

Docket Item # 7
BAR CASE # 2009-0005

BAR Meeting
February 18, 2009

ISSUE: Demolition/Encapsulation
APPLICANT: William Cromley, Owner
LOCATION: 426 North Columbus Street
ZONE: CL / Commercial Low Zone

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with the following condition:

That the Applicant will contact staff after removing the artificial siding on the north elevation, to verify there is physical evidence of windows in this location. If there is no physical evidence, the Applicant will not install new windows.



Note: This item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The Applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate at 426 North Columbus Street. The permit to Demolish/Encapsulate proposes changes to the existing dwelling and outbuilding currently on the subject property. These changes include:

Outbuilding

1. Demolish the current gable-end roof form. This demolition is part of the Applicant's desire to re-orient the gable roof structure from its gable-end form to a side gable form with two shed dormers protruding from each roof slope. This structural change will be compatible with the orientation of the adjacent neighbor's side gable garage. This outbuilding is being renovated into two separate apartment units on this commercially-zoned property.
2. Encapsulate 144 sq. ft. of the rear wall of the ell extension. This encapsulation is requested as part of a proposal to construct a 9' x 13'+/- flat roof, glass "hyphen" between the rear ell of the dwelling and the renovated outbuilding. The proposed hyphen will attach, but not penetrate the exterior wall of the rear ell. A 10' x 13' +/- painted wood pergola supported by paintable, prefabricated fiberglass columns extends from the flat roof of the glass hyphen into the grass courtyard.

House

1. Encapsulate 130 sq. ft. of the west elevation of the main massing. This encapsulation is proposed as part of a request to enclose 18' of the existing, one-story shed roof open porch along the south elevation of the ell. The enclosure will be fabricated of painted, wood insulated glass panels with simulated divided-lights.
2. Demolish 32.5 sq. ft. of first floor wall surface on the north elevation of the main house. The goal of this demolition is to determine if there is visible evidence of windows in this location, as it is the Applicant's desire to install two, new, 4/4 true-divided light wood windows in this location. Based on the architectural style of the house and this elevation's current configuration, it is believed that historically the first floor of this house had 4/4 wood double hung windows which matched the existing windows on the elevation's second story.

II. HISTORY:

This three-part frame dwelling is an excellent representation of the evolution of a mid-19th century Alexandria city house. Based on deed and title research it is believed that the main structure of this house was built by “Master Carpenter” Benjamin Jenkins about 1858 after purchasing the subdivided land from Cassius F. Lee (Period 1). Facing North Columbus Street, this structure is a simple side, cross-gable dwelling, four-bays wide and detailed in the Greek Revival style. Soon after the construction of the main house, a two-bay outbuilding with an exterior-end chimney was constructed behind the house. It is believed that this building was originally 1-1/2 stories in height (Period 2). The outbuilding was altered to a two-story building and connected to the main massing, turning these massings into a two-story ell extension with a central chimney (Period 3).

This house is duplicated on another property on Braddock Road. The home’s form and detailing are almost identical, including the evolution of the ell extension. The evolution of the Braddock Road home’s ell extension was confirmed after discussions with this home’s owner. The visible evidence within the ell, confirming the three periods of construction, includes plaster walls in the attic and exterior wall material on interior wall surfaces. It is possible that both of these dwellings were either “kit homes” or a pair of homes built by the same family.

The environmental setting of the property is the 6,896 sq.ft. lot. The setting includes the main house with its ell extension, and the gable roof outbuilding which faces the rear alley (Butts Court). This property has historically several different outbuildings on this location throughout the years. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map research has dated the current concrete block outbuilding between 1977 and 1988. BAR Case History documents identifies a new garage was approved for the site in 1982.

Regulatory Processes:

The Board of Zoning Appeals approved the Applicant’s variance request to modify the roof form of the existing detached outbuilding at their February 12, 2009 hearing.

