

BAR Meeting
February 18, 2009

ISSUE: New Construction
APPLICANT: Sophie Development LLC
LOCATION: 714 Wythe Street
ZONE: OC/Office Commercial

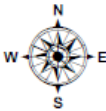
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application for new construction with the following conditions:

1. *The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
2. *The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
3. *The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
4. The statements in archaeology conditions above (marked with an asterisk) shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.



BAR CASE #2008-0193

2/18/2009



UPDATE:

The Board deferred a decision on the case at the January 7, 2009 hearing. The Board disagreed with the Staff analysis for the submission for that hearing and deferred the case with the following considerations:

1. That the Applicant revise the design of the front elevation to bring the front doors forward.
2. That the Applicant restudy the tower portion of the rear exterior.
3. That the Applicant restudy the side elevations to bring down the cornice line of the roof from the third floor to the second floor.

While the Board expressed support for the project and overall design, concerns remained regarding the front doors and the rear tower. The Board generally supported the use of shed dormers, though some members continued to express concern. The Board found the proposed building materials acceptable. Although the percentage of open space is beyond the purview of the BAR, several Board members voiced questions over the use of the roof deck as open space and loss of ground level open space. The Board also urged the applicant to lower the perceived height of the side elevations through a change in the cornice line.

After the hearing, Planning and Zoning Staff met with the Applicant to discuss solutions to the Board's concerns. The Applicant provided various design schemes to Staff prior to making a revised submission. Staff worked with the Applicant to select a scheme that most appropriately satisfied the Board's concerns.

The revisions made by the applicant for this submission include the following:

Front Elevation:

- Bringing forward the front doors and eliminating the deep recessed entryway
- Revising the front stoop to a double stair encroaching 3' into the public right-of-way

Rear Elevation:

- Eliminating the projecting rear "tower"
- Proposing an 8' fence on the rear deck that will not be visible from the public right-of-way

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval for the construction of two semi-detached, townhouses located at 714 Wythe Street.

The applicant is proposing a three-story masonry and frame building that will contain two semi-detached townhouses fronting on Wythe Street on a currently paved vacant lot. The building footprint will measure 37.5' by 52", with the front building plane set back 11" from the front

property line. The highest point of the roof was originally a low-rise penthouse with roof access at the rear of the building that measured 40' in height. The highest point of the current proposed roof at the gable ridge is 38'3". The roof height at the rear of the frame portion will measure 34'10". Each townhouse will be a mirror image of the other, both internally and externally. The applicant has designed the townhouses to have several "green" features.

Front (North) Elevation

The front (north) elevation is two stories plus an attic story with shed dormers. This elevation is symmetrical with a six-bay pattern, three bays for each townhouse. In the current submission the paired entry doors are brought forward, with only a slight recess of 1' from the front building wall. The revised stairs are no longer recessed and instead the front stoop is a split, double stair which projects 3' into the public right-of-way. The stoop will be brick, with treads and landing of limestone, with a simple black wrought iron railing. The opening below the stoop will house meters and will be screened with metal access doors that will match the decorative railing at the windows on the first level. On the previous submission, the applicant proposed a central double entryway with recessed flagstone stairs leading to side-by-side entry doors on the front elevation with a brick foundation with a brick water table. The original submission had dark gray ashlar blocks proposed for the foundation.

The main block of the building will be faced with red brick laid in a running bond pattern. The brick is identified as Tuscan Series Red Cliff Modular red brick. Between the first and second stories will be an area laid in a Flemish bond pattern with accent headers in charcoal-colored brick. The applicant also proposes recessed decorative brickwork (vertically oriented at the center of the building) at the second story and a break in the cornice to differentiate the two townhouses. The gable roof is proposed to be a dark gray synthetic slate and have red brick chimneys on either end. The front door will be a six-panel American red oak door with a single light transom. The wood windows will all be one-over-one, double-hung, double-glazed with limestone sills and lintels. The first floor windows will have a low decorative iron railing. The second-story windows will be slightly smaller in size but otherwise the same. At the roof, there will be two shed dormers, each with a series of three one-over-one, double-hung, double-glazed windows. The proposed shed dormers in the current scheme are smaller (three windows instead of four windows) and lower in height than the original submission. The cornice will have a simple profile with a break at the center and is proposed to be constructed of Fypon with an internal gutter.

