

Docket Item # 7
BAR CASE # 2009-0117

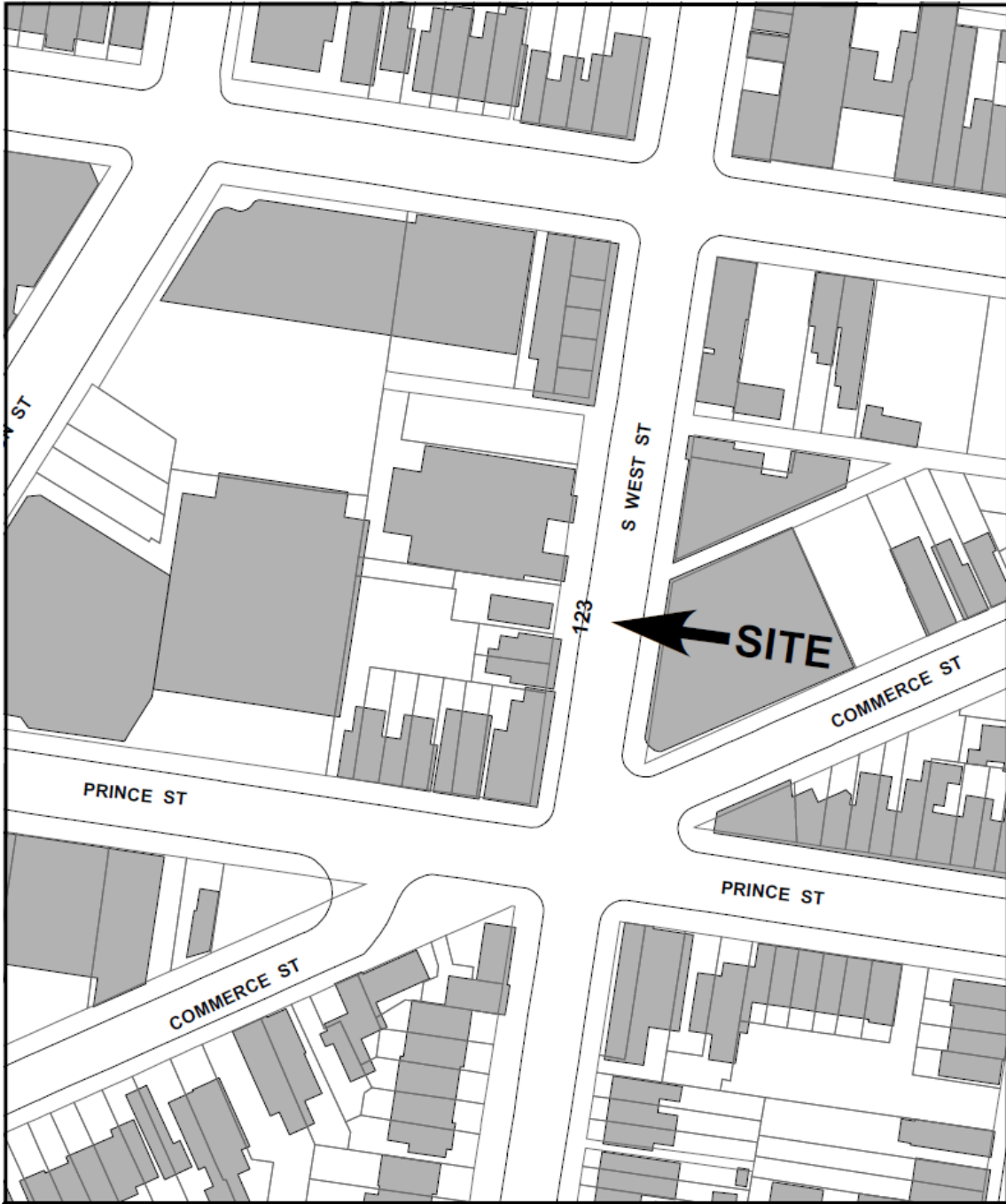
BAR Meeting
July 29, 2009

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Valda Anderson
LOCATION: 123 South West Street
ZONE: CL / Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of the application.

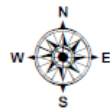
****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that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



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Update:

At the July 8, 2009 hearing, the Board denied portions and deferred portions of the application. The Board denied the portion of the application that included covering the front concrete stairs with slate and adding a cornice. The Board deferred for further study the portion of the application seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace all metal casement windows with wood windows. During the discussion, the Board noted that the building “is a rare example of 1960 architecture in the district.” The Board directed the applicant to restudy the windows including having a metal window restoration specialist come out to the property and make a recommendation concerning the viability of repair and the various options for sympathetically replacing the windows. The Board also commented that they would like to see a replacement window “more in keeping with the time period and character of the building.” The Board agreed with Staff that the proposed cornice and stair covering were inappropriate alterations.

