

Docket Item # 9
BAR CASE # 2009-0117

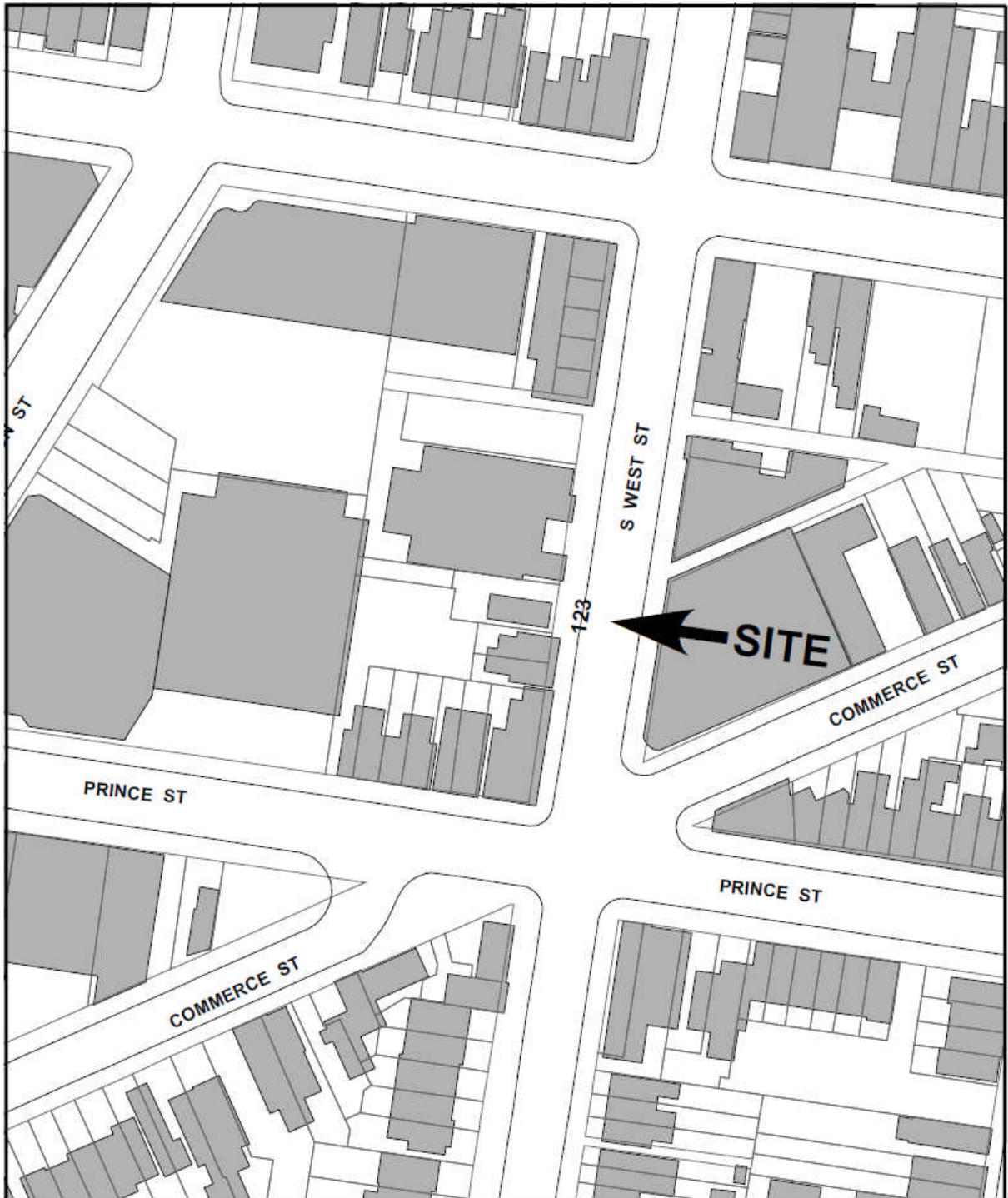
BAR Meeting
July 8, 2009

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Valda Anderson
LOCATION: 123 S West Street
ZONE: CL

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of the application.

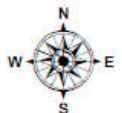
****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 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 #2009-0117

7/8/2009



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations at 123 South West Street. On the front façade the applicant is proposing the replacement of four metal casement windows, one metal awning window and the addition of a cornice. On the north elevation the applicant is proposing replacement of five metal casement windows and two basement level metal awning windows. The applicant has selected a wood, double hung replacement window for all nine original metal casement windows and a wood awning window to replace all four original metal awning windows. The applicant has also indicated the desire to cover the landing and treads of the existing front stairs with slate and to paint the concrete risers to match.