Side (East and West) Elevations

The side (east and west) elevations continue the form and materials found on the front elevation for approximately 24' (originally 20'). This front third of the side elevations wrap around the brick from the front elevation and feature end wall chimneys. The basement level will have two single-light windows and window wells with metal grates. The first and second stories will have two one-over-one, double-hung, double-glazed wood windows with limestone sills and lintels (in the original submission the second-story windows were ganged). The third story will have

smaller ganged one-over-one, double-hung, double-glazed wood windows with limestone sills and lintels. These will be centered under the chimney. Between the windows on the first story of the brick portion will be a vent for a gas fireplace that the applicant proposes to paint the same color as the brick.

The rear portion of the building will be of frame construction with HardiePlank smooth siding. This area measures approximately 28' (originally 32') in depth. Although the original submission had a more contemporary style and fenestration, the current proposed fenestration has a more historically appropriate pattern with single windows and smaller windows at the third story. The foundation will be painted concrete with a stamped brick pattern and a wood water table. Basement windows will be single fixed wood windows. The applicant originally proposed a small central projecting "tower" that was visible on the side and rear elevations. In the current submission, the applicant has completely removed the "tower" element. In place of the low-rise roof hatch originally part of the "tower", the applicant has proposed a flat roof hatch that will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Mechanical equipment will be located on the roof but will not be visible due to a parapet enclosing a roof deck. At the first story there will be two decks separated by an 8' foot fence that will be minimally visible from the public right-of-way.

On a strip of ground running along the side elevations, adjacent to the alleys, the applicant has proposed porous grass pavers to replace the existing hard surface. The porous pavers will comprise a strip approximately 3' wide along the side property lines. In the original submission the applicant proposed to install fifteen bollards along each side elevation but has eliminated the bollards and replaced them with foundation plantings. A 6' wood shadowbox fence will enclose the rear yard and will be located 3' within the side property lines.

Rear (South) Elevation

The rear elevation will be three stories and will be symmetrical. On the first story each side will have three contiguous full-length, single-light openings (one door and two fixed windows), each with a transom. The first story door will be a single-light wood door. Originally, the second and third stories were proposed to each have a set of three contiguous one-over-one, double-hung, wood windows. In the current proposal the second and third stories each have two one-over-one, double-hung single wood windows. The center projecting "tower" element has been eliminated. The rear elevation will also have metal downspouts painted to match the trim.

Materials

The siding is proposed to be HardiePlank in a beige color. The HardiePlank siding will be Navajo Beige 7.25 smooth horizontal plank siding. The windows, trim, door surrounds, and deck are proposed to be wood and painted a darker beige color (Duron Sandy Lane). The cornice is proposed to be made of Fypon, a synthetic material, and will have a built-in gutter.

The windows and doors are proposed to be wood. The windows are one-over-one, double-hung with a tilt sash. The proposed windows are the Jefferson 100 Double Hung wood series by MW.

Wall lanterns are proposed at the front and rear entrances. The propose fixtures will be hand-wrought iron with a round bulb. The fixture will measure W11” x H19” x L13” and is described as the Hunter/Kenroy Vidalia Small Wall Lantern.

The rear yard fence is proposed to be of wood, in a shadowbox style and measuring 6’ in height. The applicant is proposing a lamp post at the rear of the property adjacent to the parking area. The lamp post is 12’ in height and made of cast aluminum in what is described by the manufacturer as “classic turn of the century.”

II. HISTORY:

By 1896, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps depict a two-story house with projecting bay set back from the street at this location. By 1902, an enlarged house and an outbuilding at the rear property line were located on the site. By 1958, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps depict the site as an almost empty lot with two small outbuildings located at the rear of the property. The site is currently a paved surface parking area with a total lot area of 4,902 square feet and is surrounded by a ten foot public alley.

The applicant has been investigating with Staff the various options for developing this property for a number of years. The development options have included an office building, a multi-unit condominium development and the current proposal of two semi-detached, single-family residences. Staff encouraged the applicant to choose a development that would make the best use of the subject property with the least negative impact on the community. Planning Department BAR and Development Staff have met with the applicant over the past two years to review and revise the proposal.

In September 2008, the Planning Commission voted to approve a request to subdivide the subject property (SUB #2008-0002). The property was subdivided into two lots, each with two parking spaces, to accommodate the proposed development.

