

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE #2010-0324

BAR Meeting
December 1, 2010

ISSUE: Alterations (HVAC Screening)

APPLICANT: Burke & Herbert

LOCATION: 120 South Fairfax Street

ZONE: CD / Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the conditions that the fence be painted a dark green or dark red color and that corner posts with decorative post caps be added to the fence design.

****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 the installation of a fence to screen five proposed HVAC condenser units at the rear of the property at 120 South Fairfax Street. The proposed fence will be a four foot tall board-on-board wood fence and will be located in an area between the existing parking area and the rear of building. The maximum size of each condenser unit will be 37 inches (width) by 34 inches (depth) by 45 inches (height). Some of the existing vegetation will be removed to accommodate the units and fence. Although the alley is private, the screening will be minimally visible from South Fairfax and South Lee streets.

II. HISTORY

The three-story, three-bay brick building was originally constructed as a tenement. According to Ethelyn Cox in Historic Alexandria, Street by Street, the house at 120 South Fairfax Street was in constructed between **1805** and **1815**. In 2001, the Board approved signage for Burke & Herbert Bank & Trust Co. Retail Loans (BAR Case #2001-0142). In 2009, Staff administratively approved an in-kind replacement of a slate roof and copper gutters.

III. ANALYSIS

The proposed alterations are in compliance with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

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.” 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.

In this case, the HVAC condenser units and associated screening are located in the least obtrusive location possible on this property. When the applicant originally approached Staff, the proposal was to install three of the five units along the southern elevation of the building adjacent to the alley. In this proposal, the units would have been highly visible from South Fairfax Street through the existing iron fence with brick piers and the units would have visually destroyed what is currently a charming urban garden area. Staff worked with the applicant to find a more appropriate location on the rear of the property. While it is never ideal to install five HVAC condenser units in one location, Staff recognizes the needs of modern HVAC equipment for a building of this size and notes that it will allow the existing window units to be removed. Further, the proposed location of the units and screening is adjacent to a parking area and minimally visible from South Fairfax and South Lee streets. Staff recommends that the fence design be further refined through the addition of corner posts with decorative post caps and that the fence be painted a dark red or green color to recede.

STAFF

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

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

No comments received.

V. IMAGES



Figure 1. Ariel view of site with existing conditions.



Figure 2. Front (west) elevation.



Figure 3. Rear (east) elevation.



Figure 4. General location (on brick) of HVAC condenser units and screening.

