

Docket Item # 2  
BAR CASE # 2011-0132

BAR Meeting  
June 15, 2011

**ISSUE:** Fence Removal and Reconsideration of Window Installation

**APPLICANT:** William Cromley, Owner

**LOCATION:** 426 North Columbus Street

**ZONE:** CL / Commercial Low Zone

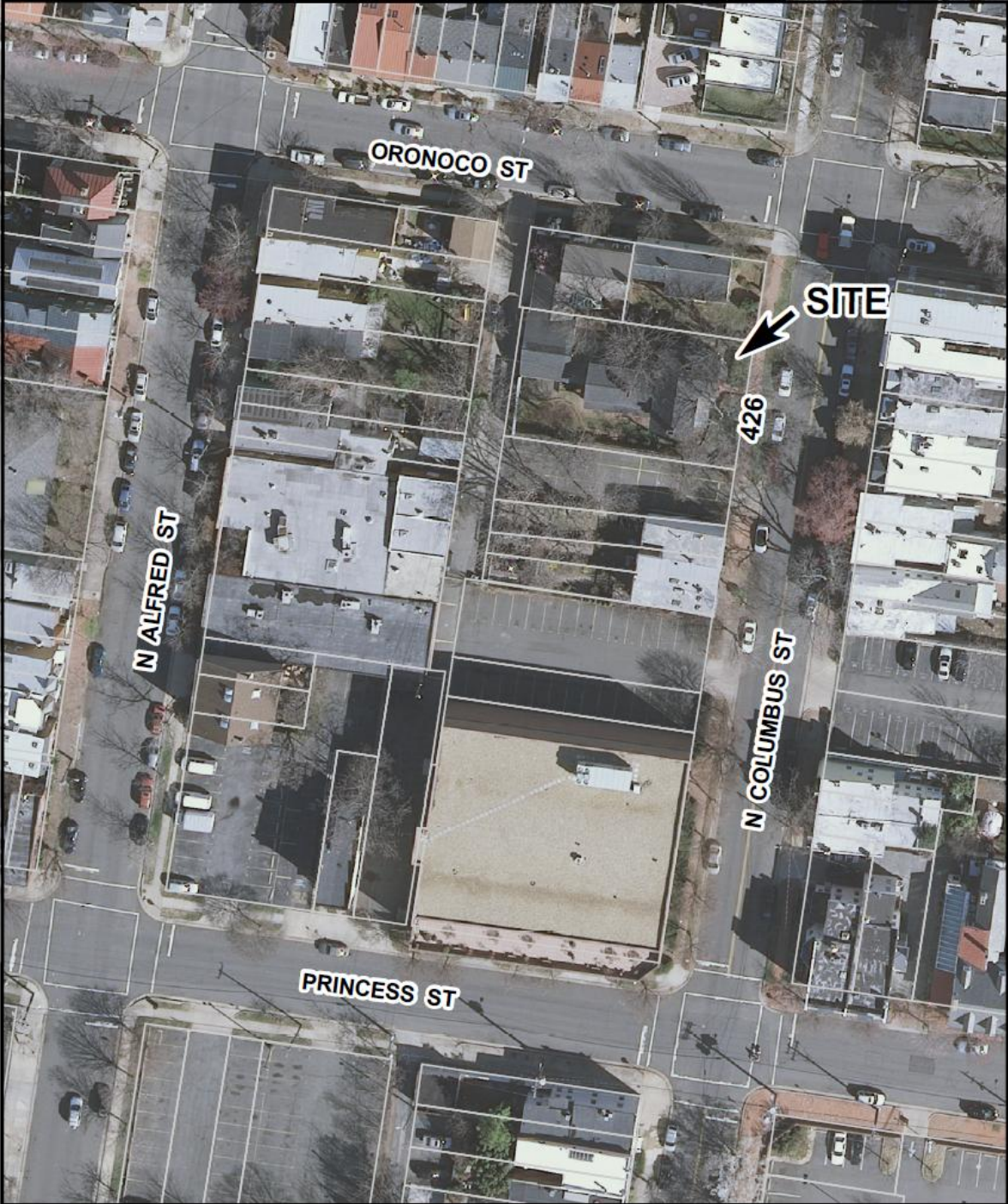
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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following condition:

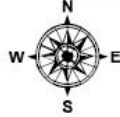
1. That the sash be a 1/1 or 2/2 muntin pattern;
2. That the profile of the exterior window trim be slightly differentiated from the historic windows; and
3. That the window balance mechanisms are modern and do not utilize a weight and chain system.