On November 5, 2008 the Board deferred the application for further study. The applicant submitted a revised design for the December 17, 2008 hearing, but later requested a deferral from that hearing. On January 7, 2009 the Board again deferred the application for further study. Throughout the BAR process, Planning and Zoning Staff have met with the applicant on several occasions.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed project complies with SUB #2008-0002 and Zoning Ordinance regulations. If the HVAC or mechanical equipment on the roof is visible from a public right-of-way, it must be screened or a Waiver of Rooftop Screening Requirement must be obtained from the Board. The

applicant may be required to file a grading plan administered by T&ES. The front stoop is permitted to encroach into the public right-of-way up to four feet per the Alexandria City Code Sec. 5-2-29.

Staff notes that since the subject property does not front onto Washington Street the Washington Street Standards and Guidelines do not apply to this project. However, due to the proximity of the project to Washington Street, Staff has taken into consideration the project's compatibility with the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Staff finds that the latest revisions found in this submission, are consistent with the *Design Guidelines* and the direction given by the Board at the previous hearing. Specifically, bringing the front entrance forward and creating a double stair stoop, as well as eliminating the rear "tower" element, have been great improvements to the project.

In considering the application of the *Design Guidelines* to this project, Staff has considered *Chapter 6: New Construction-Residential* as well as guidelines for specific architectural elements. The proposed building will be two townhouses but will appear as a single, larger building.

Staff finds that the proposed building generally meets the *Design Guidelines* set forth for new construction for residential buildings. The *Guidelines* note that "designs should complement and reflect the architectural heritage of the City." The proposed building is reflective of architectural styles found in the city, most notably a Colonial Revival style. The *Guidelines* also note that "new and untried approaches to common design problems are encouraged and should not be rejected out of hand simply because they appear to be outside the common practices outlined in the guidelines." This location has a unique design setting in that it is surrounded by a public alley on three sides, requiring special consideration.

In addition, the *Guidelines* advise that "the Boards favor contextual background buildings." At this location, on Wythe Street between Washington and North Columbus streets, the architectural character of the surrounding buildings is varied. Across the street, fronting on Washington Street, is a late 1950s motel, and across the street fronting on North Columbus Street, is historic St. Joseph's Catholic Church. To the east, fronting on Washington Street, are a series of early twentieth-century rowhouses that have been converted to commercial use. To the west, fronting on North Columbus Street, are nineteenth-century two-story rowhouses, generally still residential in nature. Thus, the adjacent properties reflect a range of architectural styles, forms and uses, allowing for a broad interpretation of what would be considered an appropriate contextual background building at this location. Staff finds that the proposed design—a brick building with a frame rear portion and traditional fenestration patterns—appropriately serves as a background building.

In general, Staff finds that the proposed building satisfies the *Design Guidelines* for new residential construction as it relates to: style, massing, width, siting, roof, spacing between buildings, building orientation, architectural detailing, directional expression, materials, utilities, and color. The proposed building has many architectural elements and features that contribute to its compatibility with the historic buildings found in the district. Staff finds that the proposed building is responsive to the needs and tastes of the current time while also maintaining compatibility with the district. Staff notes that this building illustrates how certain “green” building measures can successfully be incorporated into a design for a building in a historic district.

Staff is supportive of the current scheme. What follows is a discussion and analysis of each elevation.

Front (North) Elevation

Staff finds that the style, massing, height and fenestration of the front elevation are generally appropriate. The three-story building reads as a two-story-plus-attic building and reflects the general architectural patterns found throughout the historic district.

In the current scheme, Staff finds that the front entrance has been successfully revised by bringing the doors forward and creating a double stair split stoop encroaching onto the sidewalk. Staff finds that this is most compatible with traditional entryways and stoops. The materials proposed are consistent and compatible with materials for the rest of the project. In addition, the revised entrance at the front building plane articulates the building as two distinct townhouses.

The first story windows are taller than the second story windows, reflecting traditional fenestration patterns. The *Design Guidelines* note the following about dormers: “dormer sashes should be operable and should be the same type as the other window sashes on the structure,” “shed dormers are strongly discouraged,” and “dormers should match the existing proportions of the building and the windows.” Staff has informed the applicant that shed dormers on prominent elevations are generally not approved by the Board. The applicant has studied various dormer configurations and styles and concluded that the shed is most appropriate for this design as it minimizes height and prominence on the third story. The applicant provided studies of various dormer types and configurations to BAR Staff and the City Architect. While the *Guidelines* discourage shed dormers, it is important to note that the *Guidelines* encourage reviewing each design on a case-by-case basis and to acknowledge that the *Guidelines* are general directions rather than strict prescriptives. Staff also notes that there are some examples of front elevation dormers on historic buildings within the district. As a result, Staff finds that the proposed shed dormers, smaller and more refined than those originally proposed, are the most supportable design solution for this project.

