

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE # 2009-0293

BAR Meeting
January 20, 2010

ISSUE: New Construction
APPLICANT: George and Maria Charuhas by Stephanie Dimond
LOCATION: 634 South Pitt Street
ZONE: RM / Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the applicant submit specifications for the aluminum-clad windows, front picket fence, light fixtures and brick selection for final approval by Staff.
2. That the shed roofs on the front porch and entry portico have an overhang extending beyond the columns to be more in keeping with traditional porch design and reflecting the eaves of the main house roof.
3. *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.
4. *The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
5. *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.

*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 BAR approval 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 the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction at 634 South Pitt Street. The current application represents modifications to previously approved and amended plans.

The applicant is seeking approval for construction of a three-story, freestanding frame house on a vacant lot. Previously, a two-story frame house in a deteriorated condition was located on the property. The Board approved demolition of this house on September 21, 2005 (BAR Case #2005-0024).

The proposed new house will have an “L”-shaped footprint with the long and narrow front block perpendicular to the street and the wider block at the rear. The front block will be 16 feet in width and 28 feet in depth and the rear block will be 24 feet in width and 21 feet in depth. The two blocks will have an intersecting gable roof with shed dormers.

At its highest point, the house will be 34 feet above grade.

West (front) elevation

The 16 foot wide front block will have three bays with a porch at the first story. The porch will have tapered wood columns, a brick foundation and a shed roof sheathed in a pre-finished standing seam metal. The porch railing will have wood pickets. The first floor of the house will have three pairs of single-light French doors opening onto the porch. A transom will be located above each door. The second story will have three two-over-two, double-glazed, simulated divided light, double-hung, aluminum-clad windows centered over the doors below. One single two-over-two, double-glazed, simulated divided light, double-hung, aluminum-clad window will be located within the gable at the third floor.

An 8 foot wide section of the rear block will project beyond the front block on the south side of the building. This section will be set back 28 feet from the front wall of the house. There will be one large window on the first floor with what appears to be a two-over-two, double-hung window. At the second story, one two-over-two, double-glazed, simulated divided light, double-hung aluminum-clad window will be centered over the first-story window. A single dormer with a shed roof will have a four-light, simulated divided light, aluminum-clad casement window at the third story.

The side elevation of the front entry portico will be visible from the front. Similar to the front porch, the entry portico will have a brick foundation, tapered wood columns, a painted wood railing, and a shed roof.

East (rear) elevation

This elevation is 24 feet in width. At the first story, there will be two pairs of single-light French doors with transoms above that lead to a stone terrace. Each set of doors will be flanked by light fixtures. A brick chimney is centered on the elevation, separating the two French doors. At the second story there will be three two-over-two, double-glazed, simulated divided light, double-hung aluminum-clad windows. The third story will have two shed dormers each with a four-light, simulated divided light, aluminum-clad casement window.

South (side) elevation

The western 28 feet of this elevation consists of the front block with the eastern 21 feet being the rear block with a gable-fronted roof. The front block elevation has three bays. The entry door and portico is located on this elevation and is flanked by two-over-two, simulated divided light, double-hung aluminum-clad windows. The entry door is comprised of a four-light, simulated divided light, aluminum-clad door with sidelights. The entry portico has a standing seam metal shed roof, tapered wood columns and stone steps. The second story has four windows, with two of the windows being smaller casement windows and located above the center entry door. The other two windows are aligned with the first story windows and match those. At the third story are two dormers with a shed roof and four-light, simulated divided light, aluminum-clad casement windows. The rear block has two bays. There will be a four-light window in each bay at the basement level. These will be largely below grade and served by window wells and will be sized for egress. In each of the two bays on the first and second stories there will be a two-over-two window with the exception of one of the first story windows which will be a false window covered by faux louvered shutters fixed in the closed position. The third story will have a single small two-over-two window in the center of the gable.

North (side) elevation

On this elevation the front and rear blocks are distinguished by the intersecting gable roof. The length of this elevation is 49 feet. The front portion is four bays. At the first and second stories, the two outer bays have full-sized two-over-two, simulated divided light, double-hung aluminum-clad windows with two smaller four-light casement windows in the center bays. The applicant is proposing two light fixtures on this portion of this elevation. At the third story, there will be two shed dormers with paired four-light, aluminum-clad casement windows. The rear block has a brick exterior chimney flanked by single two-over-two, simulated divided light, double-hung aluminum-clad windows on the first and second stories and four-light casement windows at the third story. The basement of the rear block will be fully exposed and will have two four-light doors, one on each side of the chimney base.

