

Docket Item # 10  
BAR CASE #2009-0107

BAR Meeting  
June 17, 2009

**ISSUE:** Alterations  
**APPLICANT:** Deborah Dittmann  
**LOCATION:** 425 North Columbus Street  
**ZONE:** RM/Townhouse zone

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the application as submitted.

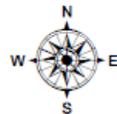
**\*\*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

**\*\*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 #2009-0107**

**6/17/2009**



**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement windows at 425 North Columbus Street.

The existing windows are single-glazed, two-over-two wood windows with exterior storm windows. The windows appear to be original. The applicant is requesting approval of Kolbe and Kolbe Heritage Series Wood Windows. The proposed windows are two-over-two, double-glazed wood windows to match the existing windows. The windows on the front are proposed to be true divided light while windows on the side and rear are proposed to be simulated divided light windows with an interior spacer bar. The muntins will measure 1 1/8”.

**II. HISTORY:**

Real estate records indicate that the residence at 425 North Columbus Street was constructed in 1890. The dwelling first appears on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1891 as one of a pair with the neighboring 423 North Columbus Street.

In 1997, the Board approved an application for a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and Certification of Appropriateness for a rear addition. (BAR Case #97-0031 and 97-0032).

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

The *Design Guidelines* clearly state that “a central tenet of the philosophy of historic preservation is that original historic materials should be retained and repaired rather than replaced. An informed and careful analysis of the existing condition should be made before any decision to replace historic materials is made. It is often cheaper to keep historic materials and repair them rather than replace an item with new material. Storm windows or new weatherstripping will make a historic sash quite efficient without replacement.” Furthermore, several recent studies have noted that single-glazed windows, if properly weatherstripped and used with a storm window, are actually more energy efficient than double-glazed replacement windows.

Prior to filing an application, the applicant contacted BAR Staff to inquire about window replacement. Staff conducted a site visit and determined that the existing windows were not in need of replacement and advised the applicant that the existing windows should be retained and repaired, perhaps with the installation of new storm windows. Staff advised that any window replacement would require approval by the Board but noted that Staff would be unable to support wholesale replacement. Staff notes that all of the windows on the front elevation are in good condition.

The retention of historic windows is of on-going concern to both the Board and BAR Staff, so much so, that in 2008 the Board added language to the window policy that states that no replacement of original windows dating before 1860 should occur. Recognizing that original windows are one of the best character-defining features of a building, Staff recommends that

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replacement windows only be approved when the existing historic windows are beyond repair, which is not the case at 425 North Columbus Street. Furthermore, research with historic maps indicates that this dwelling was constructed as one of a pair of townhouses. The other half of the pair is located at 423 North Columbus Street and also retains its original windows, indicating that the windows proposed for replacement date from approximately 1890.

The applicant has noted that the windows on her house have slightly different muntin widths. During a site visit, Staff confirmed that the windows on the second story have a slightly wider and flatter muntin than on the first story. However, the neighboring property at 423 North Columbus Street also has this same configuration, suggesting it was part of the original design. Further, it is not uncommon for historic windows to have slightly different muntin profiles depending on their location, as evidenced across the street at 426 North Columbus.

The applicant has also noted that replacement windows, similar to what is proposed, were administratively approved last year at 435 North Columbus Street. While that dwelling is of a similar period and architectural style to 425 North Columbus, Staff notes that each case must be reviewed on its own merits. In the case of 435 North Columbus, Staff was able to administratively approve replacement windows because the existing windows were themselves replacement windows and were not considered historically appropriate (six-over-one windows). The replacement windows in this instance were true divided light, double-glazed wood windows.

The *Design Guidelines* recommend that: "...replacement windows should be appropriate to the historic period of the architectural style of the building." The *Guidelines* also state that single-glazed, true divided light windows with interior storm sash are the preferred replacement window type. The *Guidelines* continue by saying other acceptable window types are "double-glazed true divided light wood windows." In addition, the *Guidelines* note that "windows with fixed or applied muntins have been approved for the rear elevation of a structure which has minimal visibility from a public right of way."

Staff finds that the current submission request is not consistent with *Design Guidelines*. Should the applicant find the need to replace individual windows which are beyond repair on the side and rear elevations, Staff can administratively approve single or double glazed, true divided light wood windows for those windows.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the application as submitted.