In earlier analysis, Staff noted that a more historically appropriate approach to this type of building (two townhouses as one building), was to delineate the two dwellings through the

application of a small amount of ornament or detailing. Staff does not object to the central entrance and finds that the revised front entryway and stoop coherently expresses the differentiation of the two townhouse units. Staff finds that the use of a recessed element at the center of the limestone lintel, a vertical line of recessed brick at the second story, and a break in the cornice at the center property line successfully differentiates the building as two townhouses.

Staff finds that the proposed front door, a six-panel oak door, and transom are acceptable for the architectural style of this building.

Side (East and West) Elevations

The side elevations are both bounded by public alleys, making the side elevations highly visible. Staff finds that the transition on the side elevations from the brick portion to the frame portion is appropriate. As houses evolve and change over time, the introduction of a new building material, such as siding on a rear frame addition to a main block of brick, often occurs. However, what generally makes such different materials and forms successful is that the rear portion is lower than the main block. The applicant previously revised the design to extend the depth of the brick portion, thereby reducing some of the original bulk of the frame portion. The current design no longer has the rear projecting “tower” element which Staff finds to be an improvement over the previous schemes.

Upon review of the original submission, Staff was concerned that the proposed fenestration on the frame portion was disjointed from the front elevation and generally inappropriate. The applicant previously revised the fenestration of the side elevation to be more historically appropriate through the use of single windows and a reduction in size of the third story windows.

Staff has no objection to the use of porous grass pavers running along the side elevations. Staff finds that the use of foundation plantings is more appropriate on the side elevations than the plastic bollards originally proposed.

Rear (South) Elevation

The rear elevation will be visible from the alleys and from Pendleton Street. The reduced ornamentation on this elevation and the simple fenestration and reinforces the hierarchy of elevations. The rear yard will also have a 6’ high wood fence, making the first story less visible. At the deck, the fence will be 8’ in height. While such height is generally discouraged, Staff finds that it will be minimally visible from the public right-of-way and is acceptable in this circumstance.

Materials

The applicant has proposed several materials that the Board has approved on new construction in the historic district. Non-traditional materials proposed include HardiePlank, Fypon, and EcoStar synthetic slate. Staff finds no objection to these proposed materials. Regarding the HardiePlank, Staff notes that, in conformance with the Fiber Cement Policy, that the nails not

show in the installation of the siding and that smooth (non-simulated wood grain) siding be installed. Staff has no objection to the proposed wall lanterns. Staff notes that the applicant desires a lamp post at the rear of the property for safety concerns and finds that the proposed selection is generally acceptable and will be minimally visible.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application for new construction with the following conditions:

1. *The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
2. *The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
3. *The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
4. The statements in archaeology conditions above (marked with an asterisk) shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Administration:

- 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 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-2 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-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-5 New construction 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 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Alexandria Archaeology:

Archaeology Findings:

F-1 Tax records indicate that a small house owned by Captain James Campbell stood on 1/4-acre of this city block facing Columbus Street in 1810. The property was valued at \$250.00 at

that time. The exact address of the house is not known, and the structure appears to have been gone by 1830. Subsequent historical documents indicate that the current development property is located on the site of the stables of the Washington Street Corral built by the Union Army during the Civil War. By 1896, a house was present on this lot. Construction and demolition of the 1890's house would have caused some disturbance to the previous resources, which were fairly ephemeral. Given the scale of this project and the post-Civil War disturbance, the property has limited potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into residential life in 19th-century Alexandria, and into military activities during the Civil War. The applicant must fulfill the requirements below to insure that significant information about the past is not lost as a result of this development.

Recommendations:

*1. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

*2. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.

