

Docket Item # 9
BAR CASE # 2009-0015

BAR Meeting
March 4, 2009

ISSUE: Demolition/Encapsulation
APPLICANT: Patrick Camus for Ken and Esther Carpi
LOCATION: 117 South Lee Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends deferral of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate.



BAR CASE #2009-0015, 0016, 0017 3/4/2009



Note: This item requires a roll call vote. While the standard practice of the Board is to approve a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate prior to considering the Certificate of Appropriateness, because of the concerns of Staff related to this project and the desire of the applicant to receive feedback from the Board, Staff encourages the Board to couple for discussion both the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate (BAR Case #2009-0015) and the Certificate of Appropriateness/Waiver of rooftop HVAC screening requirement (BAR Case #2009-0016/2009-0017) in this instance

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate in order to construct a two-story rear addition at 117 South Lee Street. The applicant proposes to demolish an existing enclosed porch structure on the rear (west) elevation. A new two-story addition will replace this addition. The rear (west) elevation of the brick rear ell has already been encapsulated/demolished with the existing addition, an area measuring approximately 315 square feet. Additional encapsulation will occur as the proposed addition will encapsulate approximately two feet of the historic rear ell, an area of approximately 42 square feet. In addition, the applicant proposes to demolish a brick flue on the rear ell.

The applicant also proposes to demolish the existing front stoop in order to rebuild and reorient the front stoop. The applicant proposes to demolish a 3' wide portion of the historic brick wall on the alley (south) elevation to accommodate a new gate opening. In addition, the applicant proposes to raise the historic brick wall approximately 18", thus encapsulating the entire top surface of the brick wall. The applicant proposes to remove a deteriorated wood fence and the non-historic brick wall adjacent to the parking area.

II. HISTORY:

The dwelling at 117 South Lee Street is a two-story, three-bay frame townhouse which City real estate records dates to 1902, though Staff and historical maps date it to the late 19th century. The G.M. Hopkins *City Atlas of Alexandria* depicts a building, similar in configuration to the existing dwelling but without a rear ell, at this location in 1877. The building appears on the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* from 1891 (the first year which covers this area). Only the main block is depicted on the 1891 map. The two-story brick rear ell first appears on the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* from 1896. A one-story frame addition attached to the rear ell first appears on the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* from 1896 but does not appear in 1902. A two-story rear porch addition (attached to the rear ell) was constructed by 1941 and continued to appear in 1958, according to *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* from those years.

In 2001, the Board approved an after-the-fact application for a waiver of the rooftop HVAC screening requirement (BAR Case # 2001-0084). In 1958, the Board approved a "spraycrete" application to the exterior.

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, capsulating 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 the opinion of Staff, the above criteria are generally not met. Staff finds that the proposed area for demolition/encapsulation is predominantly limited to the rear elevation, and has previously been encapsulated. Staff finds that although the existing two-story rear porch addition likely dates from at least 1941, the addition has been so significantly altered and rebuilt over the years that it has lost its historic integrity. Furthermore, the historic townhouse will maintain its integrity and the existing rear ell form will be continued with the proposed addition.

Regarding the demolition of the brick flue, the *Design Guidelines* indicate that “existing chimneys should be maintained *in situ* and not removed without a compelling reason and substantial justification.” The applicant has not provided a compelling reason for demolition of the chimney/flue. While the flue is not original to the building, Staff finds that it possibly is still considered historic (50 years or older) and should be retained as part of the evolution of the building, in conformance with the *Guidelines*.

While Staff has no objection to the demolition of the non-historic brick wall adjacent to the parking area or the dilapidated wood fence, Staff is concerned about the proposed demolition of the historic wall on the alley elevation. Staff finds that Criteria 5 and 6 are applicable in this circumstance. The wall on the south property line along the alley is a historic wall with a distinctive decorative coursing at its top. Staff finds that the retention of this wall, in its current form (without added height or the removal of a portion for a new gate) helps preserve and protect an historic place and area of interest (the viewsheds from both South Lee and South Fairfax streets, as well as a historic alley) as well as promotes the general welfare. The brick wall at the rear (west) property line also appears to be historic yet has been significantly altered and patched (with CMU in one part) that it does not retain its integrity. Staff notes that this wall does have some historic brick and advises that the historic brick should be retained and reused on the site.

