

Docket Item # 13  
BAR CASE # 2009-0021

BAR Meeting  
March 4, 2009

**ISSUE:** Demolition/Encapsulation  
**APPLICANT:** Dunstan Williams, Owner  
**LOCATION:** 731 South Pitt Street  
**ZONE:** RM / Residential Townhouse Zone

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of this Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with conditions:

1. That the Applicant will address stormwater management concerns at the garden wall abutting the addition by filling in and/or flashing the gap between the two additions. This infill is to be no greater than the length and height of the neighbor's addition. The top of the gap will be flashed to ensure that water will not penetrate into the buildings. The Applicant will gain the neighbor's written permission to complete this condition.
2. \* 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.
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 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.

Note: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

**I. ISSUE:**

The Applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate at 731 South Pitt Street. The permit to Demolish/Encapsulate proposes changes to the existing townhouse dwelling. These changes include:

1. Remove an existing window on the first floor of the rear elevation to install a new door for the new basement staircase. This will not require any demolition of additional wall surface.
2. Enlarge an existing window on the second floor of the rear elevation to install a new door for a closet in the new addition. This will require the demolition of 7.5 sq. ft. of the existing wall surface.
3. Encapsulate the entire rear façade of the building with a new, brick extension (approximately 326 sq. ft of encapsulation). The extension proposes to extend 18' into the rear yard.

**II. HISTORY:**

The two-story brick single-family attached dwelling unit at 731 South Pitt Street was constructed around 1941 as part of the Yates Gardens development. The subject property is an interior unit of a six-unit townhouse stick. This townhouse stick is accessed in the front by public, one-way, separated curb lane and in the rear by a public alley. The separated curb lane assists in mitigating the impacts of the urban street on this residential development. A 4' wide sidewalk is constructed across the property frontage.

The flanking townhouse to the south is recessed approximately 6' from the rear plane of the subject townhouse. This townhouse is detailed with a hipped roof form sheathed in shingles. The flanking townhouse to the north is flush with the subject townhouse and shares a side gable roof, sheathed in standing seam metal.

The current rear yard of the subject property measures approximately 16' wide x 46' long.

**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 proposed amount of demolition and encapsulation does not meet the above criteria. The proposed encapsulation and demolition to this property which alter historic fabric are confined completely to the rear of the subject resource, and will not be visible from the front elevation of the house, as the ridgeline of the building will not exceed the height of the existing building, thus retaining the integrity of the streetscape pattern, a character-defining feature of this mid-twentieth century development.

The encapsulation of the rear wall on the main massing will leave approximately 450 sq. ft. of rear open space (28' +/- by 16'). The proposed addition will extend approximately 3'4" beyond the neighbor's existing one-story extension.

The Applicant has contacted their flanking neighbors to discuss the project and request support for the proposal (letter from 729 S. Pitt attached). Photos have also been provided by the Applicant taken from the second floor windows of the adjacent neighbor's house at 729 S. Pitt (see Figure 20). This additional information was provided to address Staff's concerns that a second-story form could potentially overwhelm the rear site lines from these properties.

For these reasons, Staff recommends that the Board approve the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with the proposed conditions.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of this Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with conditions.

1. That the Applicant will address stormwater management concerns at the garden wall abutting the addition by filling in and/or flashing the gap between the two additions. This infill is to be no greater than the length and height of the neighbor's addition. The top of the gap will be flashed to ensure that water will not penetrate into the buildings. The Applicant will gain the neighbor's written permission to complete this condition.
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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.

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 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.

**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.

Code Enforcement Cont:

- 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.

Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES):

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

Historic Alexandria:

R- Approve with conditions:

FINDINGS

Tax records indicate that a house was present on the block bounded by Franklin, Pitt, Jefferson, and St. Asaph Streets by 1830. The 1877 Hopkins insurance map shows a structure, part of the estate of Samuel Miller, in the north central part of the block. While the known structure was probably not situated on the property of 731 S. Pitt, it is possible that archaeological evidence of structures and activities associated with this early to mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century homestead at the edge of town could remain buried in the yard areas of the property.

