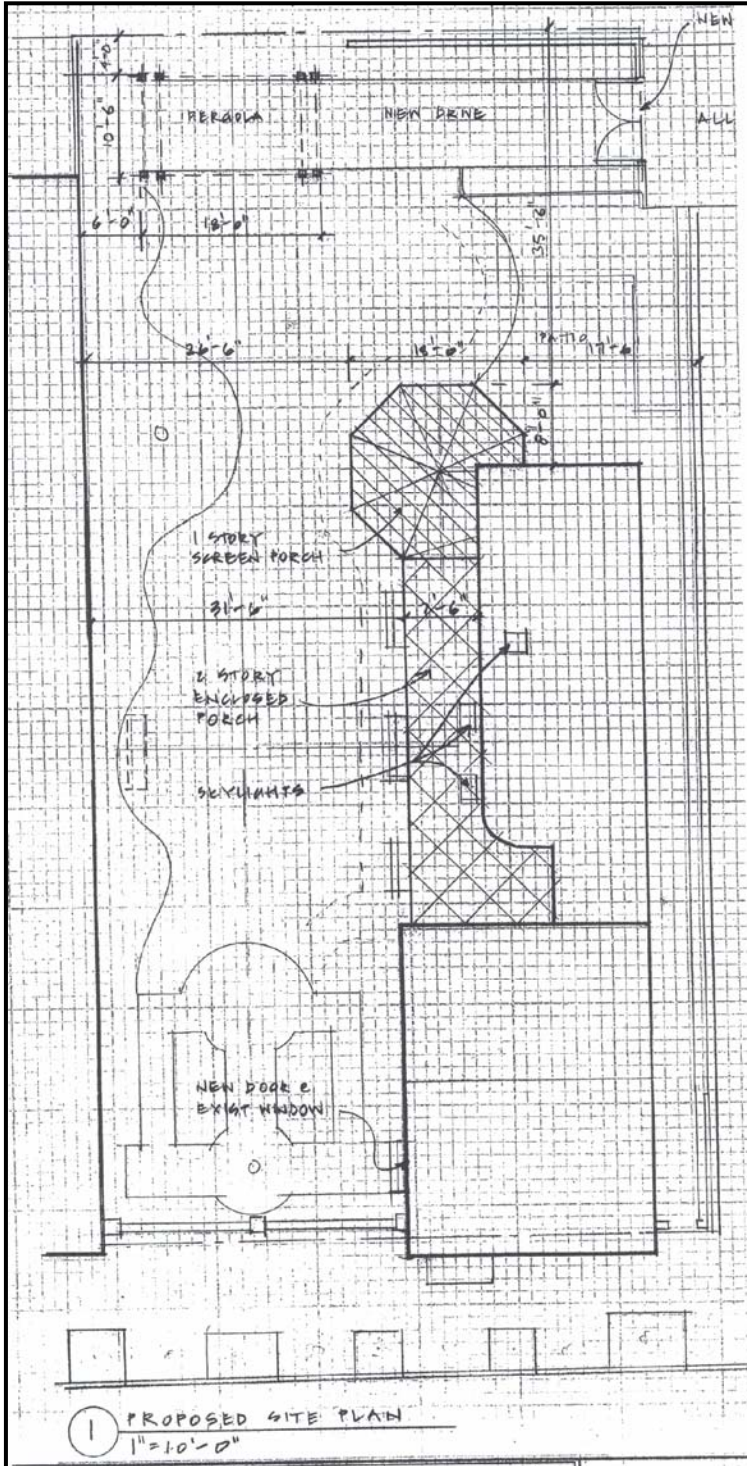


Figure 3: Site Plan as Originally Proposed

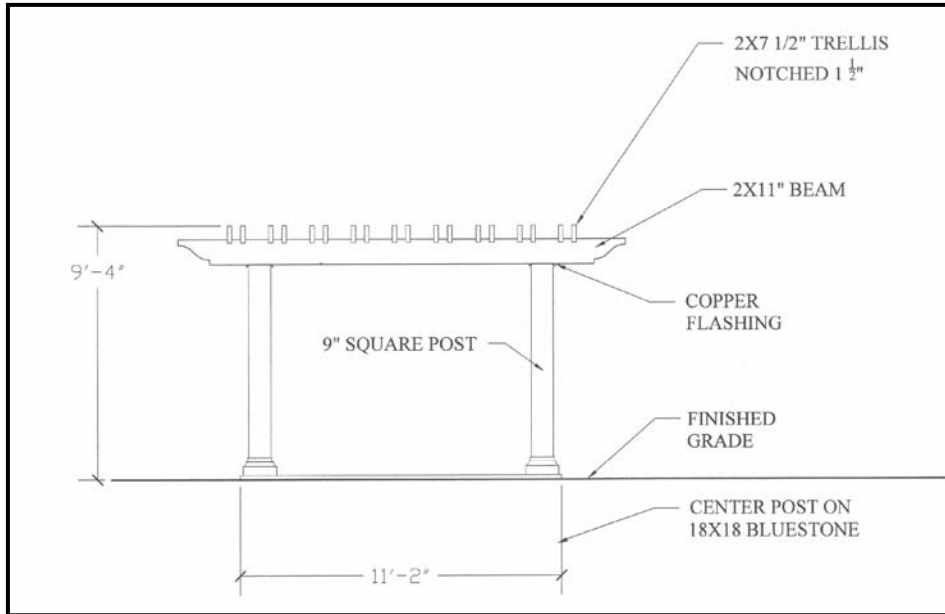


