

Docket Item # 7
BAR CASE # 2009-0097

BAR Meeting
June 3, 2009

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Frederick Allan and Laura Vickery
LOCATION: 810 South Fairfax Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the deferral of the application for restudy.

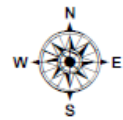
*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE: In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period. In the case for a certificate or permit for a project that requires a development special use permit or site plan under section 11-400 of the zoning ordinance, the period of validity shall be coincident with the validity of the development special use permit or site plan as determined pursuant to section 11-418 of the ordinance.

**BUILDING PERMIT NOTE: Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.



BAR CASE #2009-0097

6/3/2009



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the residential rowhouse at 810 S. Fairfax Street. The applicant is proposing to modify the existing front yard's landscape by installing a wrought iron fence and gate set upon a brick retaining wall. The proposed wall will be constructed of common bond brick with topped with soldier brick course, and a 24" ornamental wrought iron fence. The fence will be joined at a wrought iron gate which will be located at the top of a new brick staircase with the treads detailed with a bull-nose lip. The proposed retaining wall will measure 27 inches tall and stretch the length of the west (front) property line, measure 12 inches tall and run 224 inches along the north property line and measure approximately 24 inches tall and run 188 inches along the south property line.

The applicant is also proposing to build-up the grade of their front lawn to meet the height of new retaining wall.

II. HISTORY:

810 South Fairfax Street is a two-story, three bay, painted brick, center unit rowhouse that was constructed in 1958 as part of the Yates Garden subdivision in a Colonial Revival design vocabulary. The rowhouses in the 800 block of South Fairfax Street were initially approved by the Board in 1955 (5/12/55), but not actually constructed until 1958.

Staff did not locate any prior approvals by the Board for this property.

III. ANALYSIS:

Pursuant to Section 7-202(C) of the Zoning Ordinance, the BAR must grant a waiver for the proposed fence height to be compliant with the zoning ordinance, as the current proposal exceeds the maximum 3.5' allowance. A detailed grading plan will likely be required for the proposed changes in grade elevation.

According to the *Design Guidelines*, "A number of different types of materials are appropriate for fences, garden walls and gates throughout the historic district," furthermore, "masonry fences and walls of brick or stone are generally appropriate throughout the historic districts." Therefore, in Staff's opinion, the materials for the proposed fence/retaining wall are appropriate.

The historic preservation ordinance also stipulates that the Board is required to evaluate a Certificate of Appropriateness to ensure that the proposed construction will not have any "impact upon the historic setting, streetscape or environs" and "to assure that new structures, additions, landscaping and related elements be in harmony with their historical and architectural setting and environs." It is for this reason Staff is concerned with the proposed height, and alterations to the existing landscape and streetscape proposed in this application. The proposed fence/retaining wall will be 9 inches taller than the Zoning Ordinance will allow without a waiver from the BAR. Additionally, the fence/retaining wall will be sited along the front property line, adjacent to the sidewalk. This combination of height and construction on the property frontage is not typical within the district. Generally, if a fence height within the district exceeds 3.5 feet, the fence/retaining wall is sited back from the property line and sidewalk.

Secondly, alterations to grading are always problematic within a historic district. When this section of the historic district was being planned, developers spent time designing the road networks, the buildings, the site plans, and the grading/landscape plans. All of these elements in a planned community including its streetscape patterns and landscape features are considered historically significant, as they are all pieces which define the site's historicity.

The historic landscape features and the original grading are still very identifiable on this row of townhouses. They are a sloping, grassy front yard, foundation plantings, and brick staircases leading to the front entry.

Staff recommends that the applicant revise the proposal by reducing the height of the wrought iron fence and brick wall to no greater than a combined 3.5 feet and the applicant eliminate the proposed re-grading and infill from the application.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the deferral of the application for restudy.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C1. 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.
- C2. New construction must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C3. Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C4. 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.
- C5. 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.
- C6. 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:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

Archaeology Finding

Structures were present on this street face in the early 19th century. During the Civil War, most of the block was the site of Union Army support facilities for Battery Rodgers. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into both domestic and military 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 or artifact collection 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.