The applicant contacted Staff to arrange a meeting at which time Staff provided a comprehensive list of metal window restoration specialists and suggested that analysis and documentation from such a specialist be included in a revised application. The applicant expressed their desire to be re-docketed without contacting such specialist.

Staff received a revised submission depicting an identical application with the exception of changing the proposed windows on the South West Street elevation from double hung to casement windows in the same lite pattern as the existing windows.

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 three metal casement windows and one metal awning window. The applicant has selected casement windows in identical lite patterns to the existing windows for all three original metal casement windows and a wood awning window to replace the original metal awning windows. The proposed replacement casement windows are Weathershield double-glazed, true divided light wood windows. The muntin profile will be 7/8 inch. On the north elevation the applicant is proposing the replacement of five metal casement windows and three basement level metal awning windows. The applicant has selected wood, double hung replacement windows for all five original metal casement windows, and wood awning windows to replace all three original metal awning windows. The proposed double hung replacement windows are one-over-one, double-glazed wood windows.

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 Street is similar in design to those designed by Joseph Saunders found on Gibbon Street, constructed in the 1950s. 123 South West Street and the houses on Gibbon Street are good examples of modernist architecture in the historic district that reflect the modernist architectural tradition in the United States and include such elements as proportional geometry, an absence of decorative ornament, the abstraction of design elements and factory metal casement windows. It is a rarity to find a building of this 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 features 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 building’s historic character. In addition, choosing one style of window for a front facade and another for a side elevation to alleviate cost violates the historic integrity of the district. It is the opinion of Staff that the windows appear to be in a condition in which they can be repaired and retained. According to the National Park Service, “moisture is 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 modern design without modification. Altering the facade by replacing the windows would greatly compromise the building’s historic integrity. It is

the opinion of Staff that the applicant did not follow through on the direction of the Board in restudying the windows or contacting a metal window restoration specialist. The applicant has not taken the instructed strides in providing documentation that the windows are in a state of disrepair requiring wholesale replacement. Furthermore, a replica wood casement window is an inauthentic representation of a character defining element of the building. 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 comment.

Historic Alexandria:
No comments received.