Figure 4: Arbor as constructed.

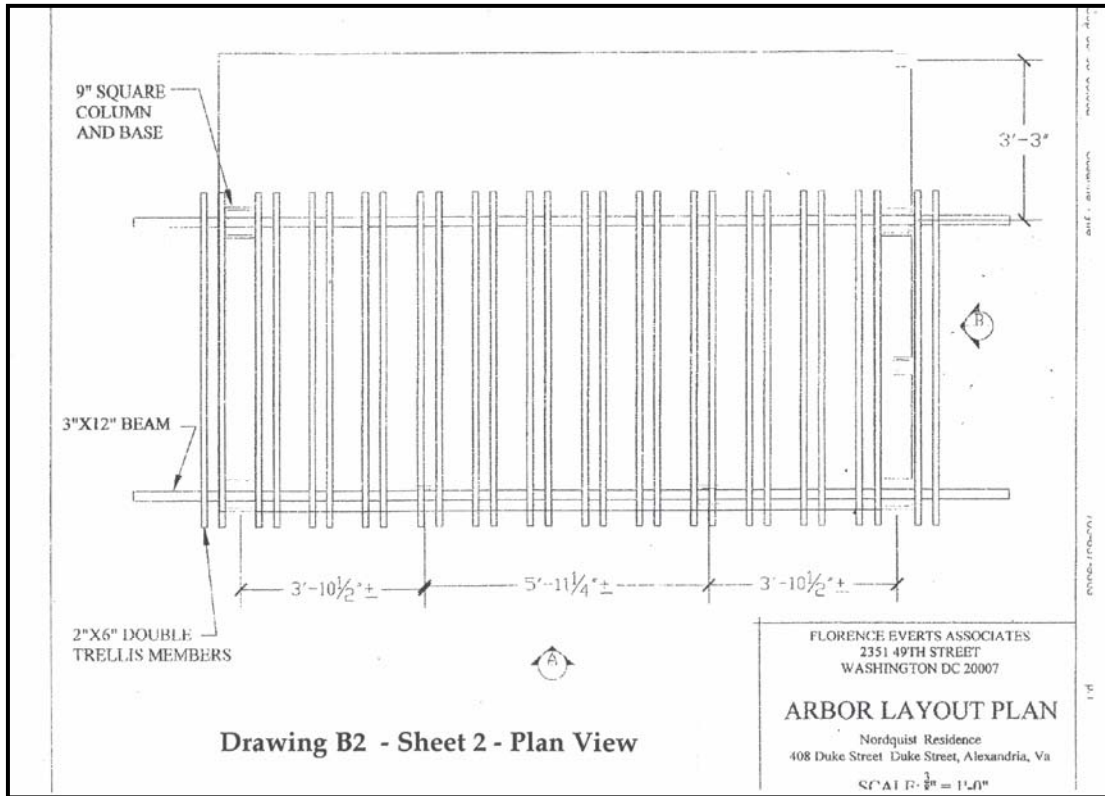


Figure 5: Plan view of arbor as constructed.