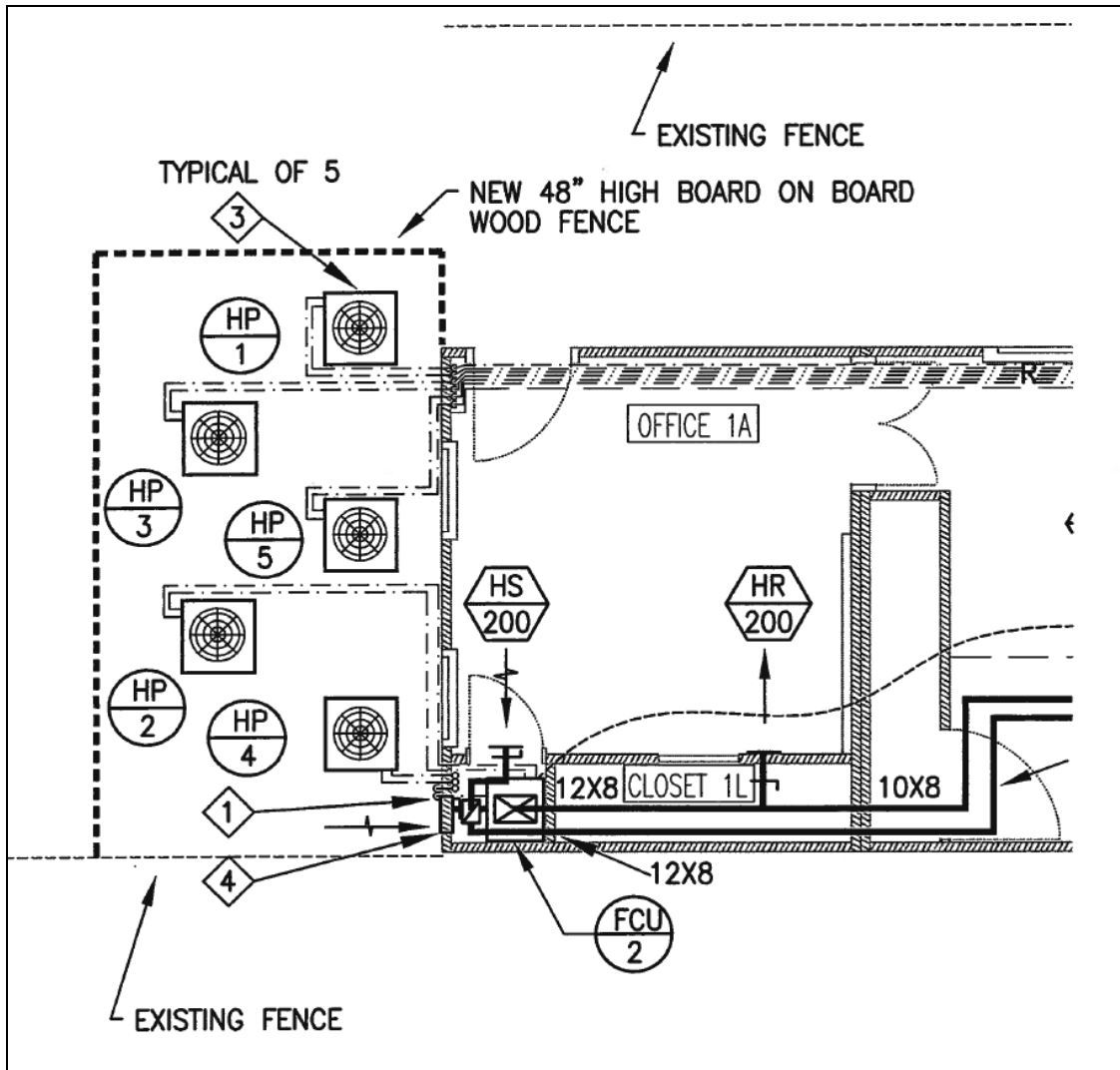


Figure 5. Partial site plan showing location of units.

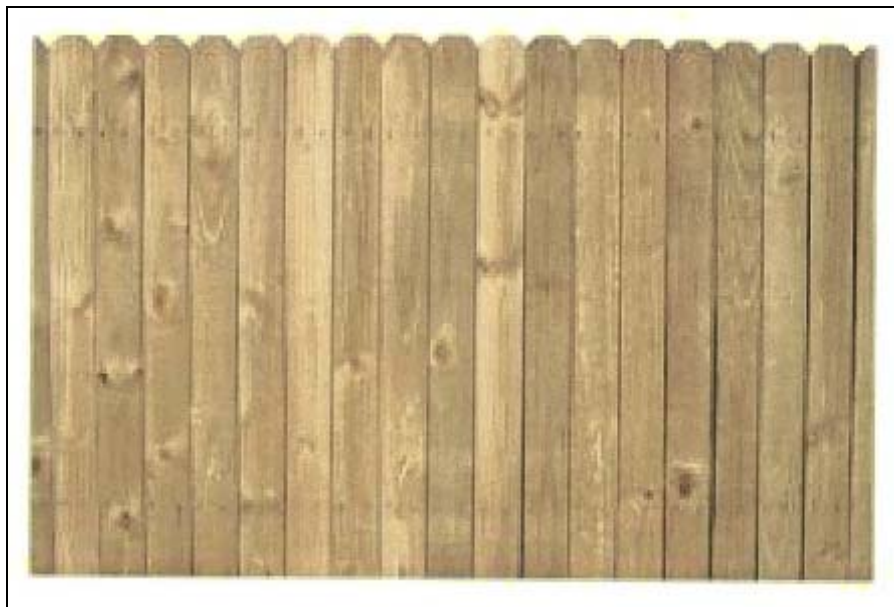


Figure 6. Proposed fence design.