*3. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

4. The statements in archaeology conditions above (marked with an asterisk) shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. An approved Grading Plan must be attached to the building permit application. The Grading Plan is required because the submitted documentation indicates the construction of a new home. In summary, City Code Section 8-1-22(d) requires that a grading plan be submitted to and approved by T&ES prior to the issuance of building permits for improvements involving:

- the construction of a new home;
- construction of an addition to an existing home where either
 - the addition exceeds the area of the existing building footprint by 100% or more;
 - or
 - the construction of the addition results in less than 50% of the existing first floor exterior walls, in their entirety, remaining;

- changes to existing grade elevation of 1-foot or greater;
- changes to existing drainage patterns;
- land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or greater.

Questions regarding the processing of grading plans should be directed to the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at (703) 838-4318. Memorandum to Industry No. 02-08 was issued on April 28, 2008 and can be viewed online via the following link.

<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/tes/info/gradingPlanRequirements.pdf>

- R2. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 8-1-22 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)
- R3. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R4. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R5. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (T&ES)
- R6. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)
- R7. Compliance with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control is required for any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)

CODE REQUIREMENTS

- C-1 Roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (Sec.8-1-22) (SUB2008-0002)
- C-2 All utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (SUB2008-0002)

C-3 Pay sanitary sewer tap fee prior to release of Grading Plan. (Sec. 5-6-25.1) (SUB2008-0002)

C-4 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61) (SUB2008-0002)

Historic Alexandria:

R-1 Approve.

S-1 Substitute wood trim and clapboard for HardiePlank and Duron.

City Architect:

No additional comments received.

VI. IMAGES



Figure 1. Existing site conditions at 714 Wythe Street.



Figure 2. Looking southeast toward site from North Columbus Street, with St. Joseph's Church on left.

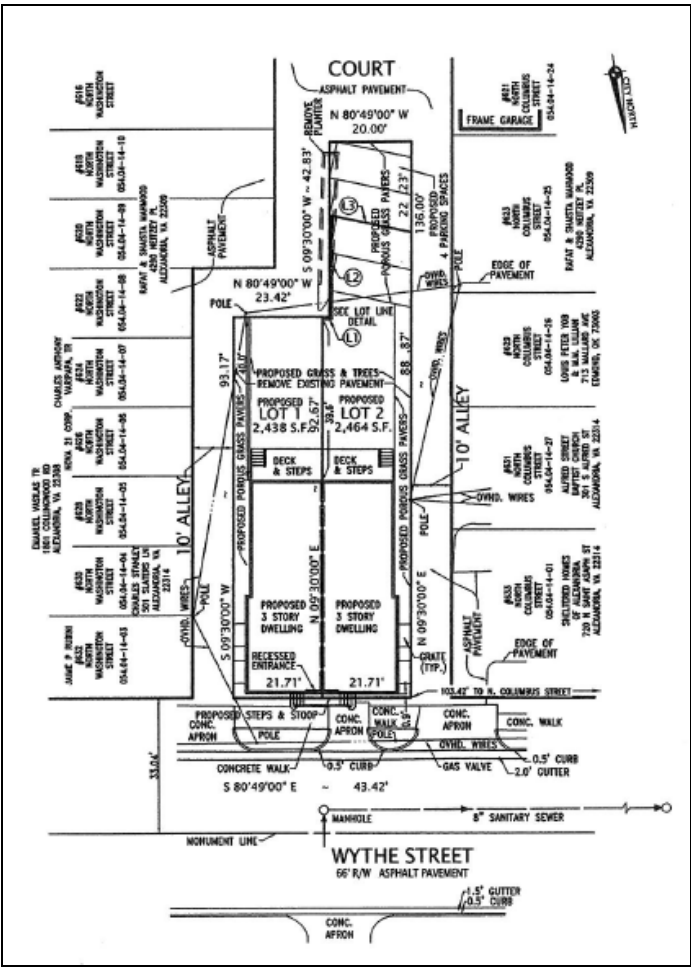


Figure 3. Plat showing subdivided lots and location of proposed dwellings.