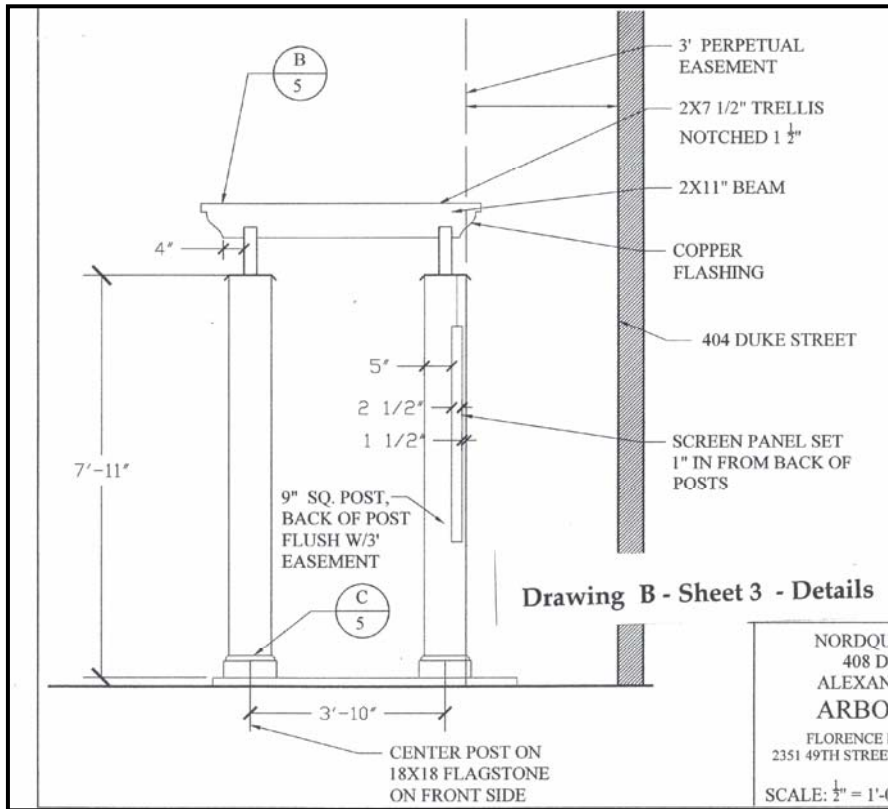


Figure 6: Detail of arbor as constructed.

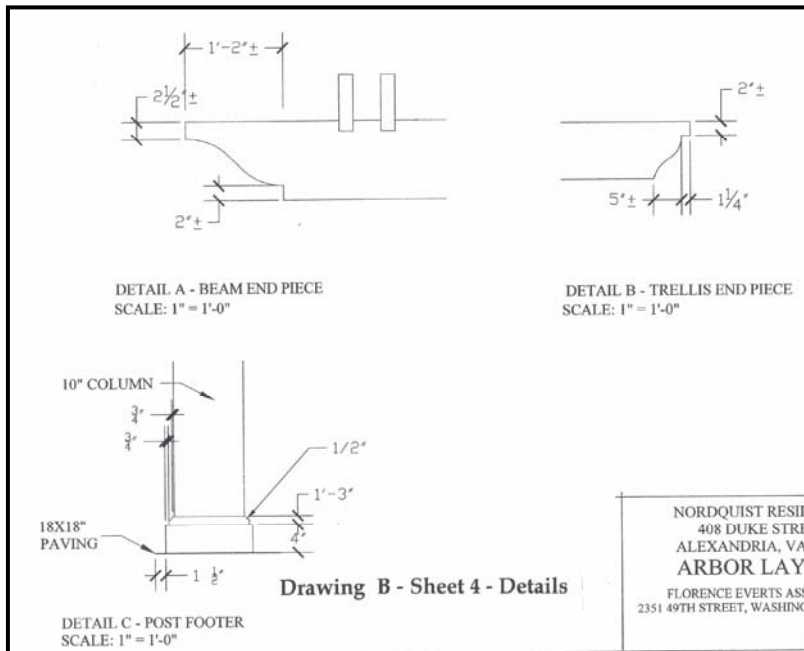


Figure 7: Details of arbor as constructed.