VI. IMAGES



Figure 1. Photograph of front elevation

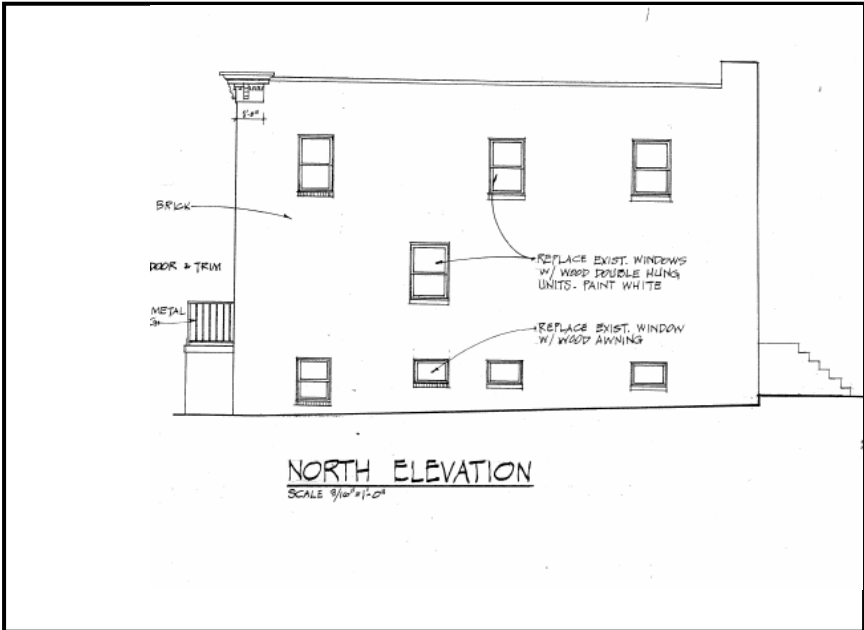


Figure 2. Drawing of proposed alterations on North Elevation

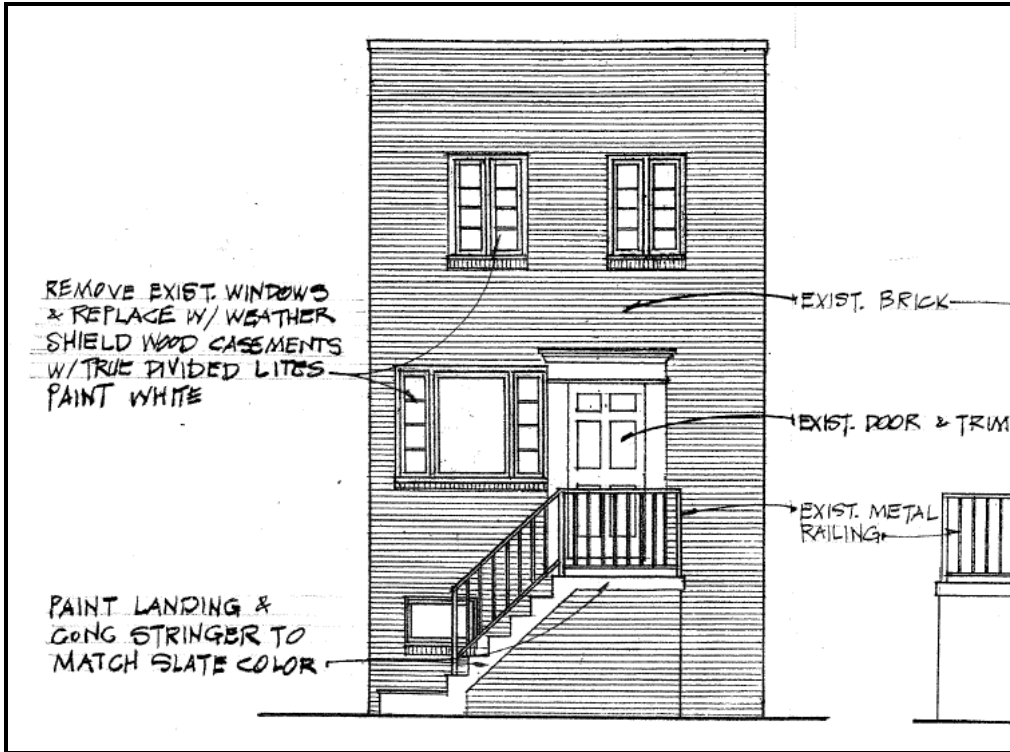


Figure 3. Proposed West Street elevation.

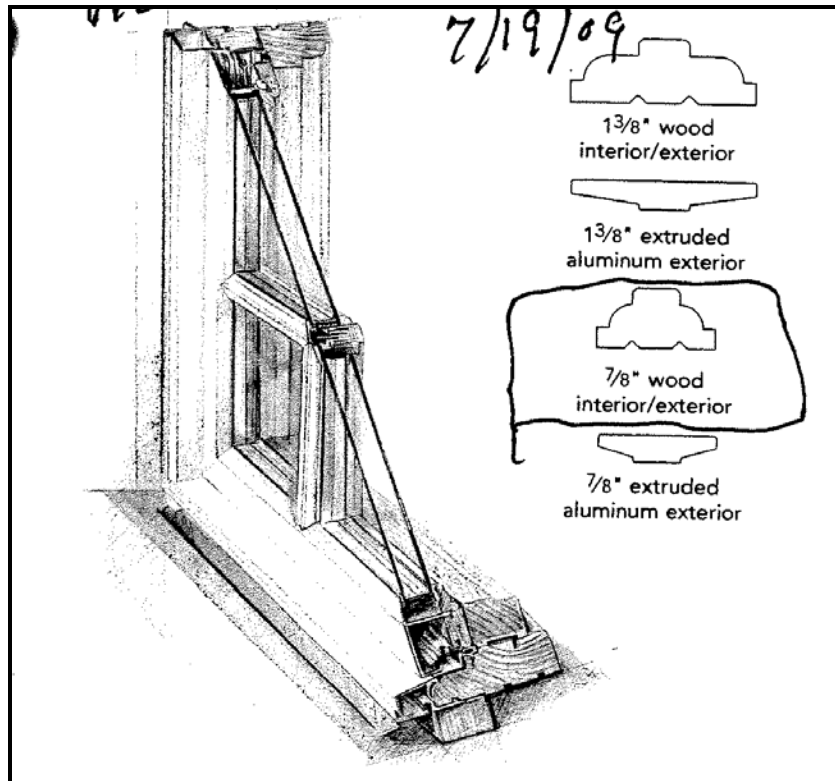


Figure 4. Specification sheet of proposed casement windows.



Figure 5. Photograph of basement windows on north elevation



Figure 6. Photograph of casement windows on north elevation