Staff located the following previous approvals for this property:

| | |
|----------|---|
| 7/17/52 | Imitation brick siding |
| 9/9/59 | Brick addition to rear |
| 4/10/68 | Addition to residence - North elevation |
| 11/17/82 | New Garage - approved with 8" wood lap siding |

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate, 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, encapsulating 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?

In Staff's opinion, the subject proposal does not meet the above criteria.

Demolishing the gable roof on this non-historic outbuilding provides an opportunity to have a contemporary resource reconfigured into a structure, which is stylistically more compatible with the adjacent neighbor's garage and other outbuildings within the historic district.

The proposed 144 sq. ft. encapsulation of the wall on the ell extension will enable the existing non-historic contemporary outbuilding to be joined to the main house through the use of a glass hyphen and pergola combination. The hyphen segment is necessary, as the Zoning Code requires all units in a multi-family dwelling to be connected. The Applicant has worked closely with Zoning and BAR staff to develop the design of this hyphen and pergola. It was necessary that the hyphen's massing contain a solid roof form for Zoning Code requirements, however BAR staff wanted to make certain that the body of the structure was as transparent as possible. This transparent design was considered essential in order to maintain a visual disconnection between the main historic house and the contemporary outbuilding and not to completely obstruct sightlines into the side courtyard.

The 130 sq. ft. encapsulation of the rear wall on the main massing will create an 18' long, glass porch enclosure within the existing shed roof porch which currently protrudes from the side/south elevation of the ell extension. The proposed glass panels being utilized to enclose this segment of the side porch will be mounted between the porch's existing square columns. BAR staff has developed a design detail with the Applicant to ensure that the original porch columns will not be damaged during the installation of these panels and to provide an opportunity for a future owner to return the porch to its open configuration without any damage to the historic architectural details (see Figure 16).

The demolition of the existing non-historic fiber siding along the north elevation of the main massing of the house is being requested to determine if windows were located on the first floor of this elevation historically. An approval with the above-recommended condition will enable the Applicant to remove the artificial siding and make a determination based on visible evidence of the window closure. If there is no visible evidence, the BAR staff recommendation advises against the installation of a conjectural feature on a prominent façade of this very architecturally unique house.

This application only proposes changes which compromise or damage architectural materials on the contemporary non-historic post1980 outbuilding. The "demolition/encapsulation" proposed on the historic resource retains all original fabric and also potentially replaces lost architectural features. It is for these reasons it is recommended that the Board support this application with the recommended conditions.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with the following condition:

That the Applicant will contact staff after removing the artificial siding on the north elevation, to verify there is physical evidence of windows in this location. If there is no physical evidence, the Applicant will not install new windows.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Legend: C – Code Requirement R – Recommendation S – Suggestion F- Finding

Code Enforcement:

- 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 Additions and Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Additions and Alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit. Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application. The plans must include all dimensions, construction alterations details, kitchen equipment, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.
- C-7 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.

Code Enforcement Cont:

- C-8 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-9 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:

R- Approve.