Materials and Site Improvements

The applicant proposes cladding the house in painted fiber cement siding with a 4 inch exposure. In addition, there will be fiber cement cornerboards and painted composite wood trim around the windows and door surrounds. The siding will be painted in Pratt and Lambert's "Timeless Gray" and the trim will be Benjamin Moore's "Regal White". The foundation will be brick. All roofs will be made of prefinished standing seam metal in slate gray.

The proposed windows and doors are manufactured by Windsor. While the plans indicate that the windows will be wood, the attached specifications state that they are white aluminum-clad. The applicant has confirmed that the application proposes aluminum-clad windows and doors. The proposed windows are all double-glazed, simulated divided light and are either double-hung or casement, all with a two-over-two light configuration.

At the west (front) property line, the applicant proposes to construct a wood picket fence with two gates, measuring 3.5 feet in height.

II. HISTORY:

A new house was approved by the Board on January 18, 2006 (BAR Case #2005-0213). Later in 2006, the Board approved alterations to previously approved plans (BAR Case #2006-0232). The Board had previously approved the demolition of a small frame circa 1891 house located on the property (BAR Case #2005-0024, 9/21/2005). The house was demolished in 2006.

III. ANALYSIS:

The front door threshold height exceeds 20% of the average threshold height of the block. As discussed with the applicant, P&Z Staff is recommending a text amendment to the Planning Commission in February that would exclude the local historic districts from this requirement. A building permit for this project cannot be issued until this requirement is changed. Upon compliance with the above threshold requirement, the proposed single-family dwelling complies with RM Zoning Ordinance Requirements.

Staff supports the proposed new house and finds that it conforms to the *Design Guidelines* for new residential construction. The *Guidelines* state that “designs should reflect the architectural heritage of the City...abstraction of historic design elements would be preferred to a building which introduces new design elements.” The proposed house appears to reference the vernacular architectural spirit, if not the size or simplicity, of the previous, now-demolished, house. Thus it will provide some sense of visual continuity and acknowledgment of the history of the site. The 600 block of South Pitt Street reflects a range of architectural styles and periods, from historic frame dwellings to contemporary buildings.

Staff notes that the architectural detailing in this project utilizes a clear vernacular vocabulary that allows the new construction to not overwhelm any of the surrounding historic fabric and to blend with the existing blockface. The only detail of the proposed design that Staff finds could be refined is the overhang for the front porch and the entry portico. A slightly extended roof overhang in these locations would be more in keeping with traditional porch/portico design. The proposed siting of the new house is dictated largely by zoning requirements, but seems both logical and appropriate. Staff finds the proposed massing to be appropriate and notes that the bulk of the massing will be at the rear of the house rather than the front. Lastly, while the proposed new house is considerably larger than the previous house, it does not appear out of scale for the setting. The adjacent masonry residences are fairly substantial. Portions of the residential complex at 628-632 ½ North Pitt Street are three stories high and are more than 3 feet higher than the proposed new house. The proposed setback and use of a front porch helps mitigate the height of the building from the street and will complement the streetscape.

The selection of materials is generally appropriate and consistent with the *Design Guidelines*. For new construction, the Board has typically supported the use of synthetic and composite materials, including fiber cement siding and composite trim. While single-glazed, true divided light wood windows are preferable, the *Design Guidelines* and the Board generally allow for double-glazed, simulated divided light windows and doors on new construction. Although the Board generally approves wood windows on new construction and additions, Staff finds that aluminum-clad windows are appropriate in this case, noting that the majority of the materials proposed for this project are synthetic or composite. Furthermore, Staff notes that this is entirely

new construction, the house will be set back from the street, and the proposed windows will be of high-quality. Staff has noted in the conditions that specifications or samples of certain items, such as windows, light fixtures brick choice, should be submitted to Staff for final approval.

Staff notes the conditions of Alexandria Archaeology and recommends that they be included as a condition of approval.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the applicant submit specifications for the aluminum-clad windows, front picket fence, light fixtures and brick selection for final approval by Staff.
2. That the shed roofs on the front porch and entry portico have an overhang extending beyond the columns to be more in keeping with traditional porch design and reflecting the eaves of the main house roof.
3. *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.
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STAFF:

Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, City Architect, Historic Preservation Section
Stephen Milone, Division Chief, Land Use Services

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Administration:

- 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 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 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.
- 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.