Staff recommends that a decision on the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate be deferred concurrently with the deferral of the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness and the waiver of rooftop HVAC screening requirement. If a more appropriate design for the addition and alterations is developed, Staff anticipates that none of the above criteria will be met.

Staff notes the comments and recommendations from Alexandria Archaeology and Transportation and Environmental Services.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate.

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 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Additions and Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 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-8 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-9 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-10 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

- C-11 Structural calculations are required to verify the ability of the existing roof to support the additional weight of the A/C unit.
- C-12 Guardrail structural design and construction must comply with USBC.
- 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:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

Archaeology Finding

1. Tax records indicate that houses were present on this street face by 1810. The 1877 Hopkins insurance map shows a structure on the lot at 117 S. Lee. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into activities in 19th-century Alexandria.

Archaeology 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 not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

3. 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 Basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any demolition permit. (T&ES)



Figure 2. Front (east) and side (south) elevations, 117 South Lee Street.



Figure 3. Rear (west) and side (south) elevations, including existing porch to be demolished.



Figure 4. View showing non-historic brick wall adjacent to parking area and historic brick wall on alley.



Figure 5. Parking area with brick walls and wood fence proposed to be demolished.



Figure 6. Existing wood fence that steps down in height according to grade and is proposed to be demolished.

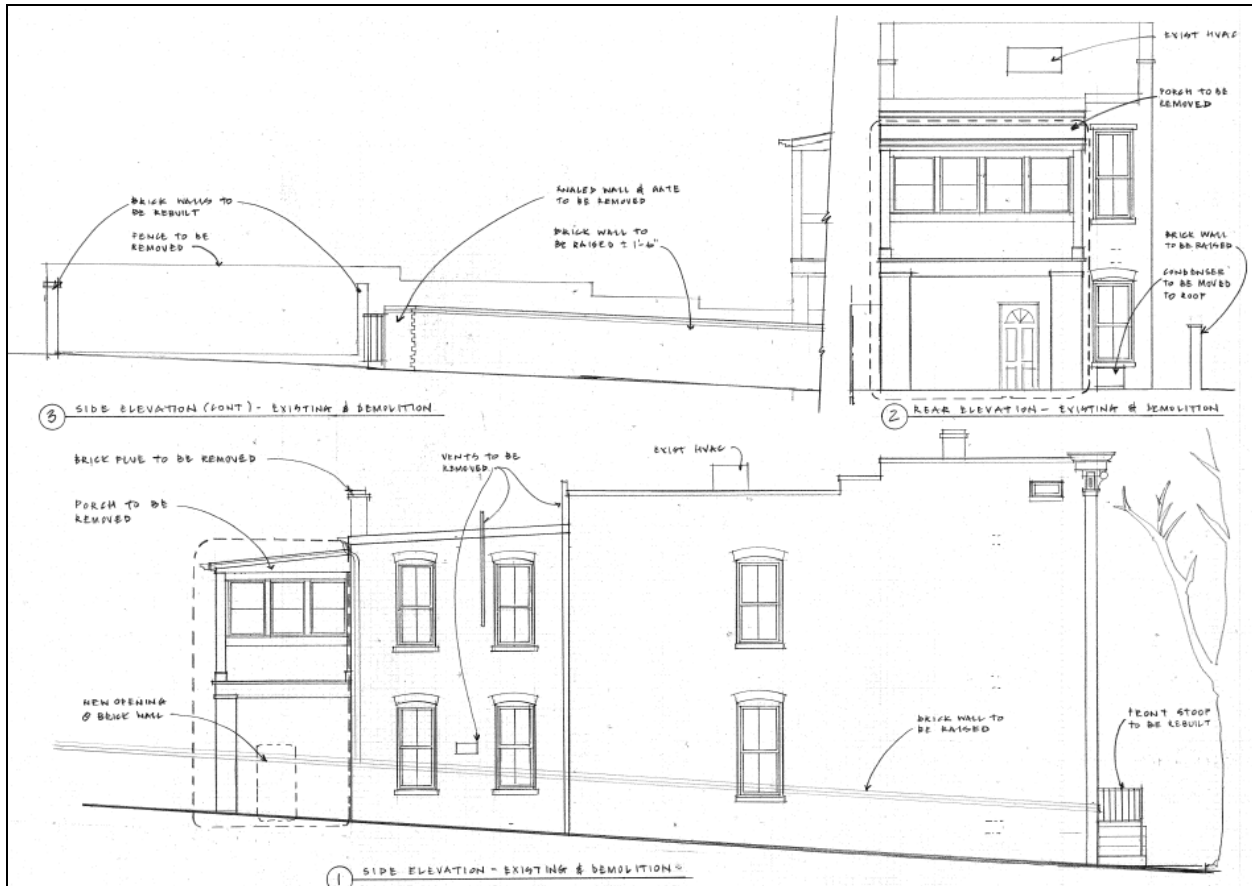


Figure 7. Proposed demolition in elevation.