RECOMMENDATION

- \*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.
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Figure 1: View of Townhouse Stick



Figure 2: View of Streetscape Development Pattern  
(Divided Street: Public Street with Separate Curb Lane)



Figure 3: View of Rear Public Alley





Figure 4: View of Rear of Property from Public Alley



Figure 5: Front Elevation of Subject Property



Figure 6: View of Front Elevations of Subject Property and Flanking Townhouses



Figure 7: View of Existing Trim Detail on Front Façade



Figure 8: View of Cornice Detail on Front Façade



Figure 9: View of Existing Elevation's "Common Bond" Brickwork

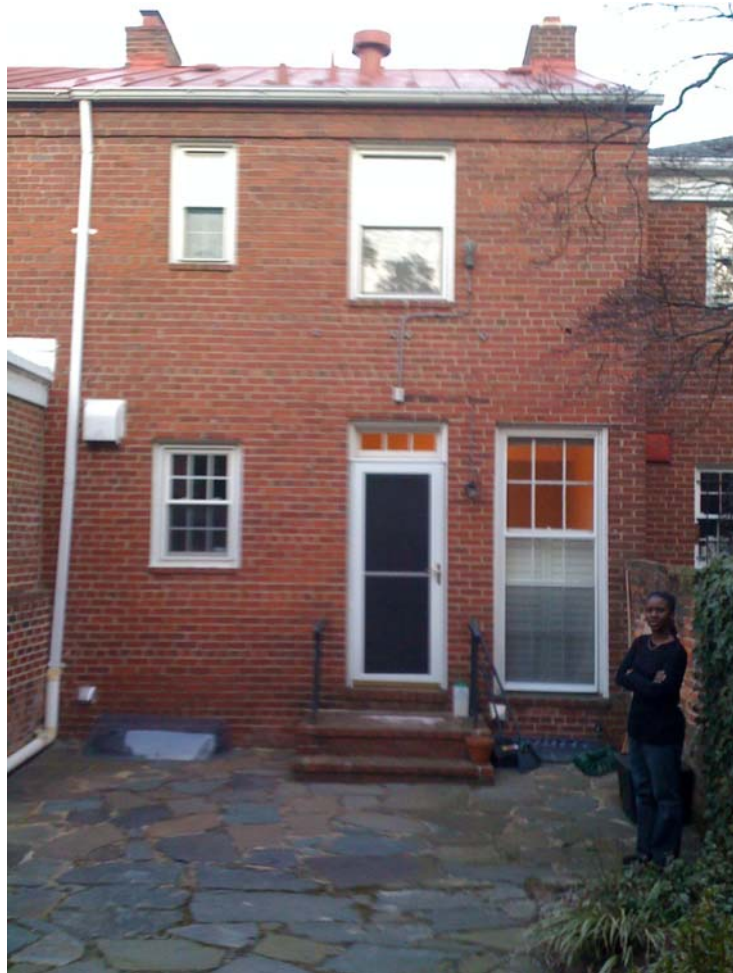


Figure 10: Existing Rear Elevation