II. HISTORY:

123 South West Street is a two story brick building that according to City of Alexandria real estate tax records was built in 1960. The lot has maintained a building of the same foot print as far back as the 1891 Sanborn, Fire Insurance Map. The existing house is constructed of manufactured brick, a material reminiscent of industrial buildings predominantly used in the mid twentieth century. This defining characteristic in conjunction with the building's Modernist Style leads Staff to the conclusion that the original structure was demolished either at or prior to the time of construction of the existing building.

Staff was unable to locate any previous BAR cases for this property.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

123 South West Street was designed and built with a minimalist aesthetic and is an example of the Modernist style in the Old and Historic Alexandria District. The house at 123 South West is similar in design to those designed by Joseph Saunders found on Gibbon Street, constructed in the 1950's. 123 South West Street and the homes on Gibbon Street are good examples of modernist architecture in the historic district that reflect modernist architecture tradition in the United States and include such elements as proportional geometry; absence of decorative ornament; abstraction of design elements and factory metal casement windows. It is a rarity to find a building of its style and age in the district that maintains all of its original metal casement windows.

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. Preservation Brief 13 by the National Park Service, US Department of the Interior on the repair and thermal upgrading of historic steel windows states that, “In many cases, repair and retrofit of the historic windows are more economical than wholesale replacement, and all too often, replacement units are unlike the originals in design and appearance. If the windows are important in establishing the historic character of the building, insensitively designed replacement windows may diminish or destroy the buildings historic character.” In this

situation, Staff finds the replacement of the original metal casement windows to be inappropriate due to the fact that they are the character defining architectural element of the building. The brief continues to state, “other elements in assessing the relative importance of historic windows include the design of the windows and their relationship to the scale, proportion, detailing, and architectural style of the building...and less elaborate windows can also provide strong visual interest ...particularly in simple, unadorned industrial buildings.” Metal casement and wood double hung windows are not synonymous and replacing one for another as indicated in this application would destroy the buildings historic character. In addition, the windows appear to be in a condition in which they can be repaired and retained. According to the National Park Service, “moisture in the primary cause of corrosion in steel windows,” the solution for which is to, “add weather-stripping,” this would also make them more energy efficient.

123 South West Street is a unique resource to the historic district in that it remains authentic to its original design without modification. Altering the facade by replacing the windows and adding Colonial Revival elements would strip the building of its historic integrity. Staff finds the addition of a cornice, with the objective of transforming a mid-twentieth century Modernist building into one of the mid-nineteenth century to be inappropriate. In addition, staff finds the installation of flag stone on the front stairs to be a further falsification of the buildings historic makeup and integrity. The lack of ornamentation at 123 South West Street is an intentional design aesthetic that should be preserved and not compromised. Therefore Staff recommends denial of the application.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of the application.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Administration:
No comments received.

Historic Alexandria:
No comments received.