Figure 1: Front Elevation of Dwelling



Figure 2: View of Ell Extension



Figure 3: Alley View of Outbuilding



Figure 4: Alley View of Outbuilding with View of Adjacent Neighbor's Garage



Figure 5: Interior Courtyard View of Outbuilding



Figure 6: Existing Site lines to Outbuilding from North Columbus



**Segment
Proposed to be
Enclosed**

Figure 7: Views of Existing Porch on Ell Extension



Figure 8: Detail View of Porch Post

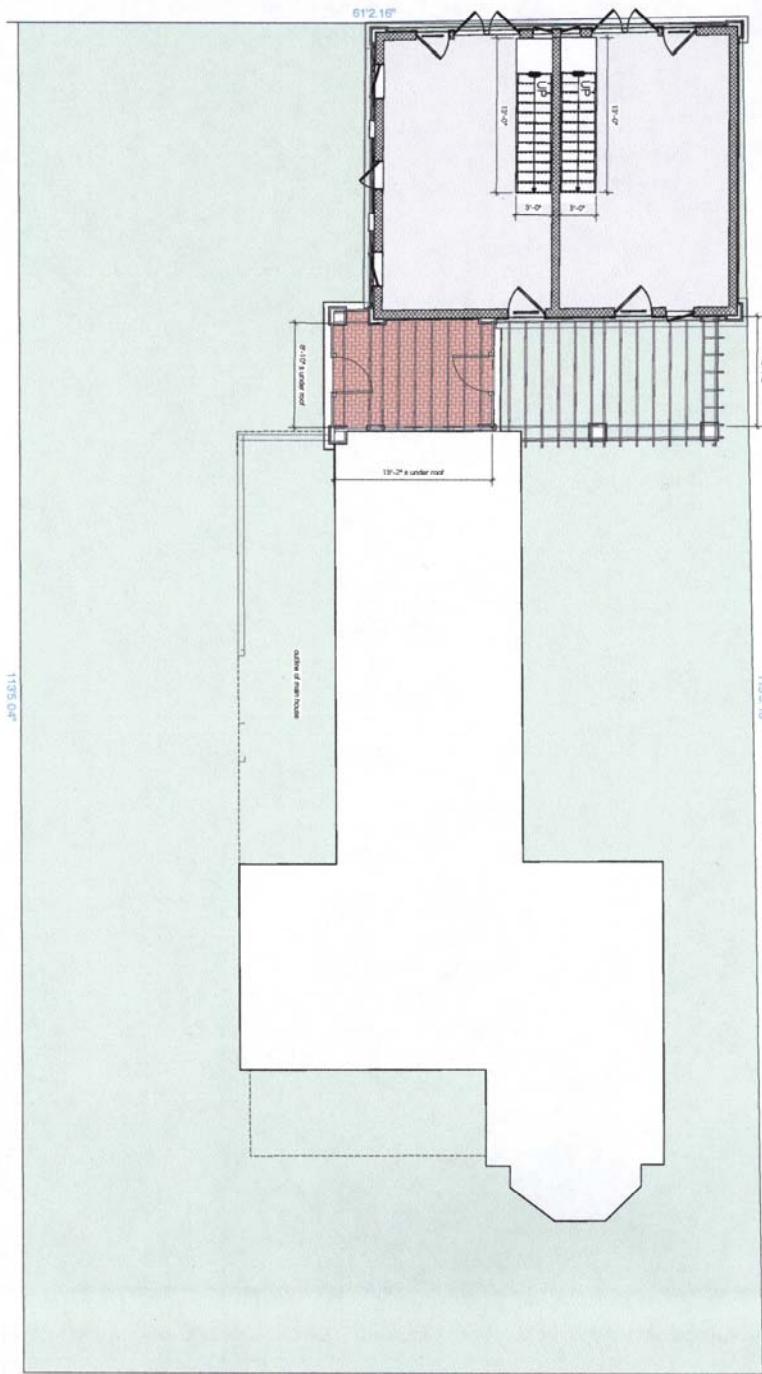


Figure 10: Proposed Site Plan



Figure 11: Proposed South Elevation



Figure 12: Proposed West Elevation of Outbuilding



