Docket Item # 12 & 13
BAR CASE # 2010-0366/0367

BAR Meeting
January 5, 2011

**ISSUE:** Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate & Certificate of Appropriateness (Alterations and Enclosure of an Existing Open Porch)

**APPLICANT:** Mitchell Bober by Lewis and Associates

**LOCATION:** 325 South Lee Street

**ZONE:** RM / Residential

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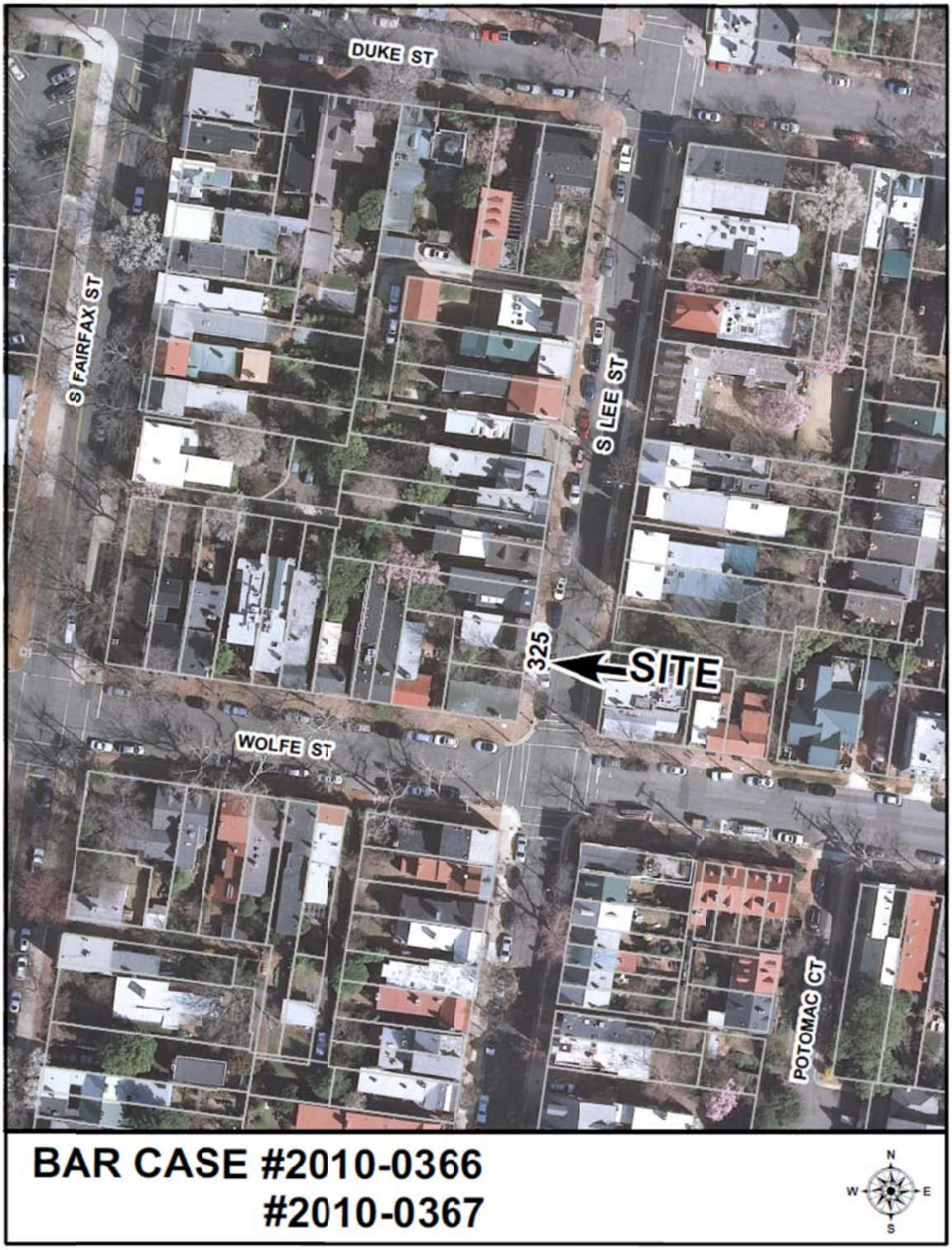
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1. That the encapsulated walls, windows, doors and porch ceiling on the second floor be placed in a conservation easement, protecting these architectural features from future demolition.
2. That the reconstruction of the porch floor will not damage or cover any of the window or door trim or openings on the first floor and that the siding at this intervention will be carefully removed and reused, where possible.

*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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**Note:** Staff coupled the reports for BAR #2010-0366 (Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate) and BAR #2010-0367 (Certificate of Appropriateness) for clarity and brevity. This item requires a roll call vote.

