

Docket Items # 3  
BAR CASE # 2011-0054

BAR Meeting  
April 6, 2011

**ISSUE:** Alterations and Waiver of Section 7-202 (Height Requirement)

**APPLICANT:** Errol de Montille (William Cromley, Agent)

**LOCATION:** 227 South Fairfax Street

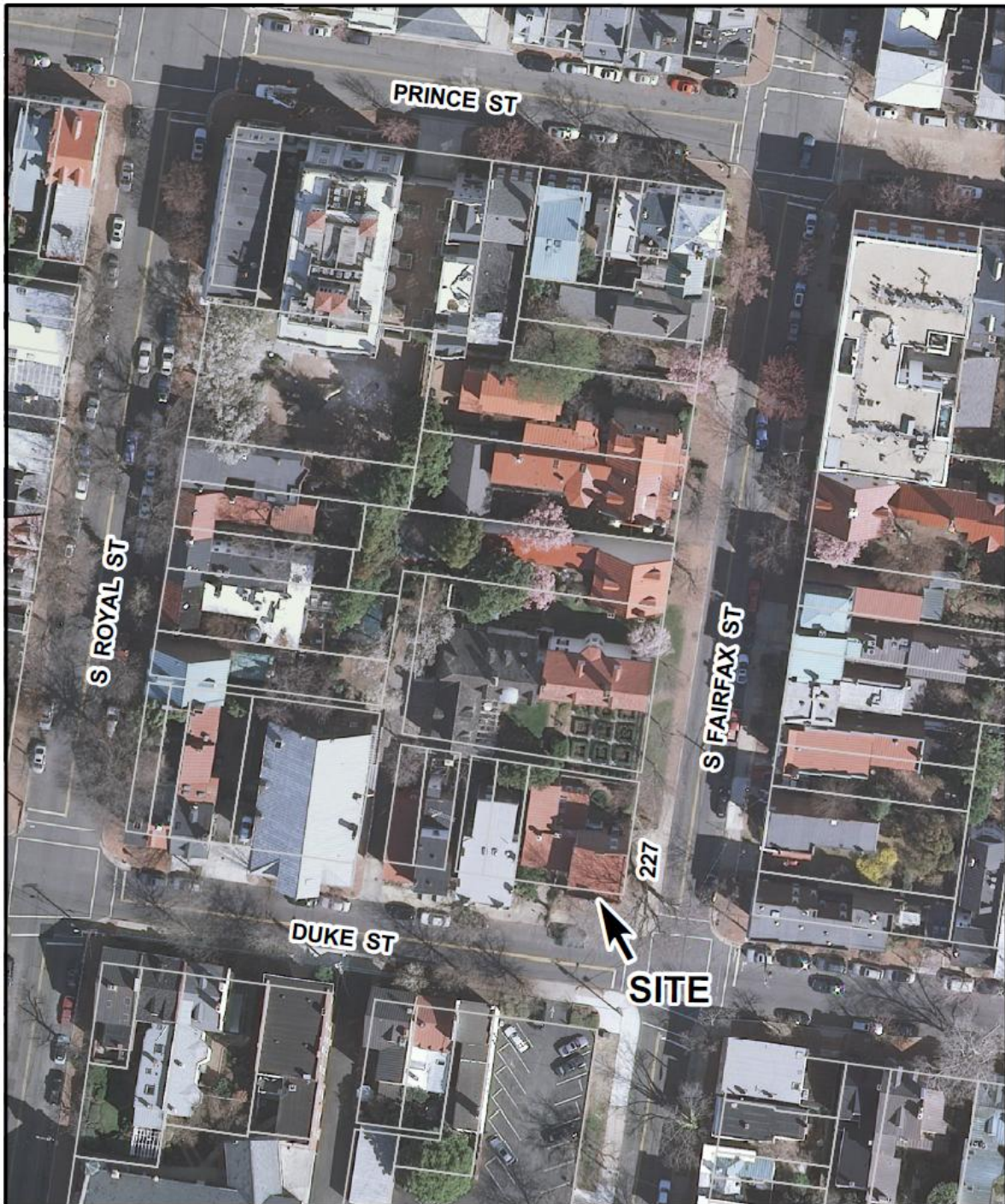
**ZONE:** RM/ Residential Townhouse Zone

---

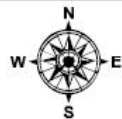
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness and the Waiver of Height Requirement per section 7-202(C), as submitted.