C-11 A Certificate of occupancy shall be obtained prior to any occupancy of the building or portion thereof, in accordance with USBC 116.1..

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

Archaeology Finding

1. The G.M. Hopkins insurance map indicates that structures were present on this block by 1877. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic 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.

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Transportation and Environmental Services:

RECOMMENDATIONS

R-1 An approved GRADING PLAN must be attached to the building permit application. 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.

Questions regarding the processing of grading plans should be directed to the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at (703) 746-4064. 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>

- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-3 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R-4 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 grading plan. (T&ES)
- R-5 An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet. An erosion and sediment control bond shall be posted prior to release of the grading plan. (T&ES)
- R-6 If construction of the residential unit(s) results in land disturbing activity in excess of 2500 square feet, the applicant is required to comply with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's Zoning Ordinance for stormwater quality control. (T&ES)

CODE REQUIREMENTS

- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99).
- C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line.
- C-3 Roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (Sec.8-1-22)
- C-4 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3)
- C-5 Pay sanitary sewer tap fee prior to release of Grading Plan. (Sec. 5-6-25)
- C-6 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)

VI. IMAGES

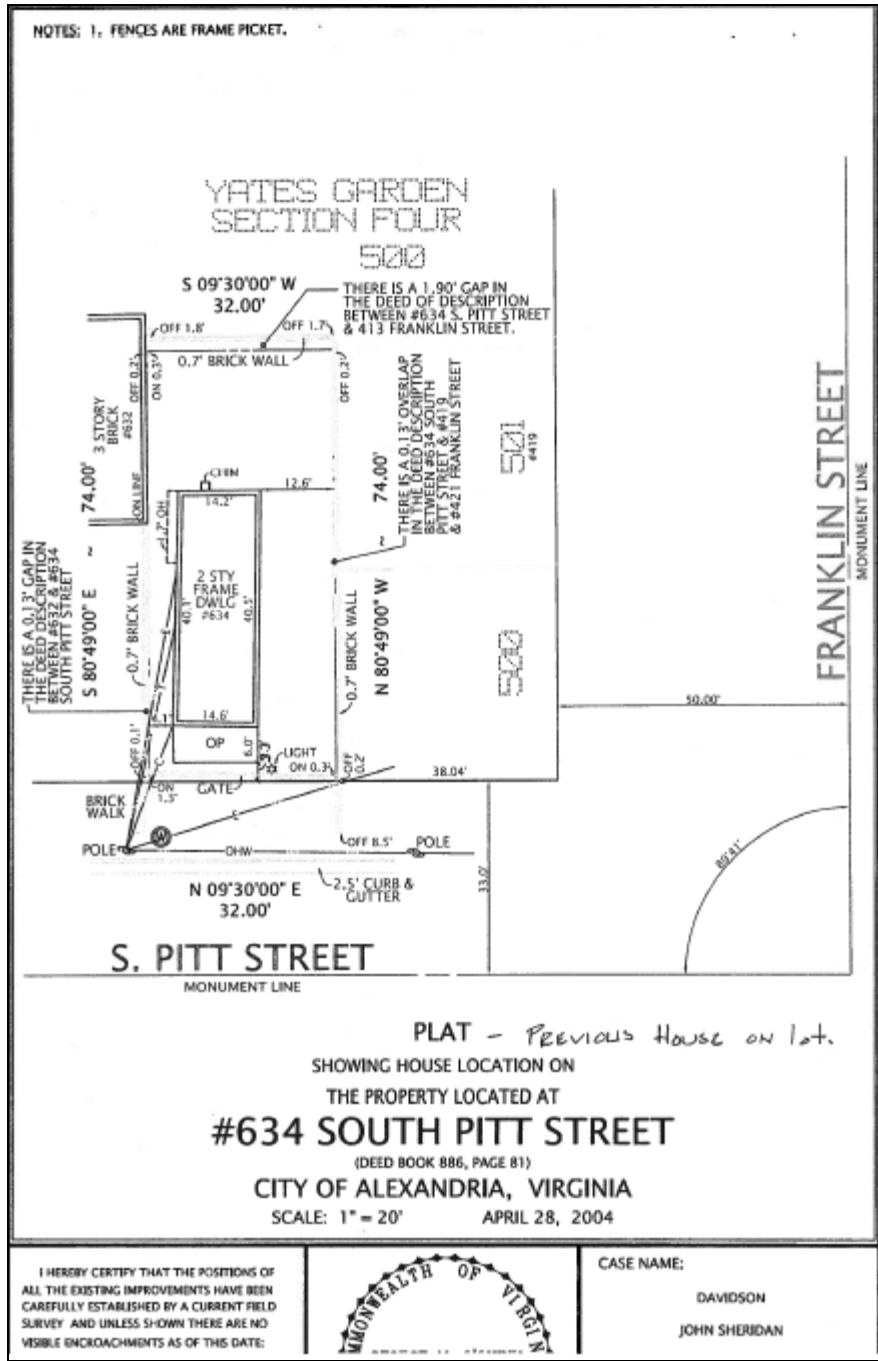


Figure 1. Plat of now-demolished house.

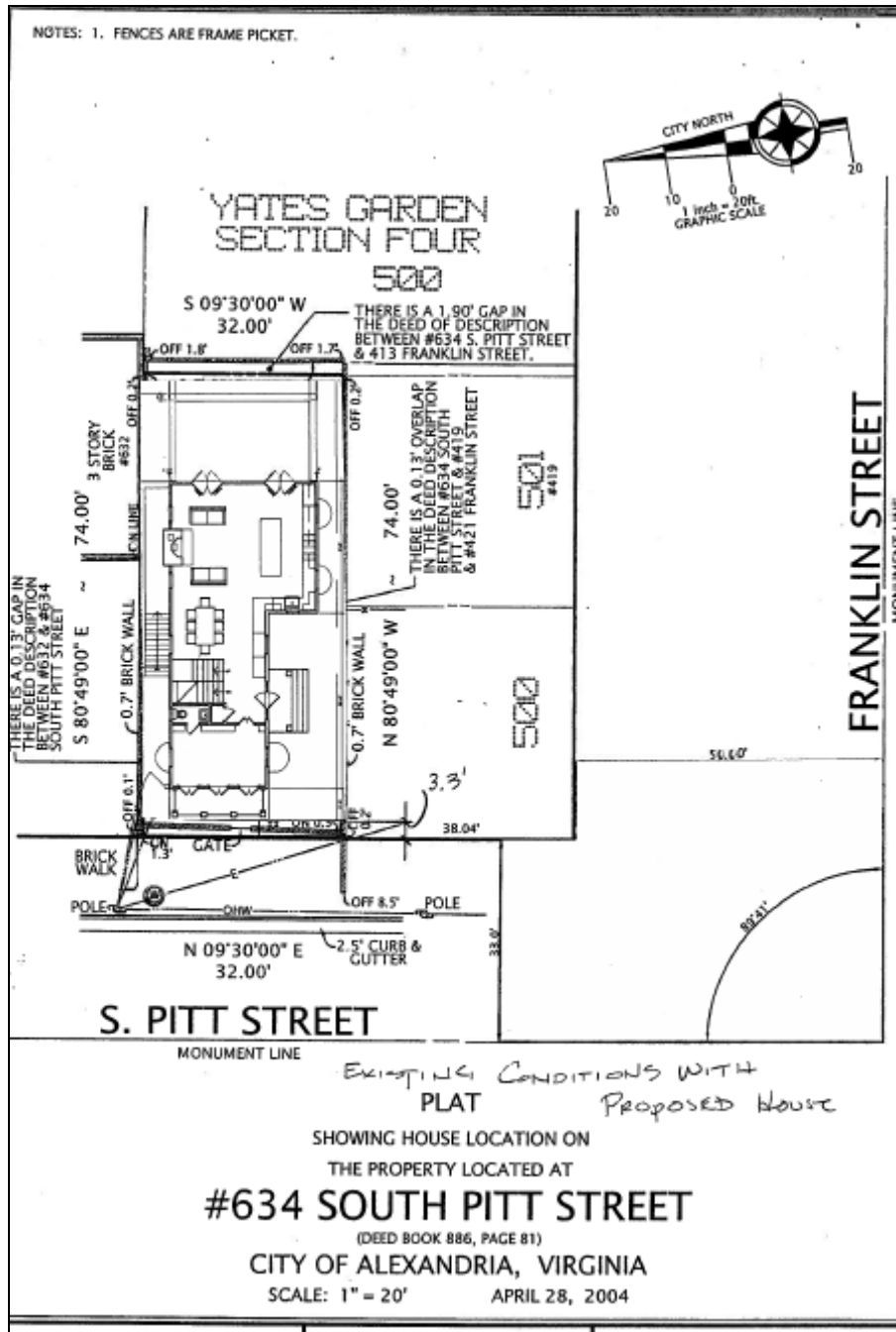


Figure 2. Plat showing location of proposed new construction.