Figure 13: Proposed West Elevation of Outbuilding and Dwelling



Figure 14: Oblique View of Project - Looking Northeast



Figure 15: Oblique View of Outbuilding – Looking East

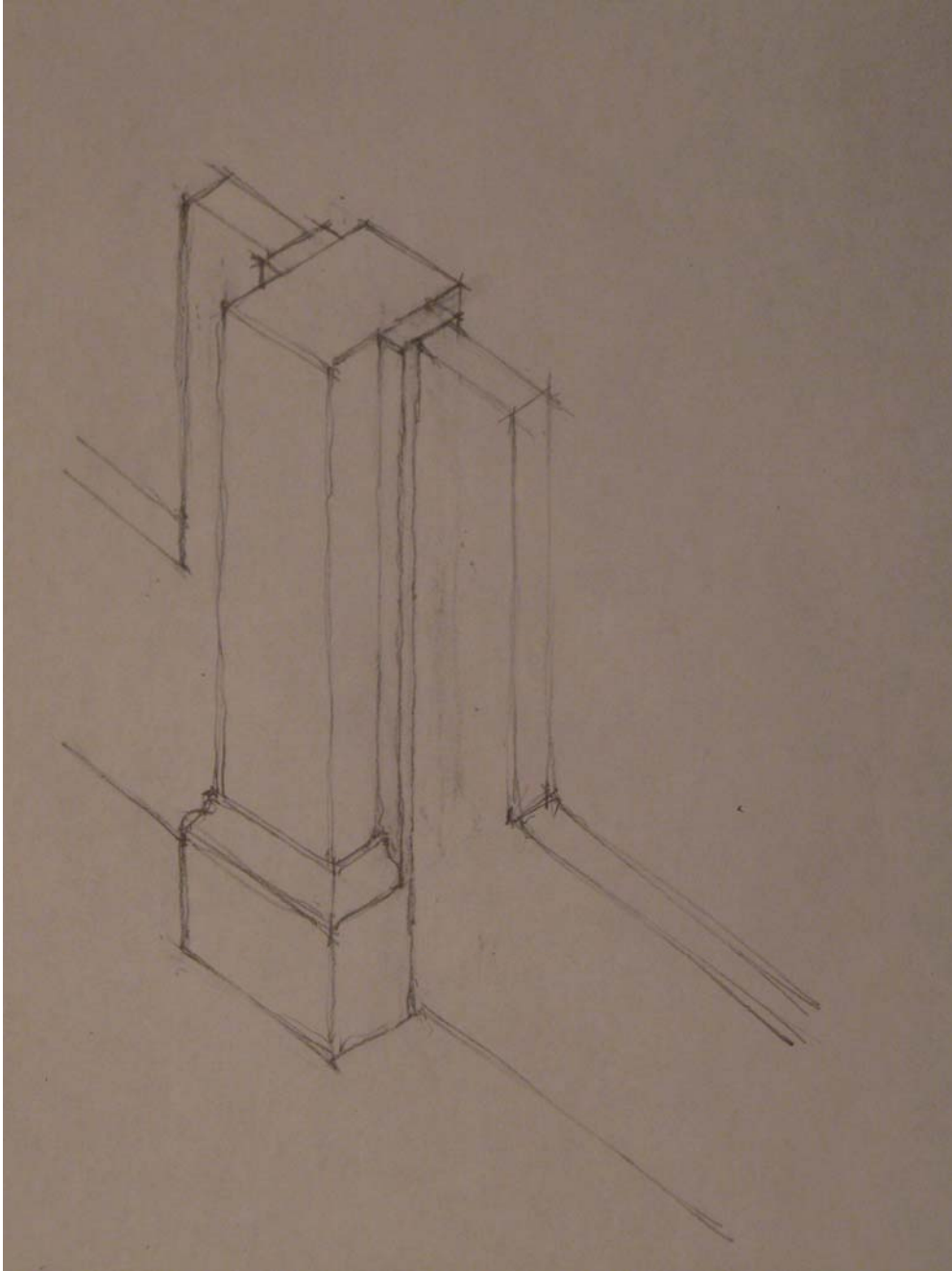


Figure 16: Mounting Detail of Shed Roof Porch Enclosure to Existing Wood Porch Posts



Figure 17: Example of a Glass “Hyphen” Form Attaching an Outbuilding to the Main House
Note: The two massings still continue to read as two separate units.



Figure 18: Existing North Side Elevation View



Figure 19: Proposed North Side Elevation View with Windows