VI. IMAGES

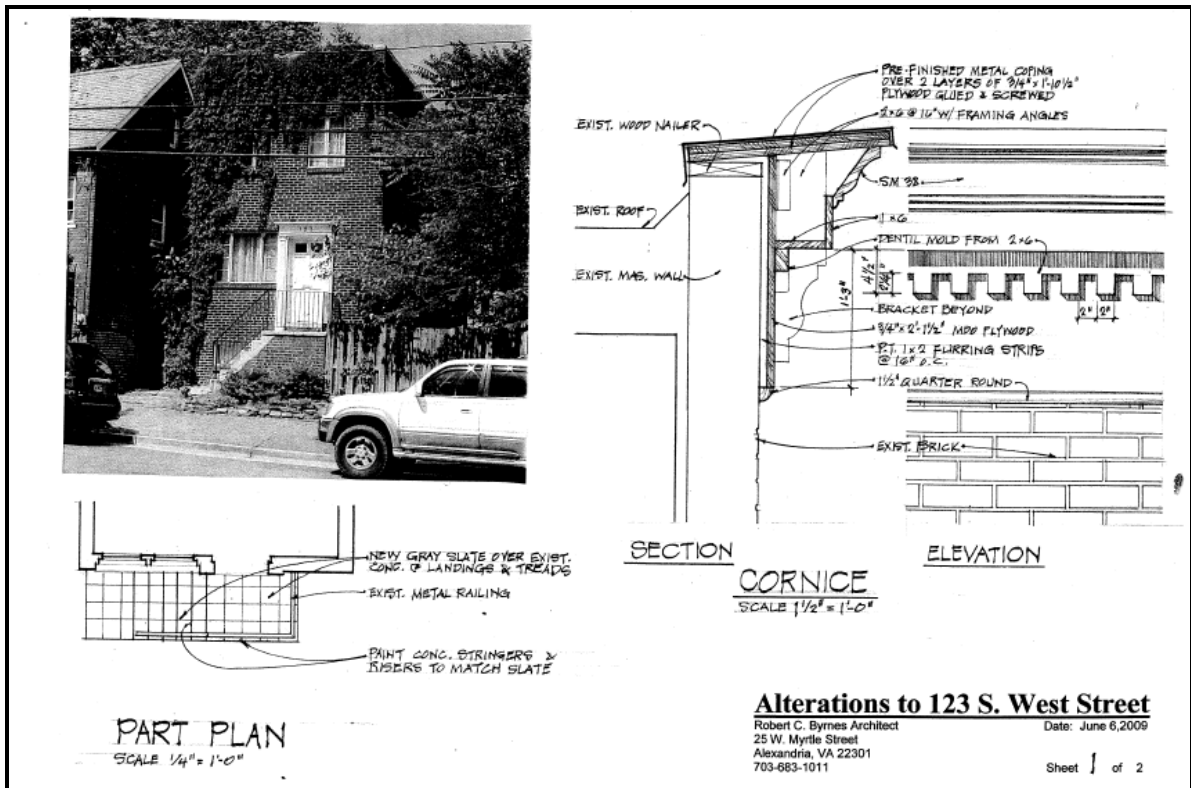


Figure 1. Photograph of front elevation and drawing of proposed cornice

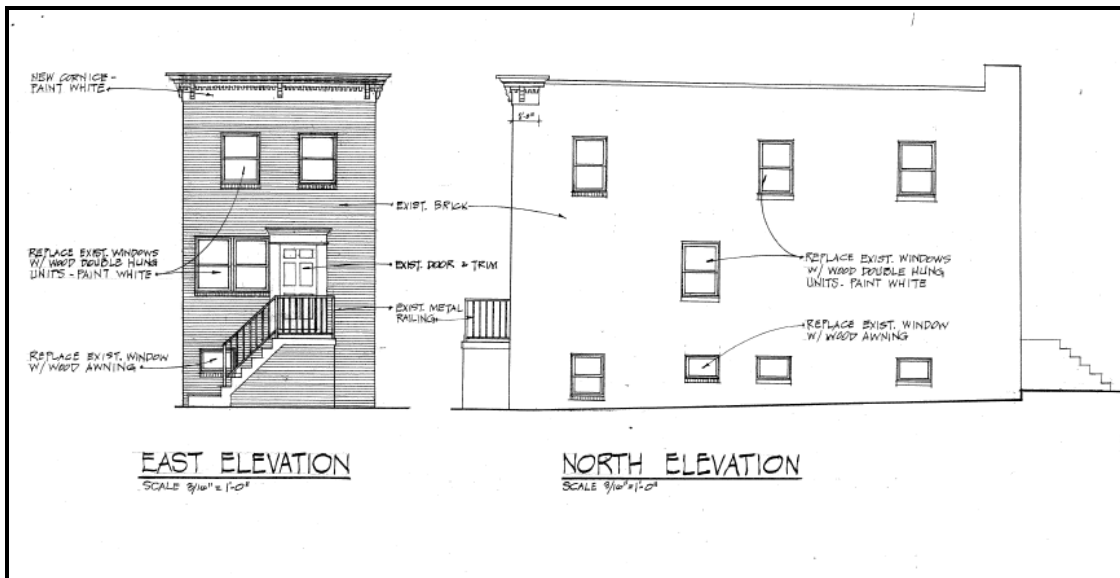


Figure 2. Drawing of proposed alterations



Figure 3. Photograph of basement windows on north elevation

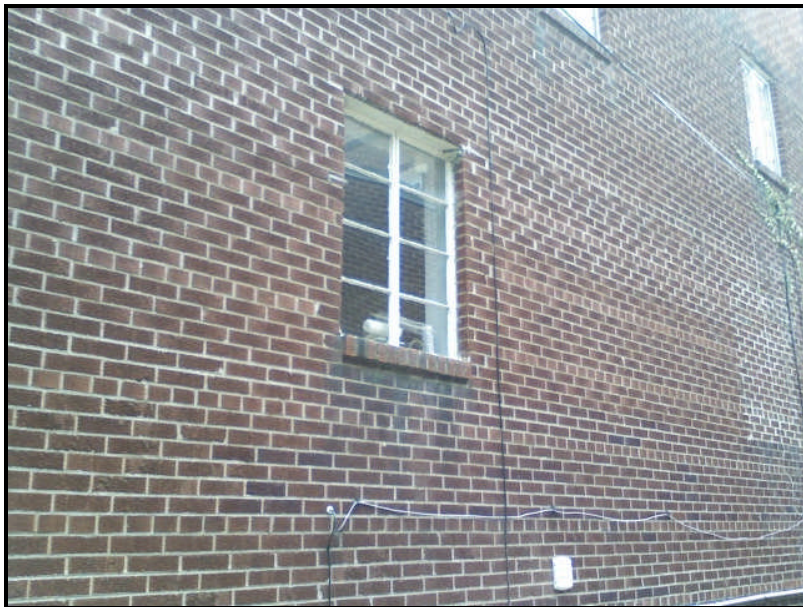


Figure 4. Photograph of casement windows on north elevation