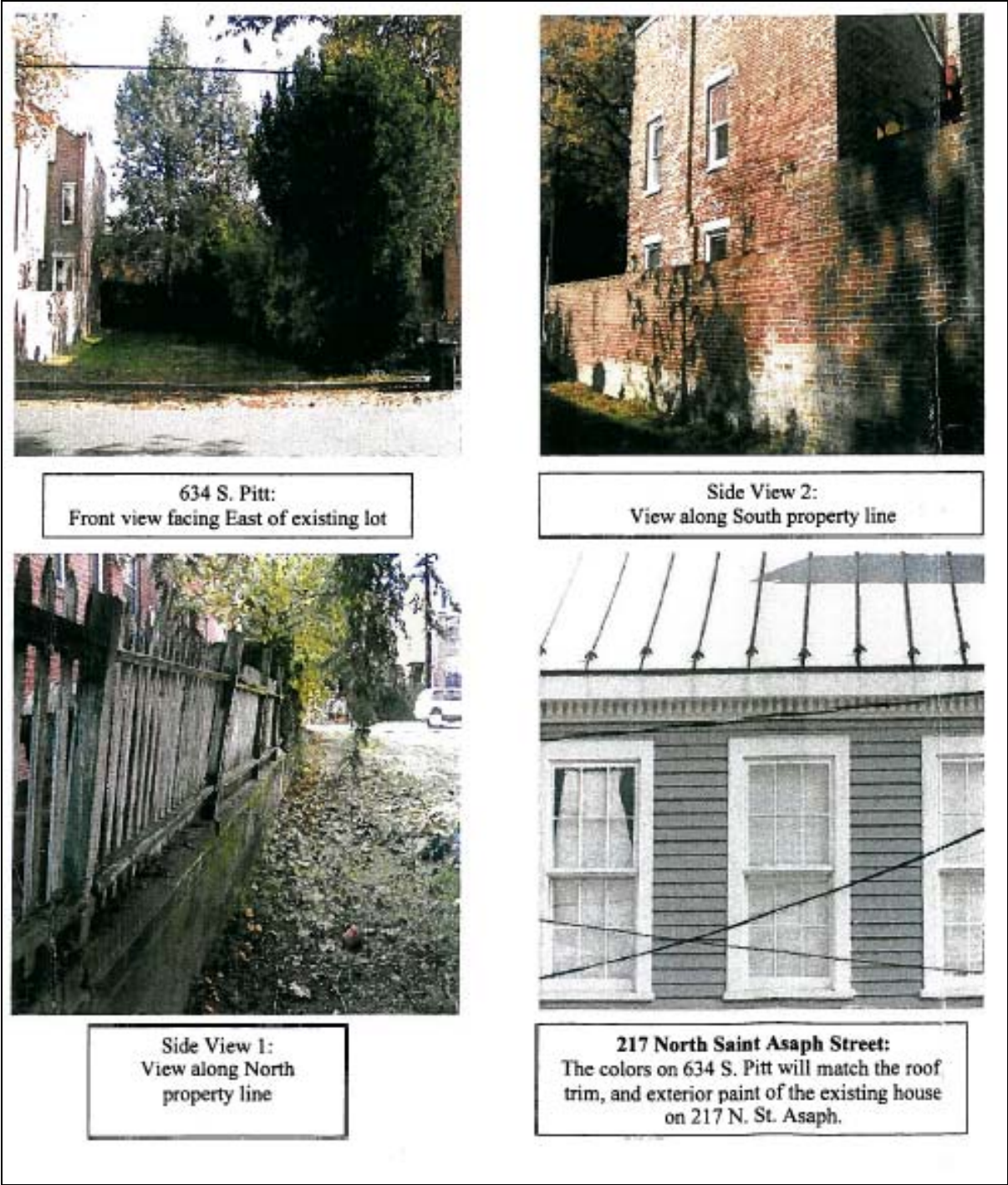


Figure 3. Photographs submitted by applicant of existing site conditions and proposed color scheme.