Figure 11: View of Adjacent Neighbor to the North



Figure 12: View of Adjacent Neighbor to the South

Side Elevation of  
Neighbor's  
One-Story  
Addition



Rear Elevation of  
Subject House

Garden Wall

Figure 13: Detail of North Garden Wall

Rear Elevation of  
Subject House



Garden Wall

Figure 14: Detail of South Garden Wall



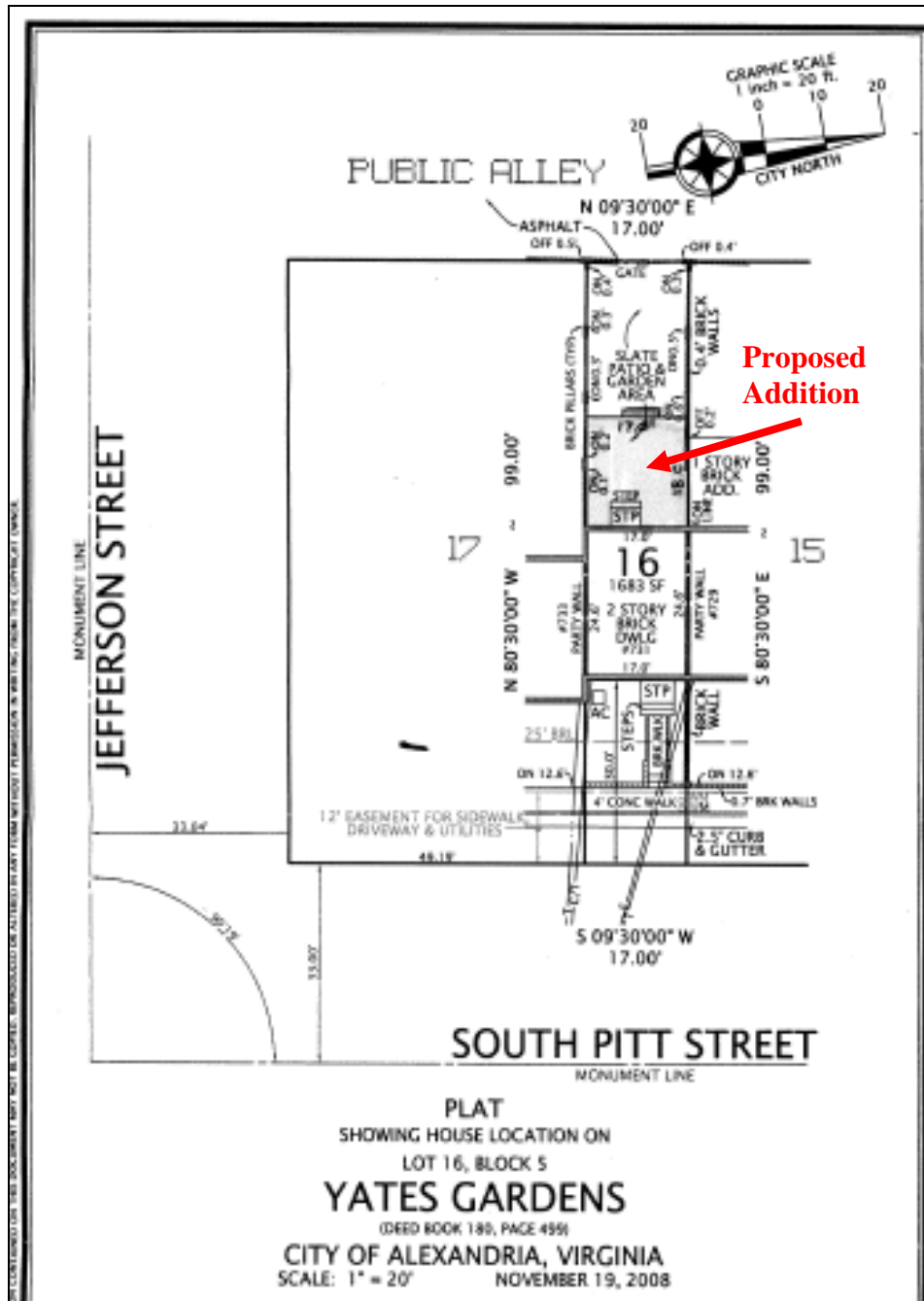


Figure 15: Existing Site Plan

