

Docket Item # 2
BAR CASE # 2009-0150/0176

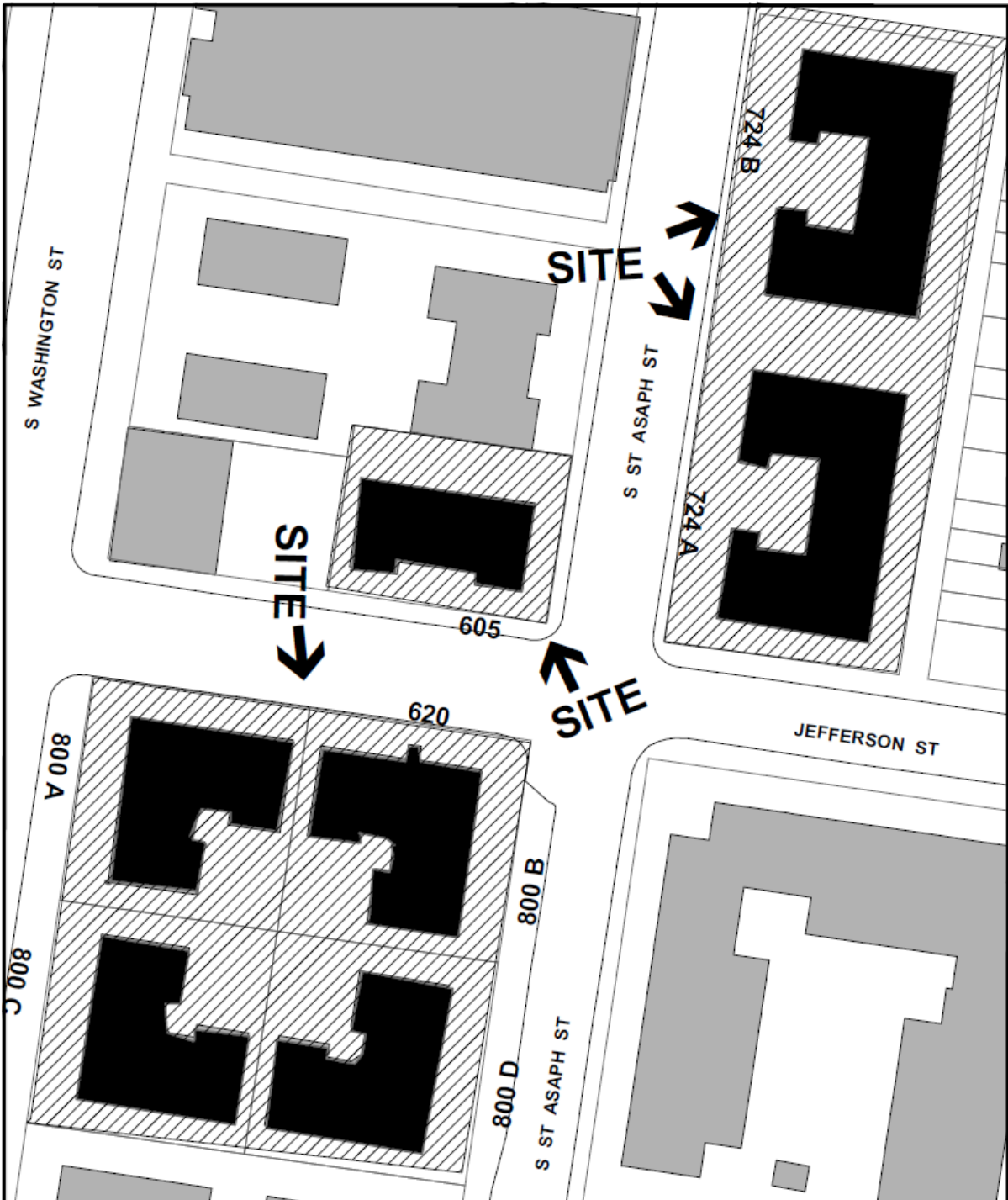
BAR Meeting
March 17, 2010

ISSUE: Permit to Demolish & Alterations
APPLICANT: Scott Management Inc.
LOCATION: 620 Jefferson Street
ZONE: RCX/Medium Density Apartment Zone

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of the demolition of historic brick fabric on those elevations facing public streets and recommends approval of the demolition of brick in the interior courtyards to accommodate the installation of thru-the-wall HVAC condensers.