Figure 5. Proposed west (front) and south (side) elevations.

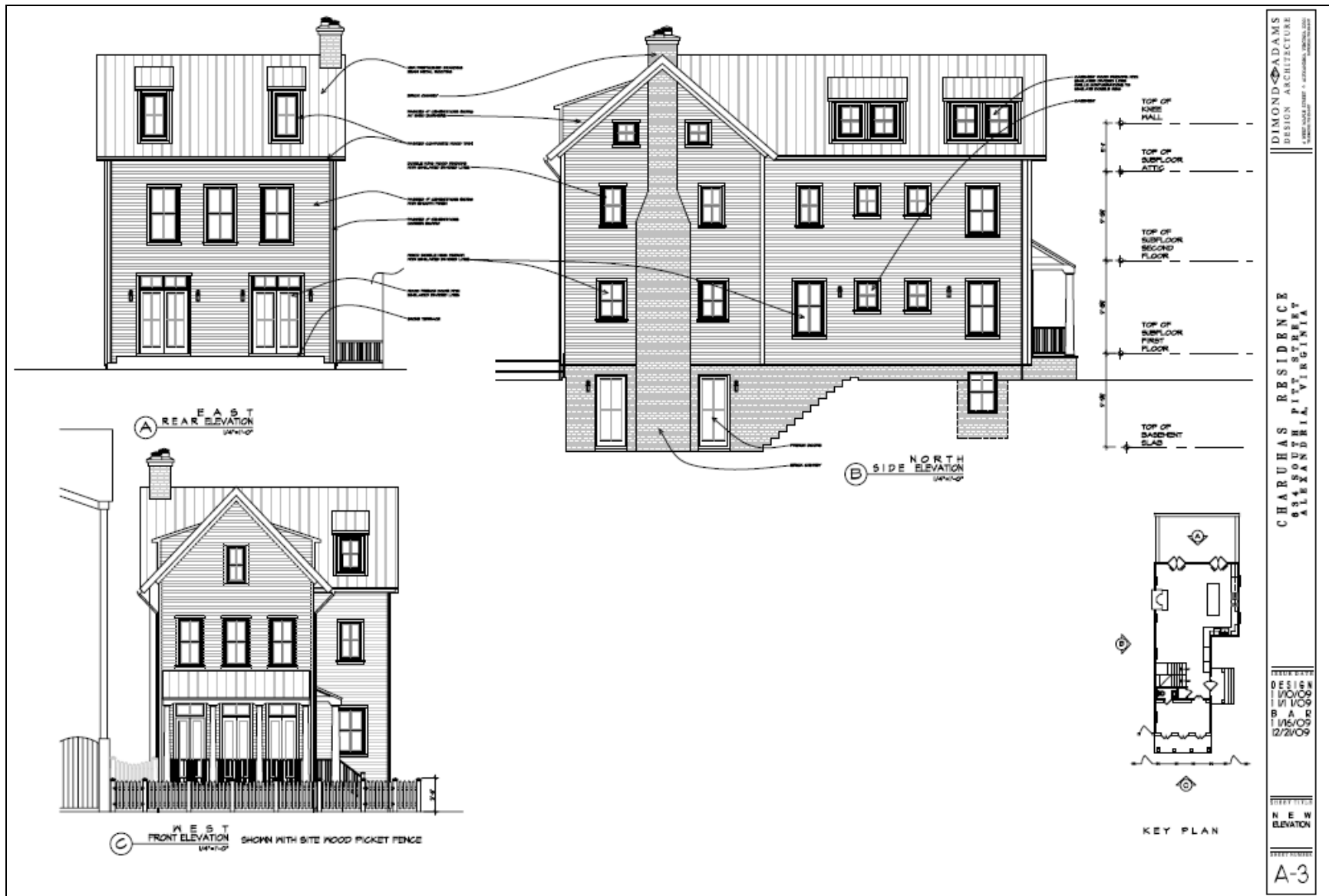


Figure 6. Proposed east (rear) and north (side) elevations; west (front) elevation from street.