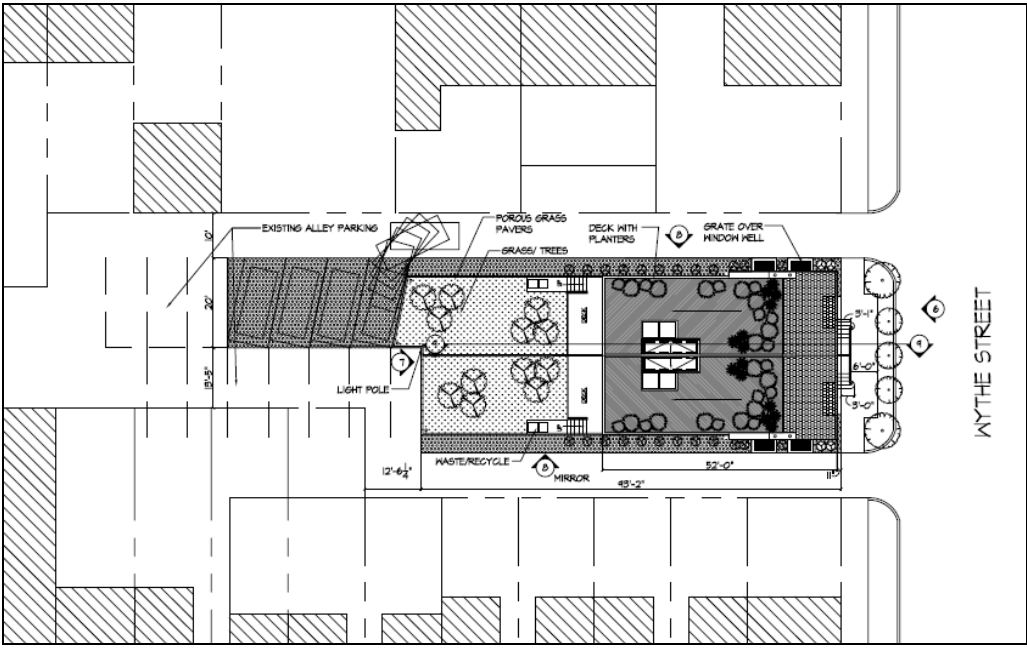


Figure 4. Proposed site plan and roof plan.



Figure 5. Proposed front (north) elevation.

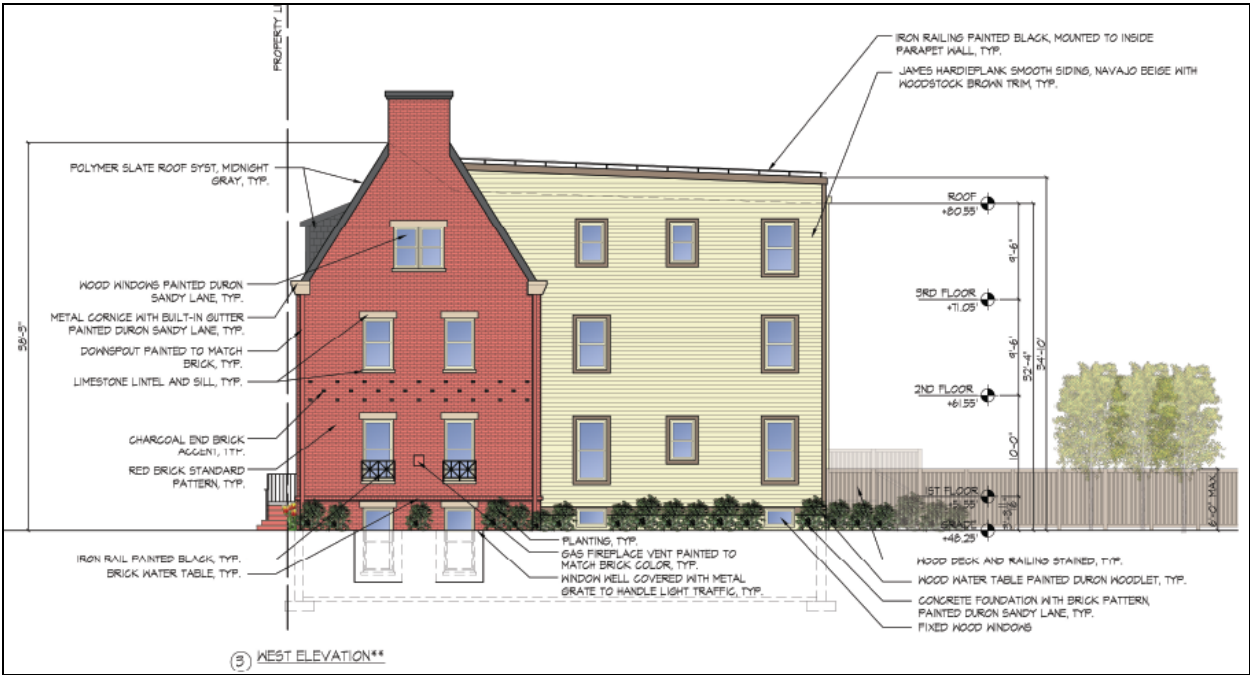


Figure 6. Proposed side (east and west) elevations.