**\*\*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.



**BAR CASE #2011-0054**



**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval at 227 South Fairfax Street for:

1. A Certificate of Appropriateness for alteration to the existing brick garden wall, which encloses the North courtyard. The proposal will increase the overall height of the existing garden wall to 6'-10" (15" higher than existing) by adding 5 courses of common bond brick.
2. A Waiver for the proposed brick wall height in excess of 6' high (per Section 7-200(C) of the Zoning Ordinance).

**II. HISTORY:**

This brick dwelling is an example of the evolution of a prominent Alexandria City house. This stately house has evolved from an **early 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1-1/2 story outbuilding** through several periods of construction including the addition of the **main Greek Revival building mass about 1851**, to the most recent demolition of a c1977 addition and the construction of a conservatory in 2010.

The north and south courtyards were enclosed with a 5'-7" high brick wall constructed after 1967. (The below c1967 photo illustrates that a wood picket fence previously enclosed both courtyards).



**Wood  
Fence**

*Previous Approvals:*

November 9, 2009      The BAR approved a Certificate of Appropriateness and a Waiver of the Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for the rehabilitation of the house and the construction of a new conservatory on the subject property (BAR#2009-0243 & 0245).

July 7, 2010

The BAR approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for installation of new, operable wood, two paneled louvered shutters on all the windows, the installation of exterior lighting and the revision to the previously approved wood fence approval for the South courtyard. The approved fence was a 3.5 feet high, painted iron fence with decorative posts. (BAR#2010-0149)

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations to the existing garden wall surrounding the North courtyard complies with zoning ordinance requirements if the BAR grants the waiver to Section 7-202(C), which would permit a brick wall beyond the permitted six feet in height.

The *Design Guidelines* state that “garden walls within the district were generally constructed of masonry and provide visual barriers. New walls should be sympathetic to the existing built environment and appropriate in materials, design and scale. Furthermore, the walls of brick are generally appropriate throughout the historic districts.”

The Board commonly reviews and approves requests for garden structures such as fences, walls, arbors, and trellises within the historic districts. This proposal will increase the overall height of the existing garden wall surrounding the North courtyard to 6’-10” (15” higher than existing) by adding five courses of common bond brick. A survey of nearby brick garden walls within front yards illustrates that the proposed 6’-10” height is typical within the historic district. Staff notes that the existing brick arch was approved for removal by the Board with the original 2009 approval (shown below).



2009 BAR Approval



The applicant will be articulating the existing brick wall with an additional five courses of brick set upon the cap of protruding stretcher and rowlock bricks (see photo below).



In Staff's opinion, the proposed changes to the garden wall meet the requirements of the *Design Guidelines*. The height of the wall is consistent with other existing walls within the district and will not damage existing historic features on the subject property. Due to the differences in grade, the new interior height of the wall will rise to six feet (6') high within the garden.

As Staff's research has illustrated, the existing brick garden wall was installed after 1967, and does not contribute to the architectural or historic significance of this 19<sup>th</sup>-century building. Additionally, it should be noted that the South courtyard, which was previously enclosed by a segment of the 5'-7" high brick garden wall, has been returned to public view by the installation of 3.5 feet high, painted iron fence with decorative posts (see photos below).



Summer 2010



Spring 2011

April 6, 2011

The proposed alterations to the existing brick garden wall are modest in massing, scale and design, do not impact original historic fabric and are complementary to, without competing with, the architectural style of the existing historic house, as recommended in the *Design Guidelines*. Staff recommends approval, as submitted.