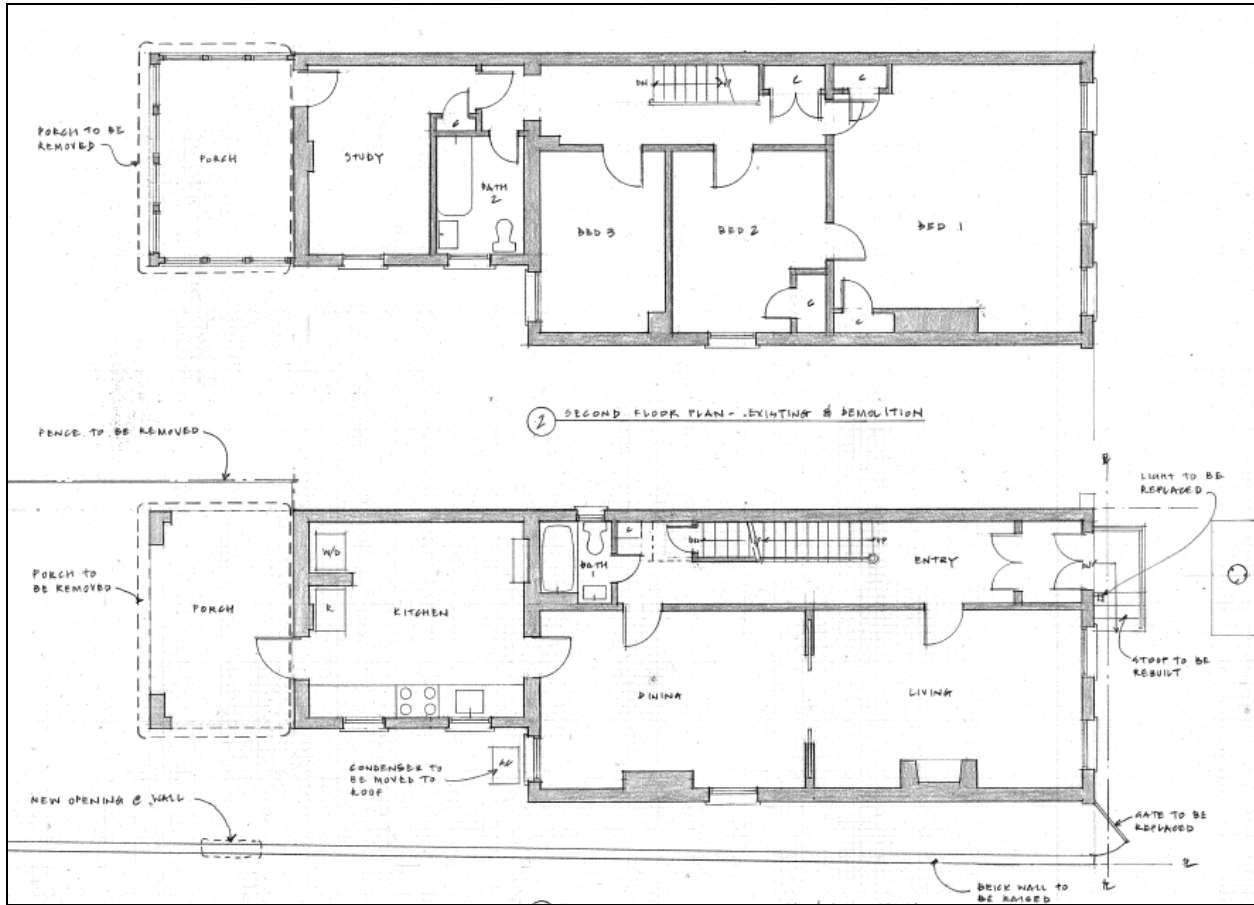


Figure 8. Proposed demolition in plan.