**V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Enforcement:

No comment.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

VI. IMAGES

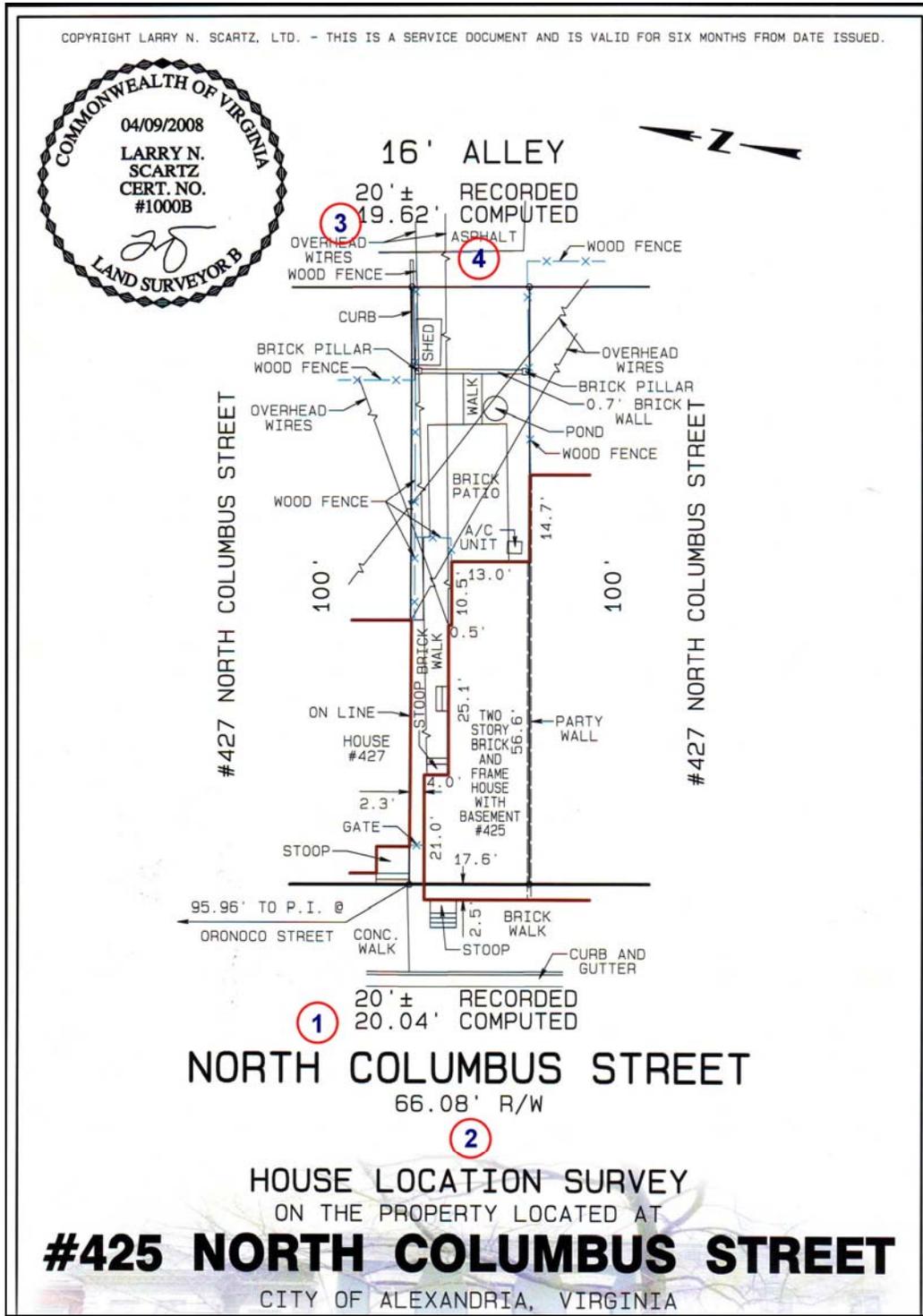


Figure 1. Plat, 425 North Columbus Street.



Figure 2. Front elevation of 425 and 423 North Columbus Street.



**Figure 3. Original window, first story, front elevation.**



**Figure 4. Original window, second story, front elevation.**



Figure 5. Front elevation showing original windows at 425 and 423 North Columbus Street.

Deborah  
Dittmann  
425 N  
Columbus Street  
703 778 3644



**My house**

**435 N Columbus**

**Figure 6. Original windows at 425 North Columbus St. and replacement windows at 435 North Columbus St.**



Figure 7. Additional views of side and rear elevations. Bottom pictures taken from public alley.