***Waiver of Height Requirement - Section 7-202(C)***

*Per Section 7-202 (C): In the Old and Historic Alexandria and the Parker-Gray Districts, the requirement of sections 7-202(A)(1) and 7-202(B)(3) may be waived or modified by the board of architectural review where the board finds that a proposed fence would be architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the district.*

Staff recommends that the Board finds that the proposed brick wall/fence would be architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the district and supports the waiver of Section 7-202(C), to permit the 6'-10" high brick wall.

**STAFF:**

Michele Oaks, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

**V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:**

Legend: C – Code Requirement R – Recommendation S – Suggestion F- Finding

**Zoning Section:**

C-1 The existing brick wall is located within a 4.00' private alley owned by the applicant. The BAR must approve the height increase to the existing wall.

**Code Administration:**

F1 The following comments are for BAR case review only and are not intended to grant approval for construction

C1 A building permit will be required to be issued prior to the start of this work.

C2 BAR approval and five sets of plans are required to be submitted for review prior to the issuance of the permit.

C3 At a minimum the plans shall include;

- Height, length, and thickness of existing garden wall
- Proposed height, length, thickness, and pilaster location of extended garden wall

VI. IMAGES:

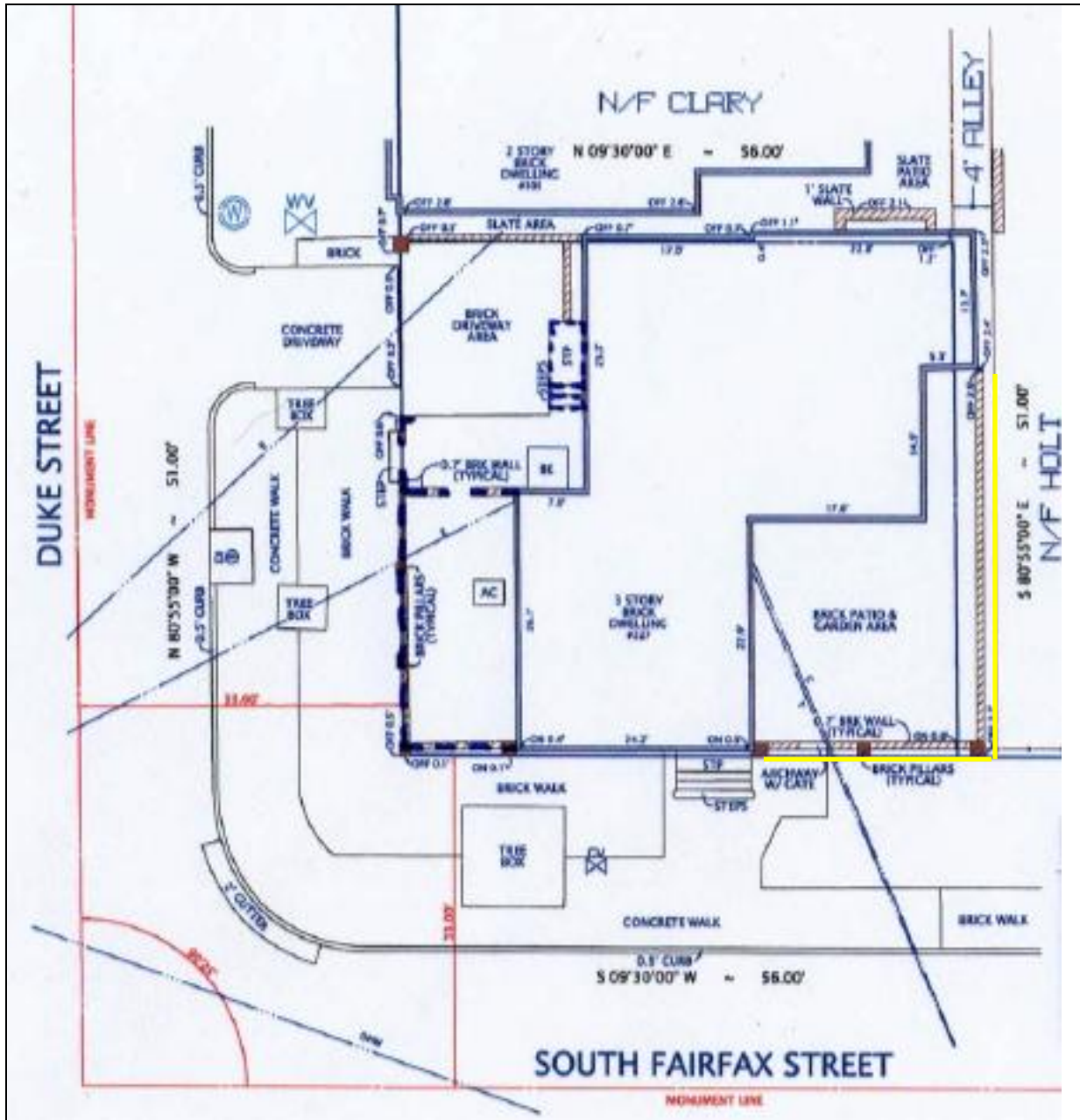


Figure 1: Plat – Yellow Lines denote brick walls to be altered



Figure 2: Proposed Front Elevation

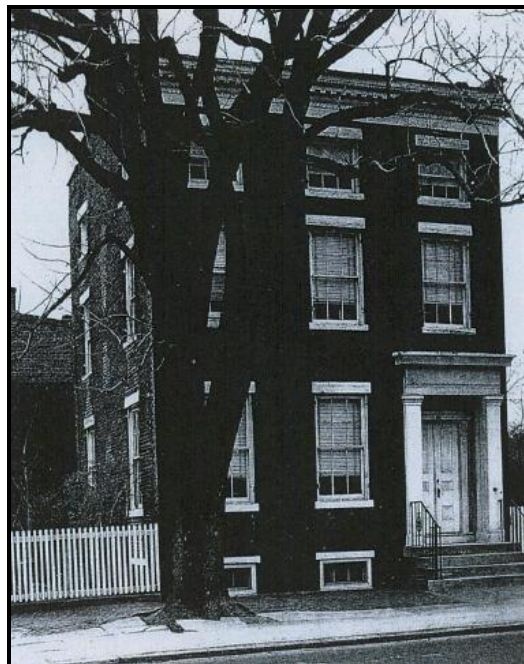
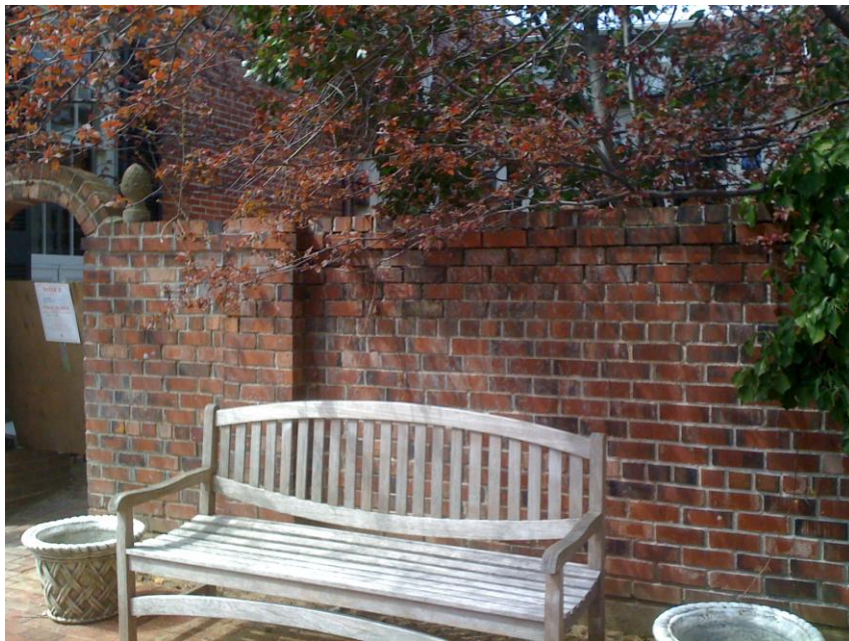


Figure 3: c1967 Photo of Front Façade with wood fence





**Figure 4: Photos of Existing brick wall**



**Figure 5: Existing Elevation**