## I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and a Certificate of Appropriateness for the lowering of an existing second-story porch floor and the enclosure of only the second floor of an existing open porch at 325 South Lee Street.

Permit to Demolish/Encapsulation

North (Side) Elevation:

- Demolish approximately 183 square feet of the porch floor and lower the floor by 1'-2" and reconstruct the floor utilizing new materials.
- Encapsulate approximately 38 square feet of wall surface on the lower level due to the lowering of the floor.
- Encapsulate approximately 248 square feet of wall surface on the upper level for the enclosure of the porch. The wall surface includes four original windows and a door opening.

Addition/Enclosure of a Open Porch

North (Side) Elevation:

- Enclosure of the second story of the existing, two-story shed roof open porch along the north elevation of the ell. The porch will be sealed off with fixed sash windows flanked by casement windows ornamented with square painted wood posts and a knee wall, detailed with battens to mimic a balustrade.

## II. HISTORY:

According to Ethelyn Cox in Historic Alexandria, Street by Street, the three-bay, two-story frame townhouse at 325 South Lee Street was constructed by Mark Mankin in **1848**, after he bought the lot of 325 and a lot adjoining on the south. The two lots were divided in 1904 when Mankin's estate was settled. A two-story ell extends from the rear elevation and is detailed with a two story open porch on the ell's north elevation. The building appears to have its original windows and original siding on the ell's north elevation below the porch roof.

*Previous Approvals:*

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|---|---|
| BAR 2009-0074 (May 6, 2009) | Replacement of an existing garden gate and the construction of a new brick arch above the gate. |
| BAR 2010-0040 (March 8, 2010) | Gas lantern Installation |

## III. ANALYSIS:

Staff has no objection to the proposed demolition or alterations to the porch's floor structure, columns, or first floor bead board ceiling. Staff's field investigations of saw marks on the framing have determined that all of the two story porch below the roof was reconstructed in the 20th century and these materials are not within the building's period of significance. The investigation uncovered that the shed roof appears to be the only remaining feature of the mid-19th century porch, which is not being impacted by the proposed work.

The proposed project complies with zoning ordinance regulations.

Permit to Demolish/Encapsulation

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulation 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?

In the opinion of Staff, this mid-19th century townhouse is architecturally significant to the overall historic district and compatible with nearby historic structures and the streetscape. The proposed minor changes to the structure are located at the rear of the building, are minimal in scope, and effect features and materials which are outside the structure's period of significance.

Staff's main concern is the encapsulation of the second floor wall. Because the siding, windows and porch ceiling have been protected from the weather by the porch roof, they appear to be first period materials and in remarkably good condition. The drawings illustrate that the homeowner intends to retain the exterior walls and the historic windows. However, once the second floor wall becomes an interior wall, the Board has no further purview when/if the current or a future homeowner desires to make changes or alterations. For this reason, Staff recommends that a conservation easement be donated to a local preservation organization for the second floor walls, windows and porch ceiling, ensuring that they remain intact after becoming interior features and to provide a future homeowner the option to reverse the porch enclosure. If the conservation easement is donated, Staff supports the demolition/encapsulation application as submitted. This

easement will protect the historic resource's character defining features and retain the overall integrity of the building and the district.

Addition/Enclosure of an Open Porch

The *Design Guidelines* specify porches as "important architectural elements especially on residential structures. They can serve as a defining element of an architectural style." The existing ceiling height of the second floor porch slopes to only 5'-3". The building code will not allow this space to be enclosed with windows unless the ceiling is raised. To accomplish this, the applicant is proposing to lower the floor of the porch by approximately 1'-2", to just above the lower level windows and doors. As the porch floor, the first floor columns, and first floor bead board ceiling have all been re-constructed in the 20th century, staff does not object to this proposed change. As shown in the illustration below, since the roof of the porch is being retained, the lowering of the porch floor will be a very minimal visual change. (The bold lines in the illustrations below indicate the bottom of the porch's skirt board.)


The proposed fixed glass and casement windows being utilized to enclose the porch will be mounted between square columns and above a knee wall detailed with battens to simulate a balustrade. This architectural detailing pays homage to the original open porch (see below), and is simple in detail and design. As it will be painted to complement the color of the predominant color of the building (white), it will blend in to the existing architectural details on the building and not negatively impact the resource as a whole.


Regarding materials, the proposed simple, single light, fixed and casement wood windows, painted wood posts and trim complements the main massing without being replicative. It is the opinion of Staff that the proposed porch enclosure's utilization of the historic shed roof, simple architectural detailing and use of an easement to preserve all of the identified historic material enables it to be a sympathetic solution for the current homeowners, yet a reversible change for a future generation.

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and the Certificate of Appropriateness for an addition and alterations, with conditions discussed above.

