

Docket Item # 1  
BAR CASE #2010-0223

BAR Meeting  
November 3, 2010

**ISSUE:** Alterations (HVAC Screening)

**APPLICANT:** Daryl Reinke

**LOCATION:** 17 Keith's Lane

**ZONE:** W-1 / Waterfront

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions recommended by the Ford's Landing Architectural Control and Covenants Committee:

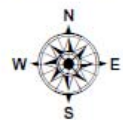
1. The deck is to be expanded to accommodate the HVAC units. The expanded deck should be constructed with lumber that matches the existing wood stoop and should be painted with an HOA approved paint.
2. The deck railing height should be 36" to hide the HVAC units. The slats should be 2½ inches apart and should match the original stoop's railing.
3. Below the expanded deck, lattice should be installed that matches the existing lattice on the partitions separating the townhouses.
4. The infill brick and mortar should match the existing brick and mortar on the townhouse.

**\*\*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 final approval 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, 703-746-4200 for further information.



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## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations associated with relocating the HVAC units at the townhouse located at 17 Keith's Lane. Specifically, the applicant is requesting the following:

- Expand the existing rear wood stoop and railing
- Infill with brick where existing through-wall units have been removed

This property is representative of an ongoing situation at Ford's Landing as the existing through-wall HVAC units have begun to fail. When constructed, these through-wall units were standard on all townhouses throughout the Ford's Landing development. As such, there were no provisions in the Special Use Permit, Site Plan or BAR approval for locating HVAC units on the ground with screening.

As the through-wall units reach the end of their life cycle, they need to be replaced with standard exterior HVAC condensing units because the through-wall units are no longer commercially available and, based on the owner's reports, never functioned well in this application. During the summer of 2010, BAR Staff approved two mechanical permits for replacement HVAC units on Keith's Lane. These permits were approved with the condition that the owners file an application to go before the BAR for approval of screening. The BAR was notified by Staff at that time that a comprehensive plan for screening of all future replacement HVAC units at Ford's Landing would be forthcoming and the applicants worked with Staff on designs for mechanical screening on the enlarged deck. Due to their location in the 100 year floodplain, the HVAC units for the townhouses on Keith's Lane must be located on a deck or similarly raised platform. The railing of the deck serves also as a screen. The owner has filled in the wall space where the through-wall units were located with brick to match the existing brick.

Recognizing that these two cases are not isolated incidents, Staff has met on site with the individual property owners as well as members of the Ford's Landing Homeowners Association (HOA) and the Architectural Control and Covenants Committee (ACCC). The HOA has hired a consulting engineer, Bradbury Consultants, to study the issue of the future siting of exterior HVAC equipment throughout the development and to prepare a report recommending how to appropriately relocate HVAC units for the different configurations found at Ford's Landing. The HOA has indicated that they anticipate the report will be completed by February 2011. The HOA will then submit an application to the BAR by early spring of 2011. Until this report is complete and can be presented to the BAR for a blanket approval to allow for the administrative approval of such alterations, the ACCC has decided upon a set of requirements for the two subject units located on Keith's Lane, which immediately abut the dog park at 600 South Union Street. At that time, Staff will also be recommending that the existing blanket approval for replacement materials at Ford's Landing be revised and eliminated or incorporated into the Modern & Sustainable Materials Policy that the Board is working on now.

The Ford's Landing ACCC approved the following requirements for HVAC screening for Keith's Lane townhouse adjacent to the dog park:

1. The deck is to be expanded to accommodate the HVAC units. The expanded deck should be constructed with lumber that matches the existing wood stoop and should be painted with an

HOA approved paint.

2. The deck railing height should be 36” to hide the HVAC units. The slats should be 2½ inches apart and should match the original stoop’s railing.
3. Below the expanded deck, lattice should be installed that matches the existing lattice on the partitions separating the townhouses.
4. The infill brick and mortar should match the existing brick and mortar on the townhouse.