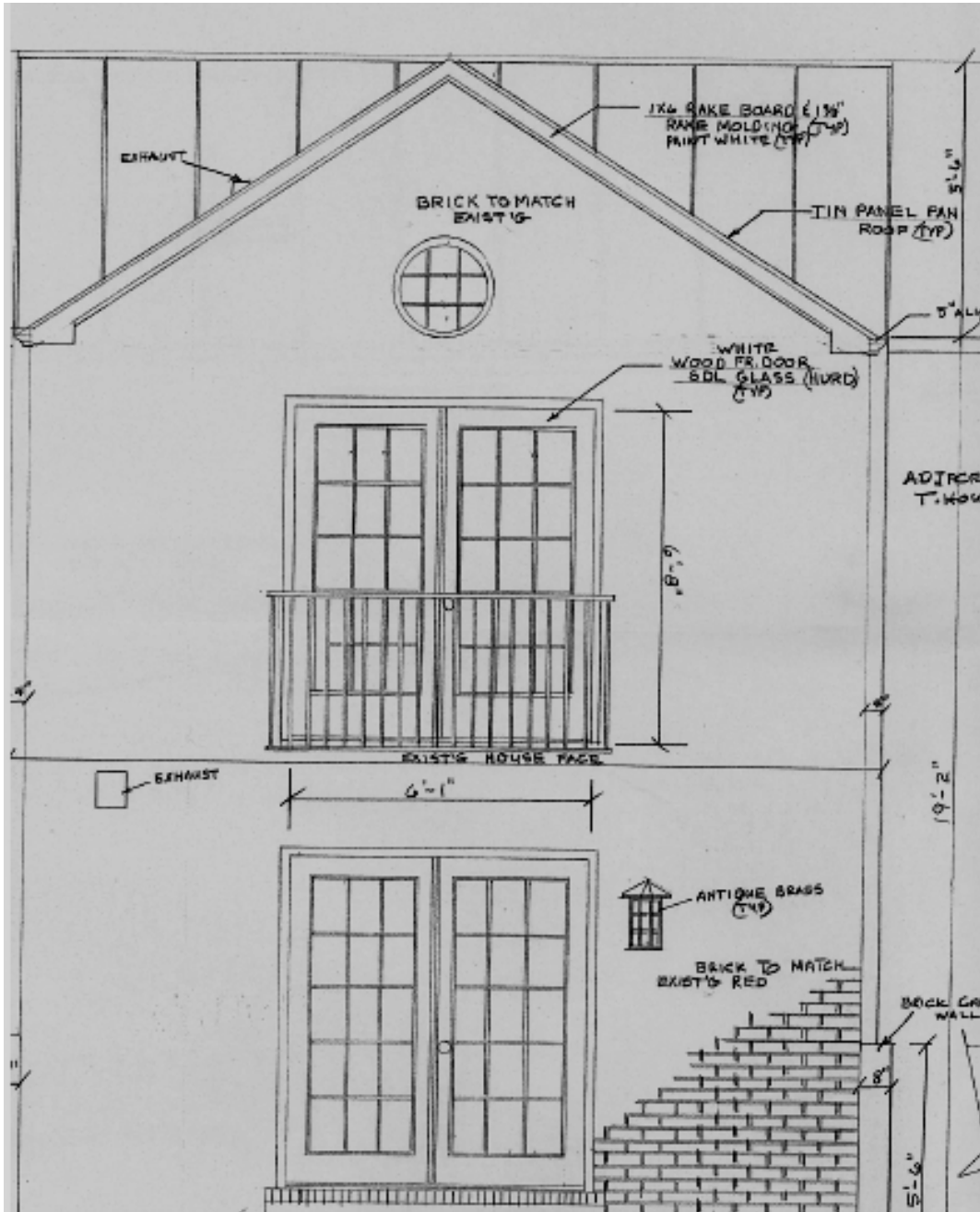


Figure 16: Proposed Rear Elevation

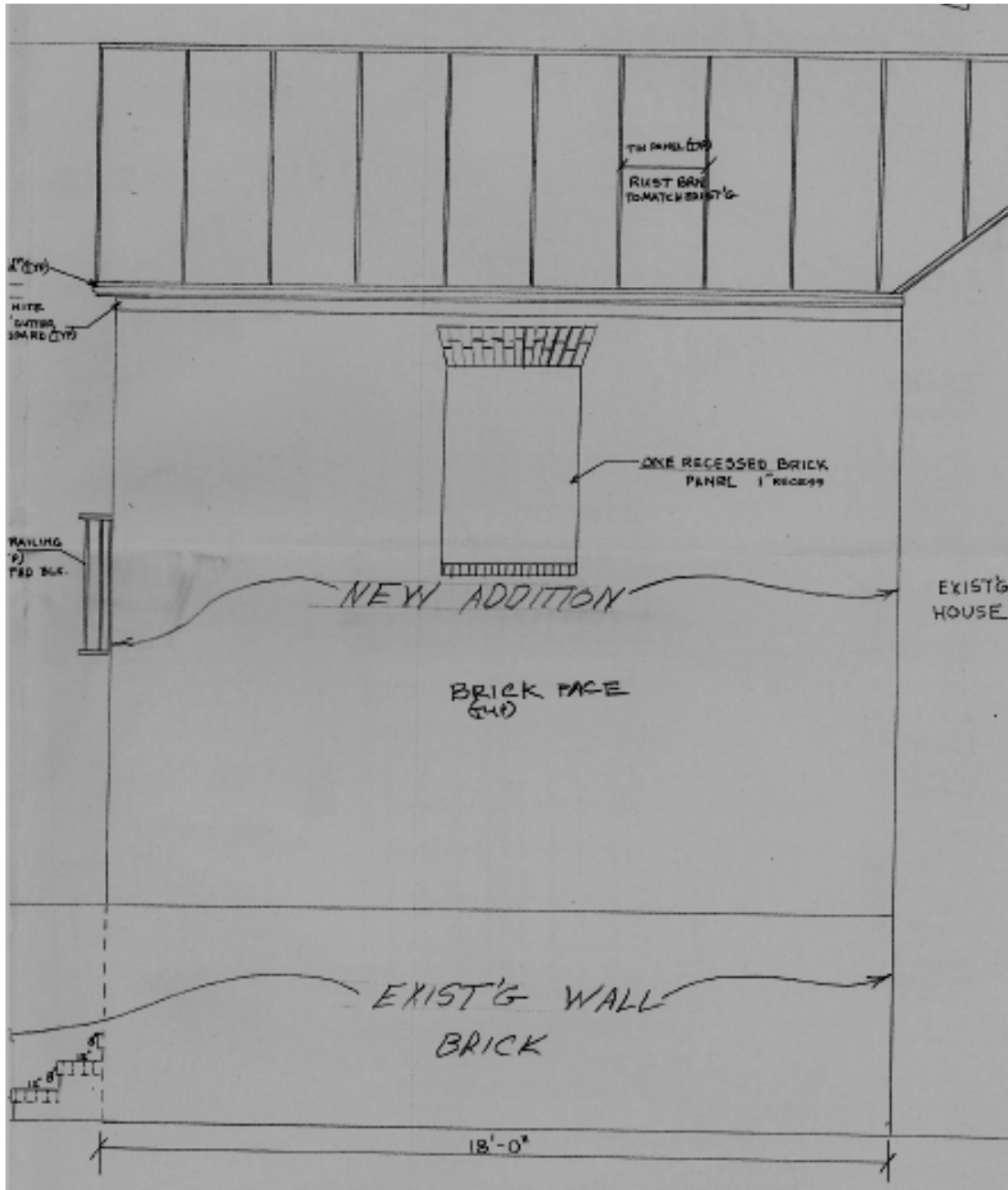


Figure 17: Proposed Side Elevations

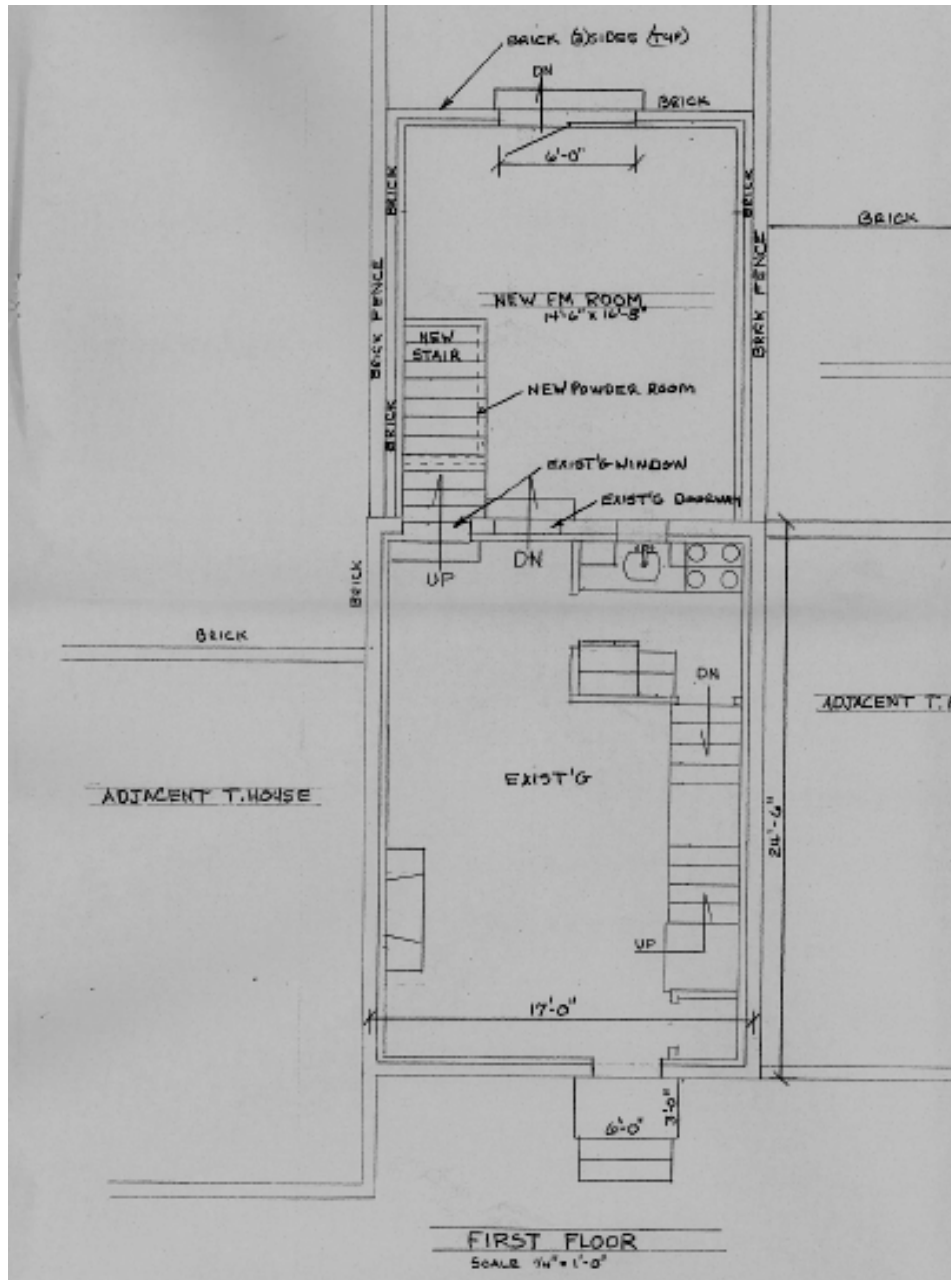


Figure 18: First Floor plan

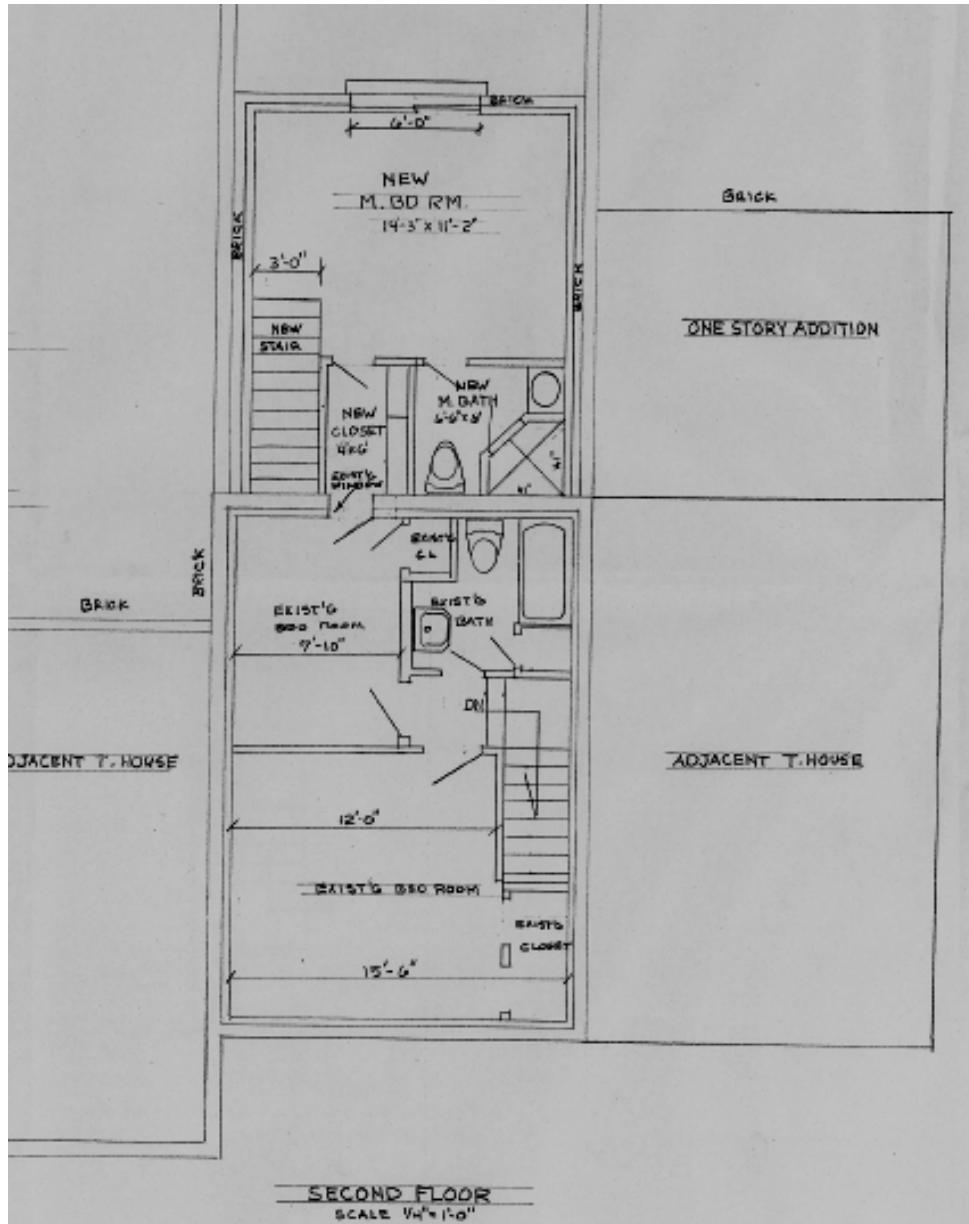


Figure 19: Second Floor plan



Figure 20: Photos from 729 South Pitt Street Second Floor Neighbor's Window  
Looking into Subject Property



24 February 2009

729 S Pitt St  
Alexandria, VA 22314

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing regarding the proposed addition to the property at 731 S Pitt Street (Tax Assessment Number: 080-040-107). As the owner and occupant of the adjacent property at 729 S Pitt St, I would like to express my support for this project. I believe it will be a valuable addition not just to the property itself, but also to the entire neighborhood. Also, this construction will in no way deter from the cherished historical character of the area.

Please feel free to contact me at 571-451-2142 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

  
Ashley Bone

Letter of Support from Flanking Neighbor at 729 S. Pitt Street