**STAFF:**
Michele Oaks, 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

Zoning Section:

C-1 The existing porch is noncomplying as to the required rear yard setback. However, the porch is currently covered and no expansion is proposed, therefore there is no increase in FAR or reduction of open space. The porch can be enclosed at the present square footage and height. As proposed the second floor enclosed porch will comply with zoning.

Code Administration:
C-1 A building permit is required to be issued prior to the start of work

C-2 Five sets of sealed plans are required to be submitted with the permit application. The plans must include, at a minimum, the proposed use of the newly enclosed porch with any new design loads; the existing floor framing, support columns, beams, spans, and connections.

C-3 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Historic Alexandria:
No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:
There is no ground disturbance associated with this project. No archaeological action is required.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

R1. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 5-6-224 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)

R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)

R3. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)

R4. 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 plan. (T&ES)

R5. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)

R6. Compliance with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control is required for any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)

## FINDINGS

F1. A Grading Plan will not be required per submitted information. There is no proposed addition at the ground level.

## CITY 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). (T&ES)

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. (T&ES)

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.5-6-224) (T&ES)

C-4 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (T&ES)

C-5 Pay sanitary sewer tap fee prior to release of Grading Plan. (Sec. 5-6-25) (T&ES)

C-6 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61) (T&ES)

## V. IMAGES

**Figure 1: Existing Front Elevation**

**Figure 2: Existing Open Porch**

**Figure 3: Existing Open Porch**

**Figure 4: Existing Open Porch**

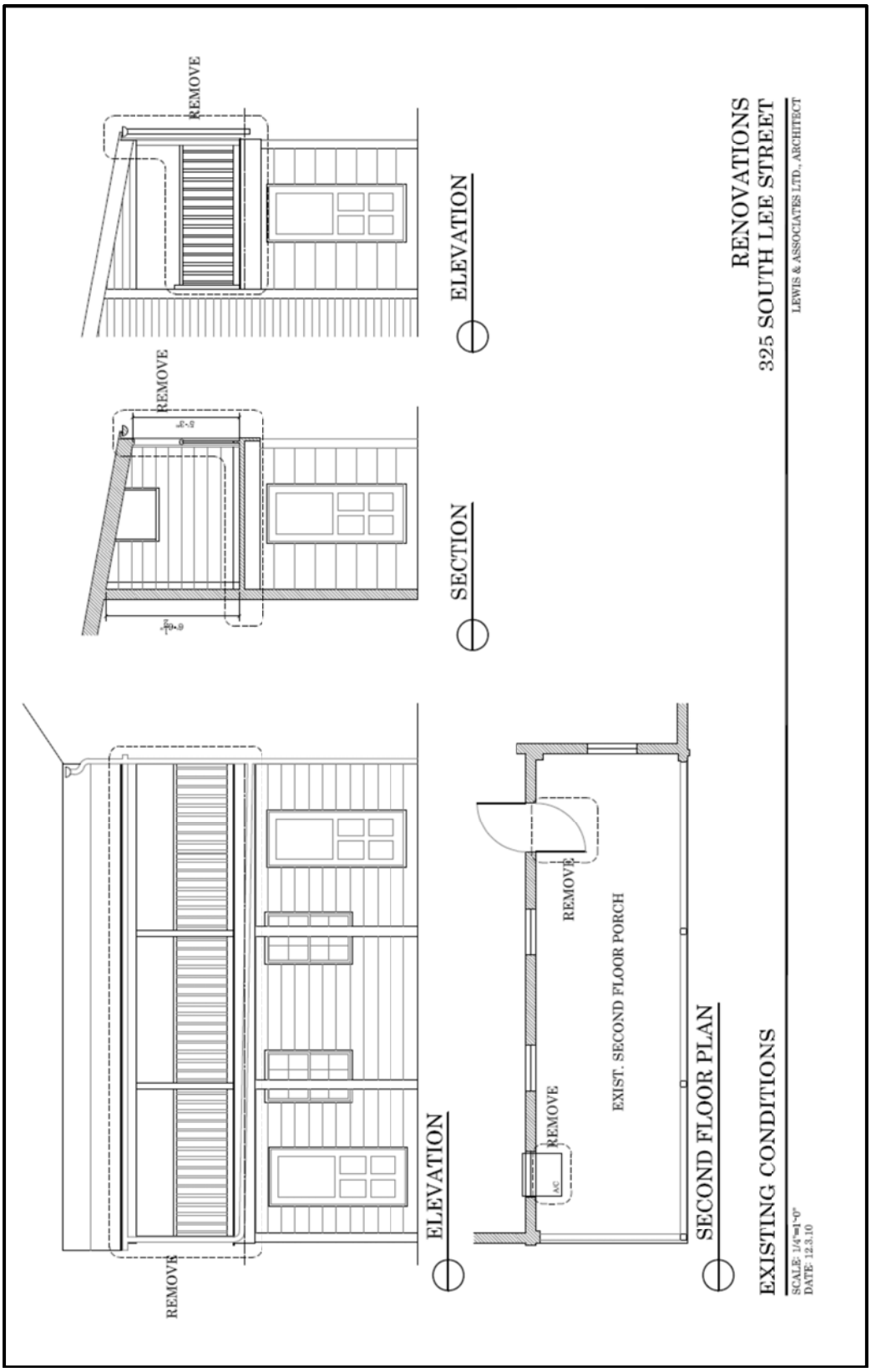


**Figure 5: Existing Elevations**

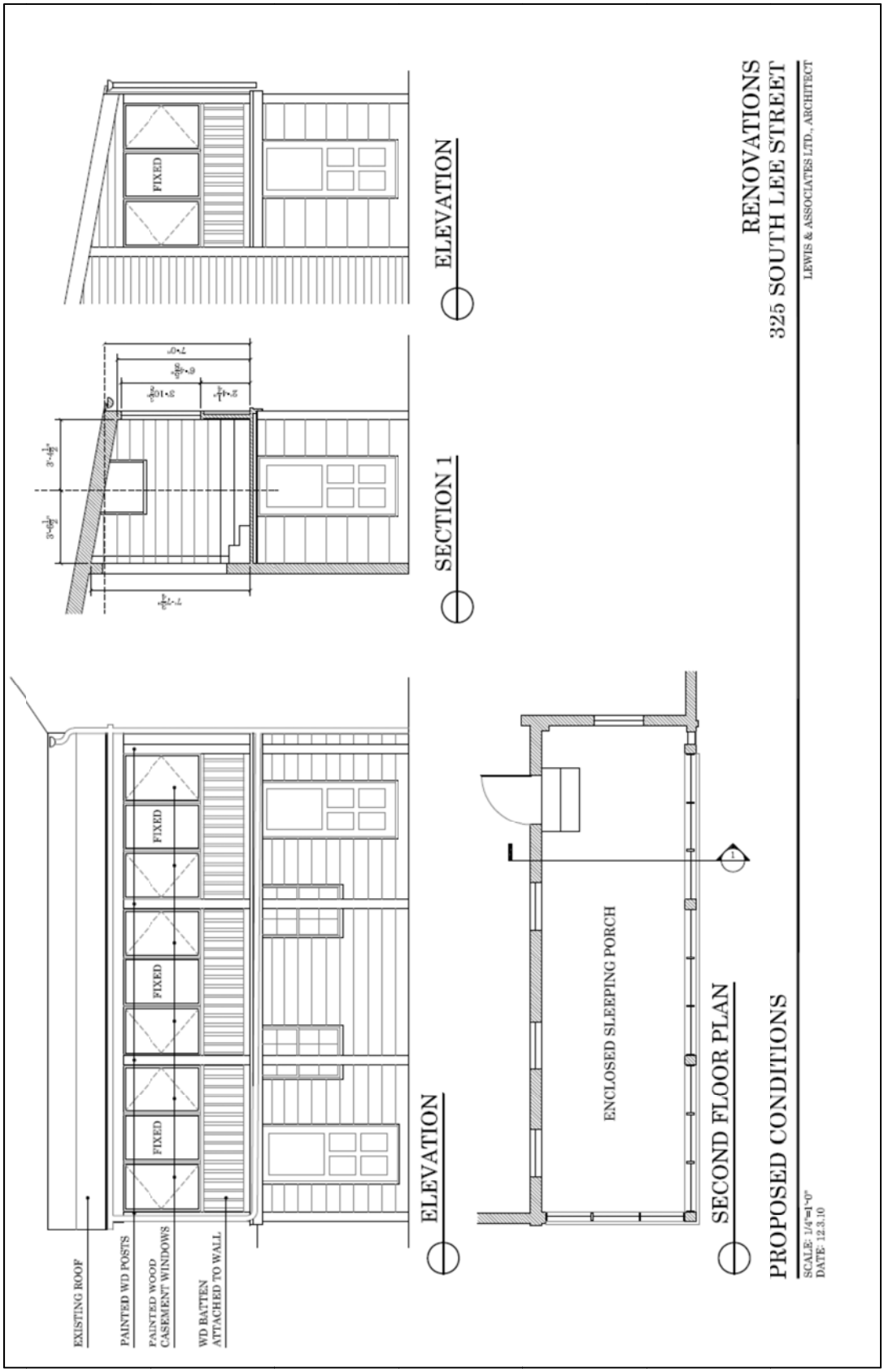


**Figure 6: Proposed Elevations**