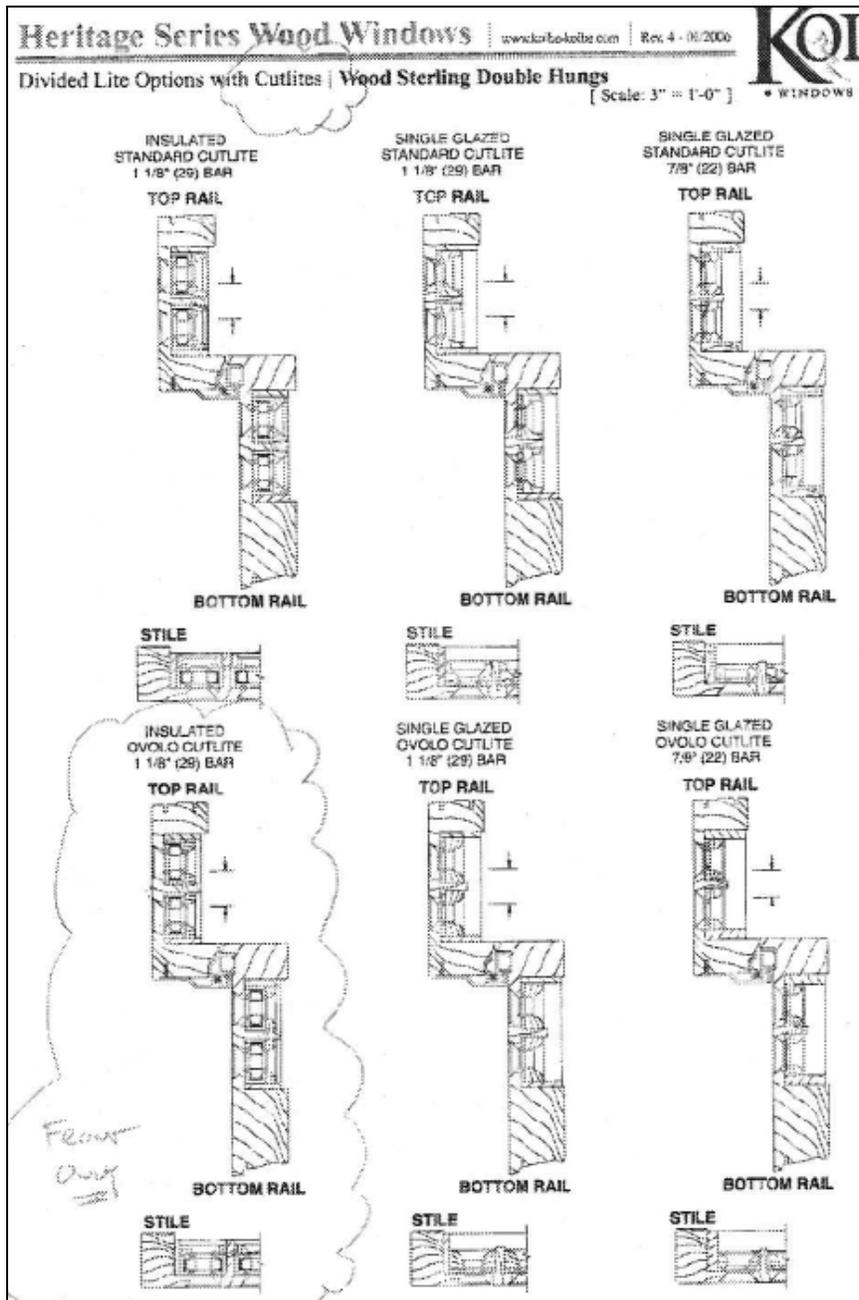


Figure 8. Window specifications for front windows: double-glazed, true divided light.