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Transportation & Environmental Services:

R1. 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)

R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)

R3. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)

R4. 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)

R5. 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)

- R6. 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)

FINDINGS

- F1. An approved grading plan may be required at the time of building permit application. Insufficient information has been provided to make that determination at this time. 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.
1. 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>**

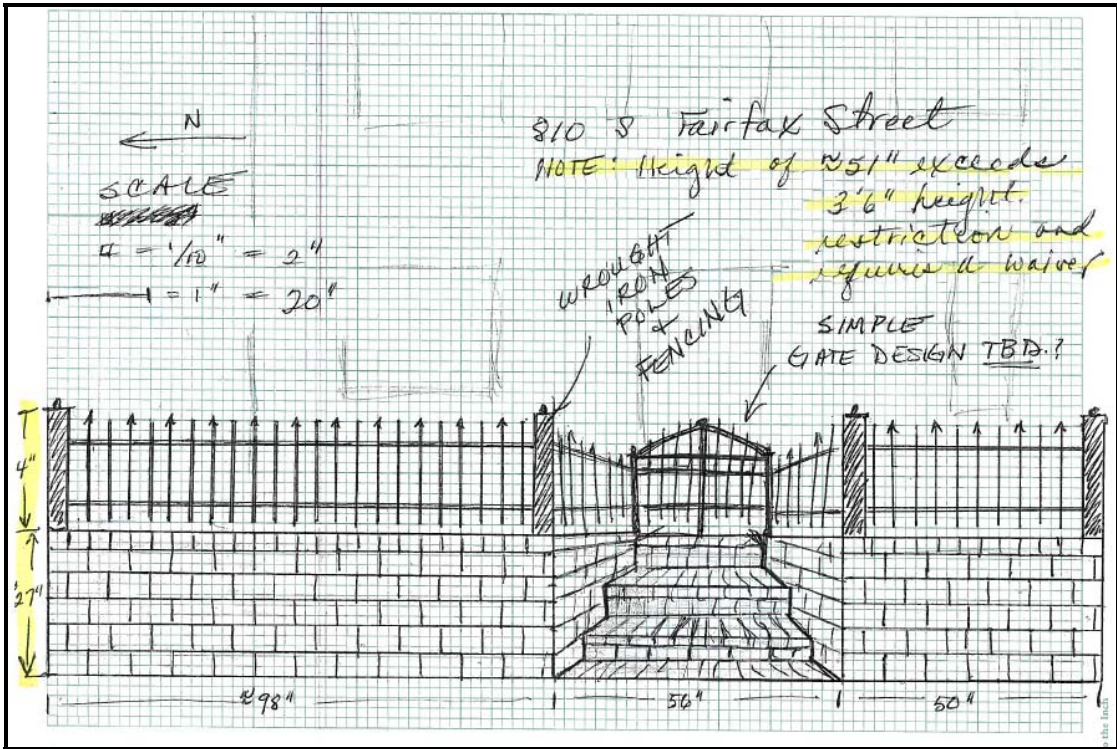


Figure 2: Drawing of Proposed Fence/Retaining Wall - Front Elevation

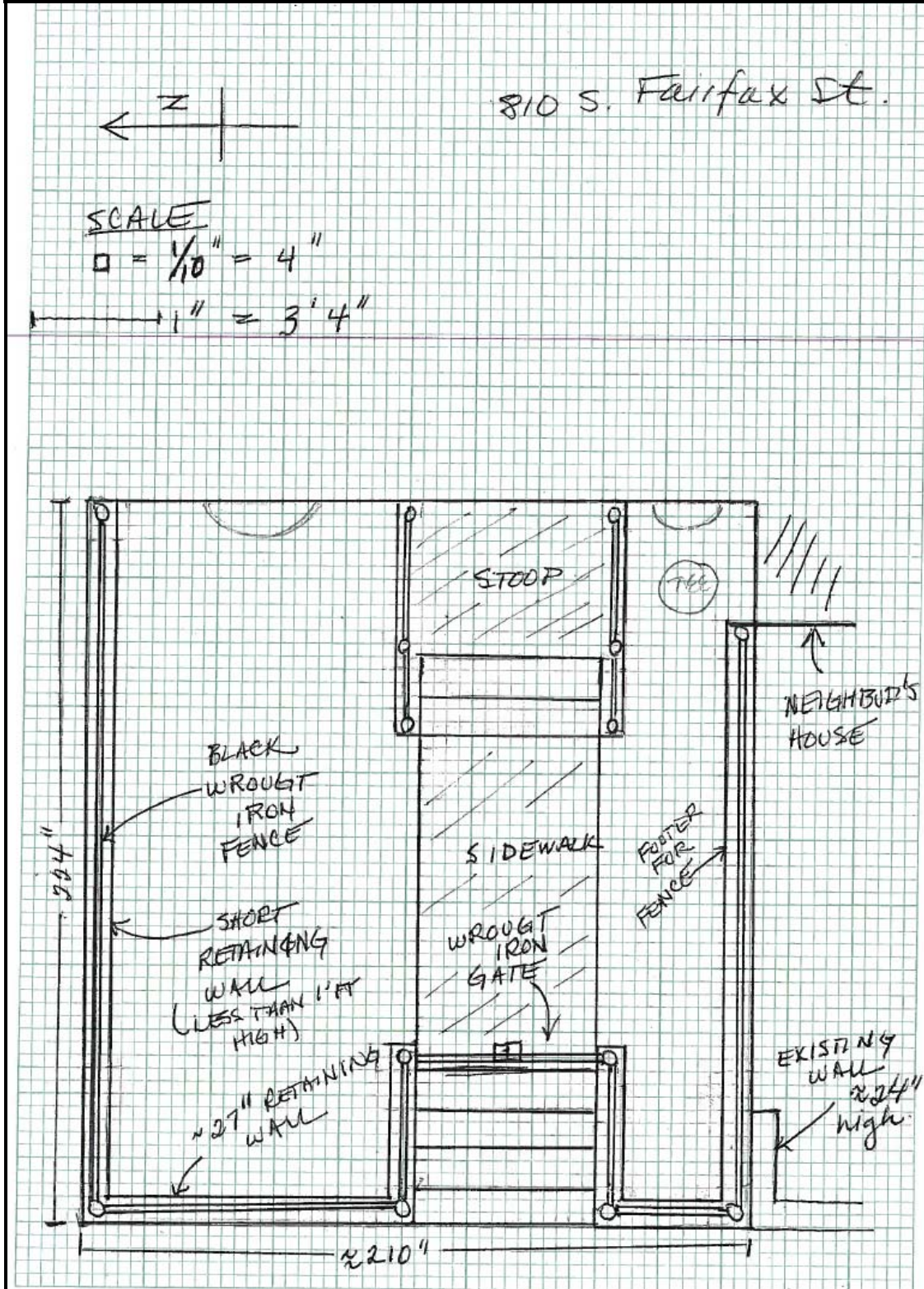


Figure 3: Drawing of Proposed Fence/Retaining Wall – Plan View



Figure 4: Photograph of Front Elevation of 810 S. Fairfax and Adjacent Neighbors



Figure 5: Photograph of Existing Steps



Figure 6: Photograph of Existing Steps



Figure 7; Example of Proposed Steps and Proposed Color of New Brick



Figure 8: Applicant's Example of Proposed Fence

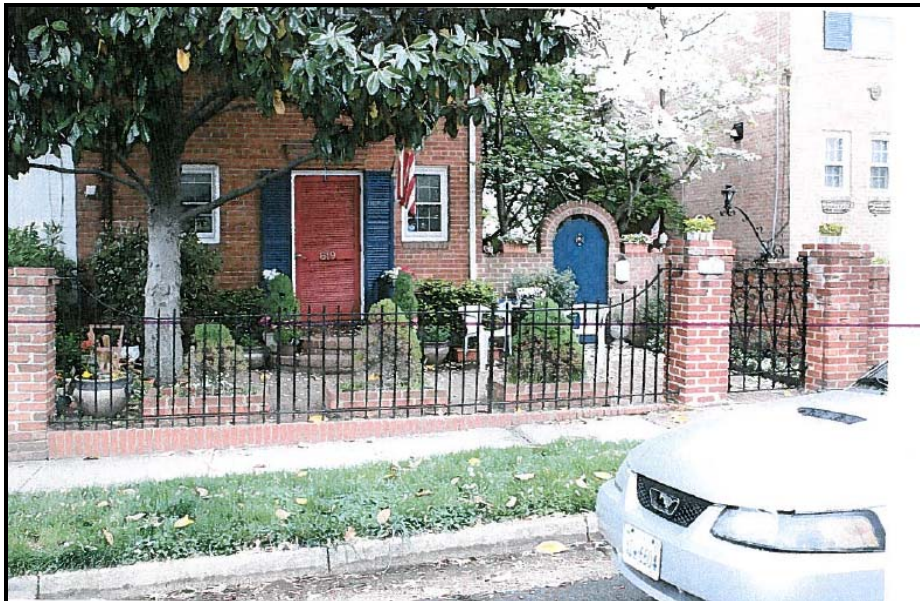


Figure 9: Applicant's Exhibit (810 S. Fairfax)



Figure 10: Applicant's Exhibit (833 S. Fairfax)