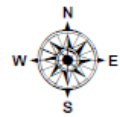
****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 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 #2009-0150/0176

3/17/2010



 - SITE

Note: Staff coupled the reports for BAR2009-0150 (Certificate of Appropriateness for Alterations) and BAR 2009-0176 (Permit to Demolish) for clarity and brevity because consideration of these cases is functionally inseparable.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish and a Certificate of Appropriateness for installation of through-the-wall HVAC units at the Monticello-Lee Apartment complex located on parts of three City blocks along Jefferson Street, South Washington Street, and South Saint Asaph Street. The complex consists of seven buildings located at 800A, 800B, 800C and 800D South Washington Street, at 605 Jefferson Street, and 724A and 724B South Saint Asaph Street. In order to install, the proposed wall units a 17-1/4 inch tall by 27 1/4 inch wide hole will be cut into the historic brick wall of all 346 apartment units. The units will project approximately 2 inches from the exterior wall of the building. The applicant intends to paint the exterior grills to match the adjacent masonry.

II. HISTORY:

The main Monticello Lee Apartment complex of four buildings was designed by Evan Conner for the Atlantic Development Company and was constructed in late 1939 and early 1940. The garden style apartment buildings are three stories in height and constructed of brick, with variations in the design of the buildings on each of the three contiguous sites. The buildings have undergone minimal exterior alterations in their seventy year history.

The Monticello-Lee Apartments are among a number of garden apartment complexes constructed in Alexandria at the north and south ends of Washington Street from the late 1930s through approximately 1950. Most of these garden-style apartment developments utilized Colonial Revival style details, though some are constructed in an Alexandria brick version of the Streamline Moderne style. All had large setbacks and significant open space, and are emblematic of garden-style apartments built in this period throughout the Washington, D.C. region.

Prior to this current proposal, alterations at the Monticello Lee Apartment complex have been heard before the Old and Historic Board on three prior occasions:

March 20, 1996 (BAR Case #1996-0052): BAR approved replacement of 752 non-original windows in the 800 South Washington Street buildings with one-over-one aluminum clad windows.

April 7, 1994 (BAR Case #1994-0037): BAR approved an entrance portico with signage on the 620 Jefferson Street building.

September 20, 1989 (BAR Case #1989-0156): BAR approved alterations to the main entrance of the 620 Jefferson Street building.

III. BACKGROUND:

This case was last heard by the BAR on October 21, 2009, at which time it was deferred for restudy because the applicant did not adequately respond to the concerns expressed at the previous BAR hearing of September 9, 2009. At the October 21, 2009 hearing, several Board members noted that the application was incomplete because it did not include architectural drawings showing the specific areas proposed for demolition and installation of the through-the-wall units on each building. The applicant has now submitted architectural drawings of all seven buildings.

At the prior hearing, on September 9, 2009, the Board generally agreed with Staff's analysis that found it inappropriate to demolish the building's historic brick masonry in order to install through-the-wall HVAC units. At both hearings, several Board members commented that alternative mechanical systems that would not permanently damage the historic building should be fully explored, such as a split system which places condensing units on the roof and/or on the ground. On November 5, 2009, the applicant provided a summary to Staff of their bids for alternative heating and cooling systems, as well as their cost, for the property which is included with the Board's materials. However, as the Board has previously noted, their purview is historic preservation and architectural review; therefore, consideration of energy efficiency and installation cost will not be considered.

Staff notes that the application and previous BAR Staff reports indicate a request for 325 through-the-wall HVAC units. However, the architectural drawings dated December 17, 2009 represent the installation of 346 through-the-wall units. The applicant has indicated that 346 is the correct number of units based on the recent architectural studies.

Finally, at a recent BAR meeting, the Chairman asked Staff to survey the garden apartment buildings on South Washington in order to compare the alterations that have occurred in similar structures. The results of this brief survey are attached at the end of the report.

IV. ANALYSIS:

On the surface, and as presented in previous Staff reports, this is a simple issue of the demolition of a significant amount of masonry from approximately 70 year old buildings fronting the George Washington Memorial Parkway and a number of other public streets. This type of application would typically be denied on historic buildings as a matter of good preservation practice and because of the unfortunate aesthetic effects these mechanical units will have on the building elevations, clearly something never envisioned by the original architects of these pre-WWII apartment buildings. According to the *Design Guidelines*, "Through-the-wall air conditioning units are discouraged because of their adverse visual impact as well as the loss of historic building material that results from their installation." However, a brief survey of alterations to the garden apartments on South Washington Street indicates that previous approvals for alterations on these structures have not been entirely consistent.