Figure 8: Front View of Arbor as Built



Figure 9: Side View of Arbor As Built



Figure 10: View of 408 Duke Street Garden from the Street

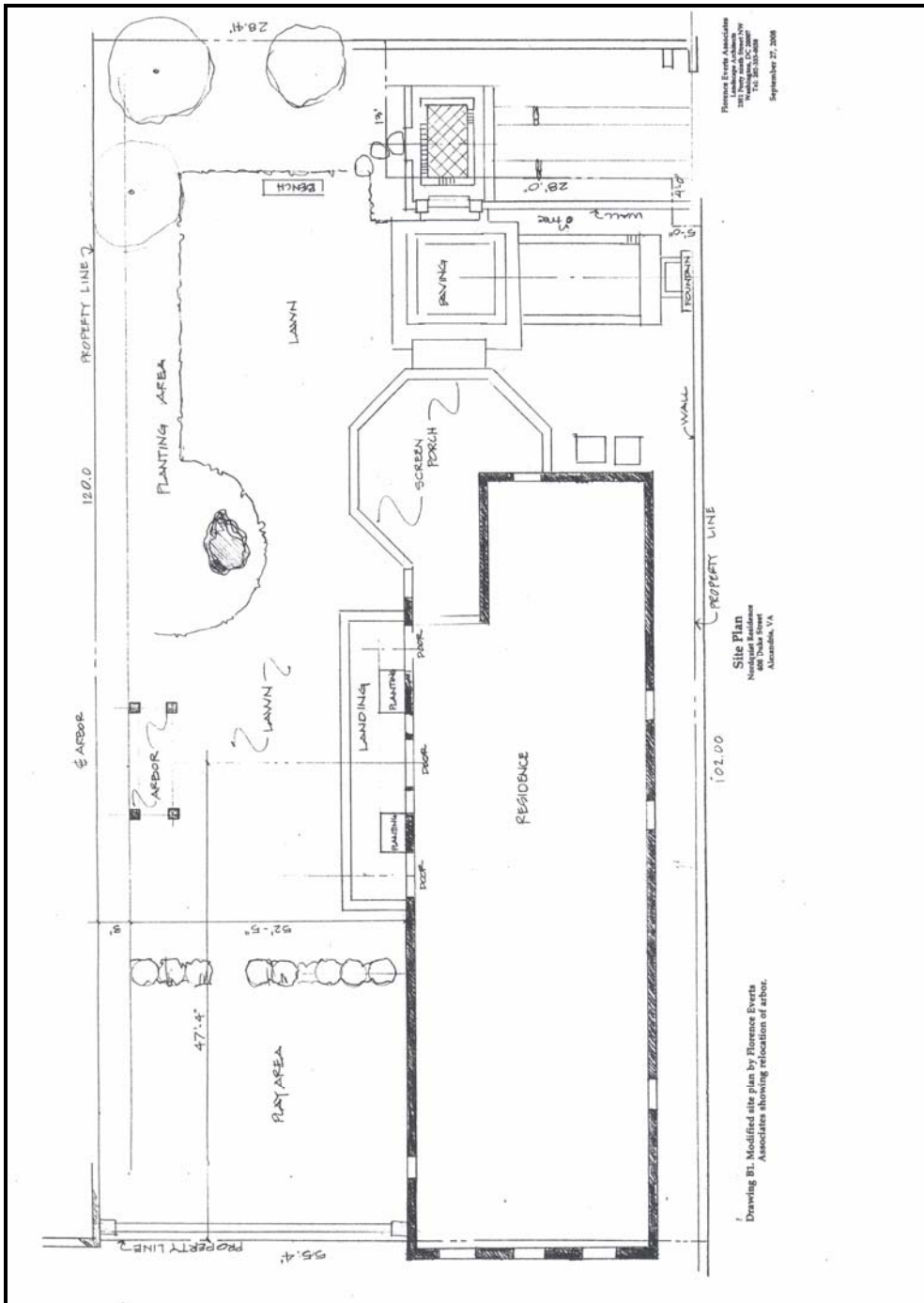


Figure 11: Site Plan showing actual location as constructed