## **II. HISTORY**

17 Keith’s Lane is located within the Ford’s Landing development. The Ford’s Landing complex was approved by the Board in a series of meetings in 1996 (BAR Case #96-0030). The Special Use Permit (SUP #96-0006) and Site Plan (SIT #96-0002) were approved by the Planning Commission and City Council in 1996.

On September 5, 2007, the Board approved a matrix of materials appropriate for replacement on exterior features within Ford’s Landing, to allow administrative review for items deemed to be in conformance with the approved matrix.

In April 2009, the Board approved expansion of the rear deck at 19 Keith’s Lane to accommodate replacement HVAC units, similar to the two applications currently before the Board.

## **III. ANALYSIS**

The proposed alterations have been reviewed and administratively approved for zoning compliance by Planning & Zoning Development staff. For the remaining units, the HOA will be required to submit a minor amendment to their SUP 96-0006 application and file it with the Development division. This minor amendment will show the proposed location, expansions of decks/patios and screening methods for all the units. The amendment will be brought forth to the BAR, along with the entire HVAC relocation and screening report prepared by the HOA’s consultant and, upon approval by the BAR, will be administratively reviewed by Development staff.

The *Design Guidelines* state that “HVAC equipment should be located in a visually inconspicuous area of a building” and “HVAC equipment which must be located in...a visually prominent area of a building should be screened.” Additionally, the *Design Guidelines* note that “decks should not hide, obscure or cause removal of historic architectural details...decks should be made of materials which are sympathetic to the building materials generally found in the historic districts...decks should generally be painted the predominant color of the building or the color of the trimwork.” As the rear elevations of the Keith’s Lane townhouses are highly visible from the adjacent waterfront dog park and South Union Street, appropriate screening must be provided. Whenever HVAC units are screened, consideration must be made to adequately screen the units in a way that neither the units nor the screening are visually obtrusive. Therefore, the location of the units and the design of the screening must be done so as to allow the necessary mechanical equipment to recede from view. Although beyond the BAR’s scope, Staff notes that the newer units are astonishingly quiet in comparison to the through-wall units.

In the case of the rear elevations of Keith’s Lane, Staff finds the requirements proposed by the ACCC to be appropriate screening and consistent with screening approved throughout the district.

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In addition, these recommendations will result in a clear and consistent understanding among property owners about what is appropriate rather than each homeowner trying to create an individual screening design. Staff notes that the intent of screening is not to entirely and completely hide something but rather to generally shield it from view. Therefore, the proposed use of an expanded deck and railing are considered suitable screening. The use of lattice below the deck, not currently below the existing stoops, will hide the enlarged deck's bracing and mechanical tubes and wires. The southern edge of the dog park has extensive vegetation which further screens the units from the public right-of-way. Staff finds the screening requirements that the HOA/ACCC have proposed for these units are the least visually obtrusive from the public right-of-way and most compatible with the architectural integrity of the existing townhouses on Keith's Lane. Staff notes that finding suitable alternatives for replacing HVAC units throughout Ford's Landing development will be a complex and challenging undertaking, noting that there are a variety of configurations. Staff walked around the development with members of the HOA and ACCC to identify particularly challenging areas.

As seen in the photographs at the end of this report, the HVAC units have been installed on platforms at 17 Keith's Lane but the deck has not been expanded nor the railing installed. Staff recommends approval of the HVAC screening at 17 Keith's Lane in accordance with the ACCC's recommended requirements.

**STAFF**

Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

**IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

*As a building permit (BLD2010-01080) was already approved for this case, the application was reviewed and approved by the necessary City departments (Code Administration and Transportation & Environmental Services). Therefore the BAR application was not routed for comment.*



**V. IMAGES**



**Figure 1. Example of existing wood stoop and railing and through-wall HVAC units.**



**Figure 2. 17 Keith's Lane showing replacement HVAC units on platforms without screening.**





Figure 3. 9 Keith's Lane showing expanded deck and brick infill.



Figure 4. View from park of 9 Keith's Lane with expanded deck and infill brick, and the existing deck configuration to the right.



**Figure 5. View of rear elevations of Keith's Lane townhouses from park.**