The majority of the garden apartments in this part of the District were constructed in the 1930s and 40s along the recently completed George Washington Memorial Parkway in response to the need for housing for employees of the growing federal government. None of these buildings individually exhibit a high degree of architectural design merit, though they are generally well

crafted and are more solidly constructed than modern buildings of their type. In addition, they have large landscaped courtyards and are set back from the streets with yards filled with mature trees, forming a gradual transition from the urban core of Alexandria as one drives past the cemeteries and to the pastoral portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Buildings on the Parkway are subject to the *Washington Street Design Guidelines* which state that, “construction shall be compatible with and similar to traditional building character particularly mass, scale, design, and style, found on Washington Street on commercial or residential building of historic architectural merit.” To use the late Peter H. Smith’s definition of buildings which maintain the dignity, purpose and memorial character of the Parkway under the 1929 agreement with the federal government: “One should not remember any individual building when driving through Alexandria from Washington, DC to visit the shrine at Mount Vernon, except for those few present during the General’s lifetime.” As such, while it is unlikely that they will ever rise to the historic importance of Gadsby’s Tavern, these garden apartments conform to that definition of memorial character and are excellent examples of background buildings. It should be noted that the Parkway listing on the National Register notes its significance for engineering, landscape architecture and transportation, not architecture within the City of Alexandria. Therefore, as background buildings, it is the urban design qualities of scale and the setting that these buildings contribute to the character of this part of the City, not the high style details of a particular architectural style or the work of a nationally recognized master architect.

The Board has recently asked Staff to initiate a dialogue on the use of modern materials on 20th century buildings in the historic district in order to develop a consistent policy for their use. It is clear that the community’s opinion of whether these buildings are “historic” has evolved over time. Buildings which were constructed within the living memory of citizens are seldom considered historic and no one would have considered them so when the Old and Historic Alexandria District was established in 1946. However, some of these garden apartment buildings on Washington Street are now 70 years old and have acquired a cultural importance that was not shared when some of the alterations to these structures were approved in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, it was not until this part of the City was intensely studied as a result of the Wilson Bridge reconstruction and enlargement that many people realized the importance of this area to the Old & Historic Alexandria District.

Therefore, Staff believes that the historical significance of these 20th century buildings is their urban design contributions to the Old and Historic Alexandria District and to the memorial character of the Parkway. Staff believes it is appropriate to use modern replacement materials on these buildings. The question is what kind of materials and how they should be installed.

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?

- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

Taken literally, the demolition criteria in the Zoning Ordinance section above anticipates wholesale demolition of the building and does not specifically address removal of small amounts of fabric spread over seven buildings. Nor does it preclude alterations to buildings over time. For instance, the wall area of historic fabric lost thru installation of aluminum windows, approved by the Board on this project in 1996, is far greater than now proposed for thru-wall units, though windows are undeniably more easily replaceable than masonry. As brick and mortar can never be re-constructed without the repair being visible, this becomes an issue of design more than an issue of historic preservation.

Despite the relatively small loss of material for the installation of each thru-wall unit, Staff cannot support the adverse cumulative effect of the thru-wall units on the overall architectural character of these buildings when viewed from the public streets surrounding the Monticello Lee apartments. The units, even if the louvers are painted to match the adjacent brick, disrupt the original composition of the fenestration and decorative brickwork. Although it may be physically possible to install the units in most walls without cutting thru decorative bands of projecting brick, the units will appear forced into these spaces, particularly on the Alexandria Moderne style Wakefield and Patrick Henry buildings. The unbalanced architectural composition would be particularly unfortunate where the units would be installed to the sides of the windows in the first floor, rusticated base of the Patrick Henry. Instead, Staff would strongly encourage the applicant to utilize a split mechanical system for these apartments which locates the HVAC condensers on the flat roofs of the apartment buildings, where they would not intrude into the landscape setbacks and would be out of public view.

However, while the Zoning Ordinance requires the Board to carefully consider any demolition over 25 square feet in area, regardless of its visibility, Staff does not believe that the loss of this amount of area on walls surrounding courtyards interior to this project rise to the same level of concern as those walls facing public streets or the Parkway and has no objection to installation of thru-the-wall units inside these courtyards, many of which are not visible from a public way.

In summary, Staff recommends that the Board deny the demolition of historic brick fabric on those elevations facing public streets and recommends approval of the demolition of brick in the interior courtyards to accommodate the installation of thru-the-wall HVAC condensers.

STAFF:

Meredith Kizer, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager

ATTACHMENT:

A Brief Survey of Alterations to Garden Apartments on South Washington Street, March 7, 2010

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Planning & Zoning

F-1 The proposed alterations comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

Code Administration:

C-1 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 and construction alteration details, including electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.