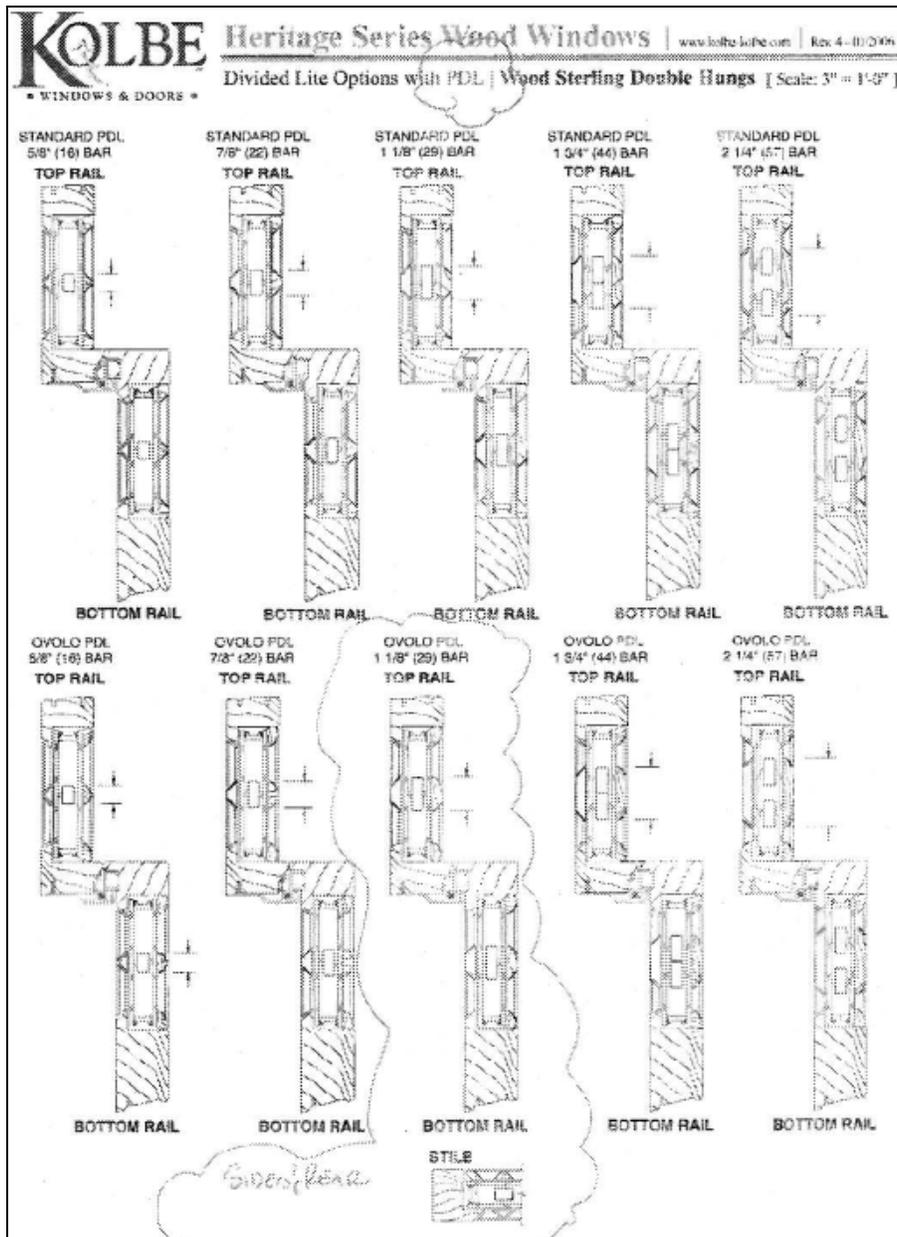


Figure 9. Window specifications for side and rear: simulated divided light, double-glazed.

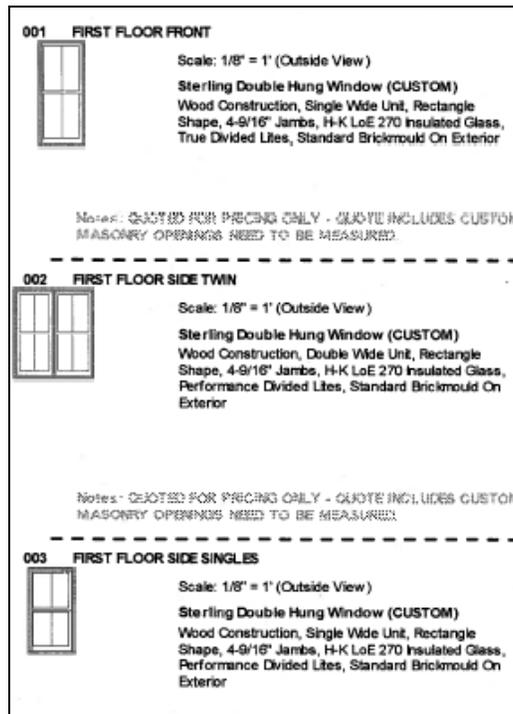


Figure 10. Window specifications, details.

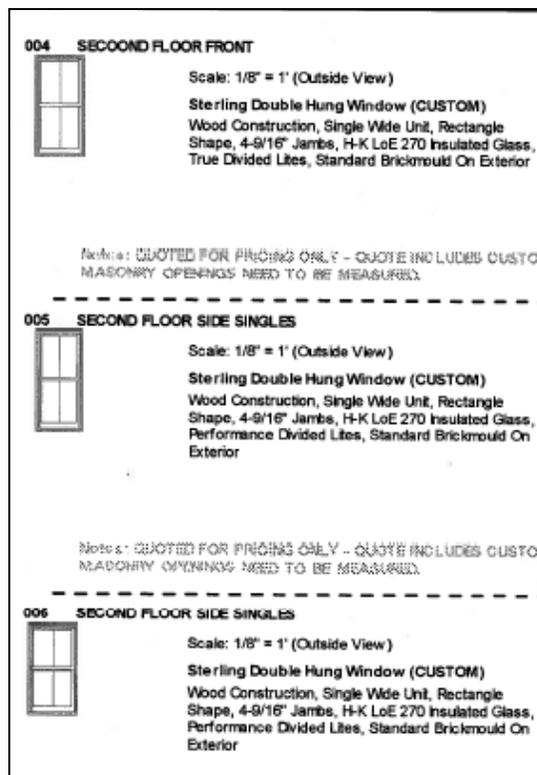


Figure 11. Window specifications, details.