Figure 7. Proposed rear (south) elevation.



Figure 8. Perspective drawing.

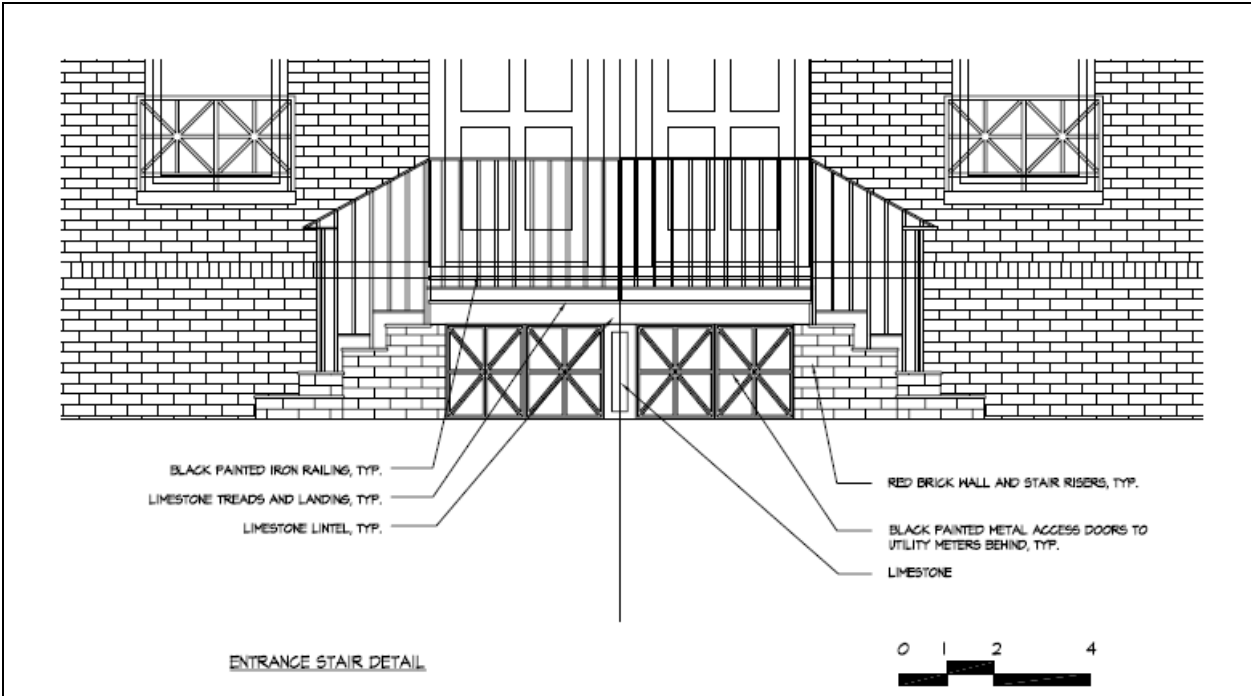


Figure 9. Detail of proposed entryway and stoop.