C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) and installation of the mechanical units must comply with the current edition of the Mechanical Code.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

VI. IMAGES

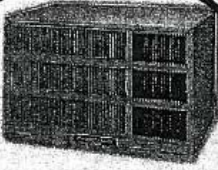


Figure 1. Photograph of building from S. Washington St.



Figure 2. Photograph of building with existing HVAC units.

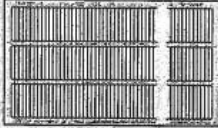
WallMaster | 27" Sleeve Exterior Grilles



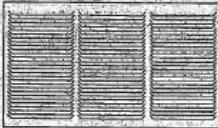
WSC Sleeve Standard Grille - Ships with sleeve

IMPORTANT:
Operating the air conditioner with incorrect rear grille or without Baffle Adapter Kit (on 19 3/4" deep sleeve) will recirculate discharge air and cause compressor overload to trip.

CORRECT Vertical Louvers

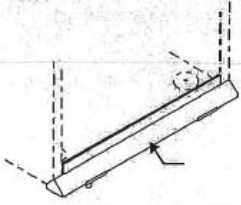


INCORRECT Horizontal Louvers



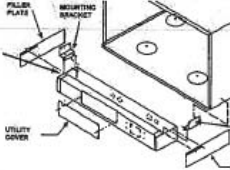
DK / Drain Kit

Installed at the back of the unit and allows for attachment to permanent condensate disposal system, if disposal is necessary or desired.



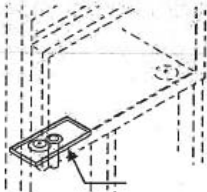
SB / Sub Base

Used as a base for the unit when it is desired to place the cord and receptacle within the installation, or simply as a base for the unit when mounted low in the wall.



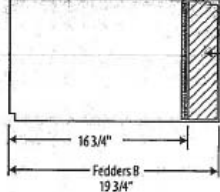
IDK / Internal Drain Kit

New construction applications where a condensate drain system has been built into the wall interior.



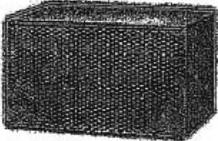
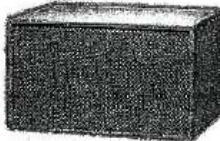
BAK / Baffle Adapter Kit

Necessary when installing in a sleeve deeper than 16 3/4" deep, such as Fedders B sleeve (19 3/4" deep).



16 3/4"
Fedders B
19 3/4"

Uni-Fit. | 26" Sleeve Exterior Grilles

USC Sleeve Standard Grille Sleeve shown with Replacement Grille

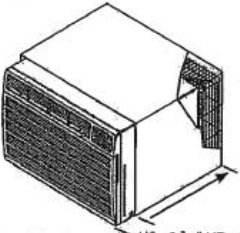
STANDARD GRILLE - Ships with USC sleeve
Expanded aluminum grille designed for use with USC sleeve.

REPLACEMENT GRILLE - Ships with US/UE chassis
High-tech plastic for use on existing sleeves without any grille.

IMPORTANT:
When installing into an existing sleeve, consult Installation Section of your Installation/Operation Manual to determine whether or not the grille needs to be replaced and/or a baffle adapter should be used.

WallMaster. | Uni-Fit. Sleeve/Chassis Dimensions

Model	Height	Width	Depth	Depth with Front	Minimum Extension Into Room	Minimum Extension Outside	Thru-the-wall Finished Hole		
							Height	Width	Max. Depth
WALLMASTER									
WSC Sleeve	15 3/4"	27"	16 3/4"	23"	7 1/2"	9/16"	17 1/4"	27 1/4"	15 5/16"
Chassis	15 3/4"	26 1/2"	21"	22"	-	-	-	-	-
UNI-FIT									
USC Sleeve	15 1/2"	25 7/8"	16 3/4"	20 1/2"	-	1/2"	15 3/4"	26 1/8"	16 1/4"
US Chassis	14 3/8"	24"	-	20 1/8"	3 3/4"	-	-	-	-
UE Chassis	14 3/8"	24 5/8"	-	19 5/8"	3 1/2"	-	-	-	-



US = 3 3/8", UE = 2 7/8"

IMPORTANT:
US chassis w/front fully installed into USC sleeve extends into room 3 3/8". UE chassis w/front fully installed into USC sleeve extends into room 2 7/8".

IMPORTANT: Sleeves are sold and shipped separately to accommodate new construction and replacement requirements

Figure 1. Proposed HVAC Units.

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