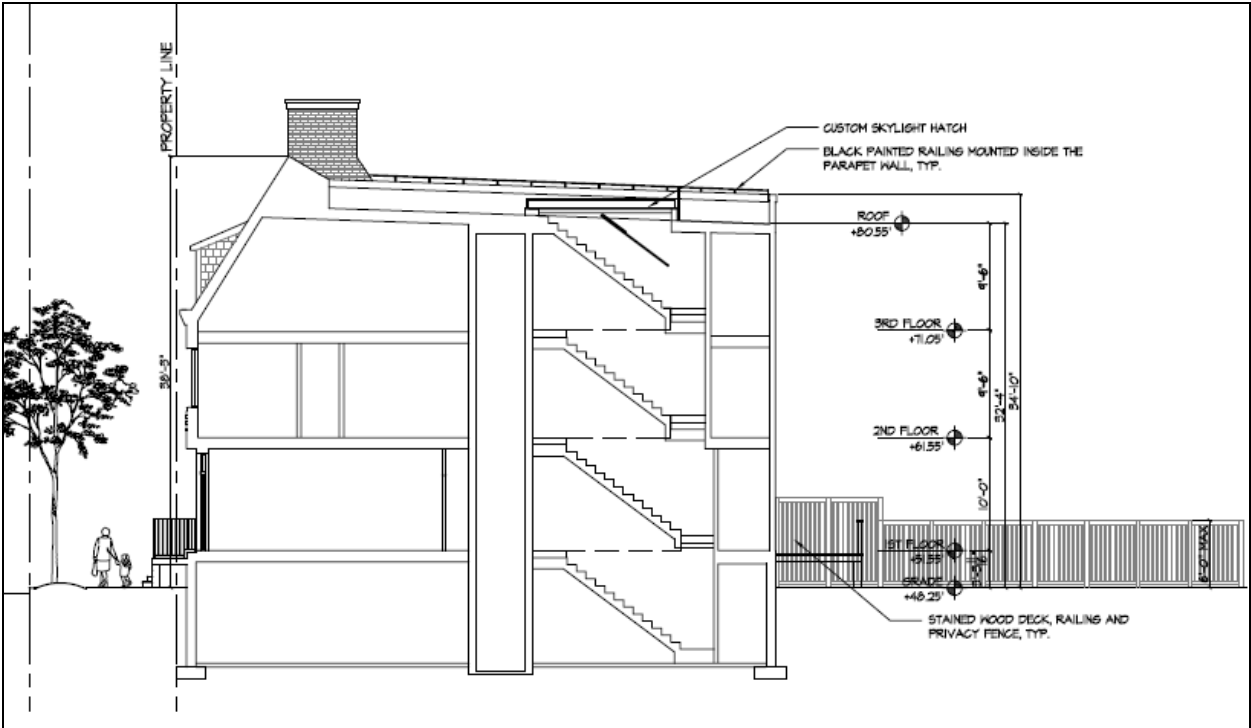


Figure 10. Section.

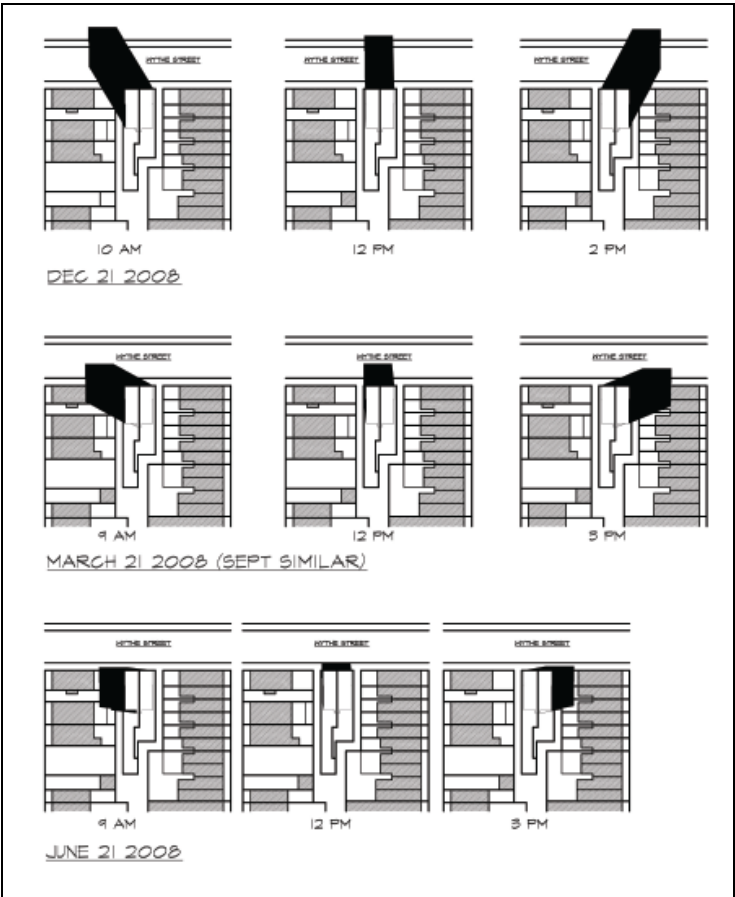


Figure 11. Shadow study.



Figure 12. Proposed wall lantern.



Figure 13. Proposed lamp post.