\*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 #2011-0132**



**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness at 426 North Columbus Street for:

1. Installation of two, new, 4/4 true-divided light wood windows on the first floor of the north elevation of the principal building mass;
2. Removal of a 4' high chain link fence and 6' high picket fence along the southern property line.

**II. HISTORY:**

This three-part frame dwelling is an excellent representation of the evolution of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Alexandria city house. Based on deed and title research it is believed that the main structure of this house was built by "Master Carpenter" Benjamin Jenkins about **1858** after purchasing the subdivided land from Cassius F. Lee (Period 1). Facing North Columbus Street, this structure is a simple, side cross-gable dwelling, four bays wide and detailed in the Greek Revival style. Soon after the construction of the main house, a two-bay outbuilding with an exterior-end chimney was constructed behind the house. It is believed that this building was originally 1-1/2 stories in height (Period 2). The outbuilding was altered to a two-story building and connected to the main building mass, turning these into a two-story ell extension with a central chimney (Period 3).

This house is duplicated on another property on Braddock Road. The home's form and detailing are almost identical, including the evolution of the ell extension. The evolution of the Braddock Road home's ell extension was confirmed after discussions with the home's owner. The visible evidence within the ell confirming the three periods of construction includes plaster walls in the attic and exterior wall material on interior wall surfaces. It is possible that both of these dwellings were either pattern book "kit homes" or a pair of homes built by the same builder or family.

The setting of the 6,896 sq. ft. property includes the main house with its ell extension and the gable roof outbuilding which faces the rear alley. This property has historically had several different outbuildings through the years. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map research has dated the current concrete block outbuilding between 1977 and 1988. The concrete block garage was approved by the BAR in 1982.

**Previous Approvals:**

The Board approved, with conditions, alterations and changes to the existing garage and house on February 18, 2009 (BAR #2009-005&06.) In 1982, the Board approved the garage (11/17/82), in 1968, an addition to the north elevation (4/10/68), in 1959 a rear masonry addition (9/9/59) and in 1952 imitation brick siding (7/17/52).

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

The *Design Guidelines* note that “windows are a principal character defining feature of a building and serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. Windows allow the interior of a building to receive natural light, provide a means to see from the inside of a building to the outside and to allow ventilation of a building’s interior. The size, location, and type of windows are a defining element of historic architectural style.”

The applicant is requesting reconsideration of the “re-installation” of two new windows on the first floor of the north elevation of the main body of the house, previously reviewed by the Board in February of 2009. The Board was generally supportive of installing windows to provide more symmetry, yet noted staff’s concerns regarding the installation of historic style windows without documentation of their prior existence. The Board approved the case with the condition that the applicant could install new windows only if the applicant provided Staff with physical evidence of original windows in this location.

As mentioned above, a house of the same design was built on Braddock Road during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. As that house does not have windows on the right side elevation either, the applicant believes that the north elevation of the house at 426 North Columbus house is likely the original design. The applicant is, therefore, returning to the Board with these findings and a request for reconsideration in order to provide additional light and ventilation to the first floor parlor using single-glazed 4/4, true-divided light custom made windows and trim to match exactly the existing windows.

While this is a very handsome and remarkably intact historic dwelling, Staff does not believe that this precludes any alterations to a secondary elevation and has no objection to the addition of windows in these two locations. The proposed window size and locations are architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the overall fenestration of the dwelling. However, one of the core tenants of preservation is that structures should be recognized as “a physical record of its time.” Implementing changes to a historic building which attempt to create a “false sense of historical development” by adding architectural details, features or elements which cannot be documented as part of the original structure is generally discouraged. Therefore, from a preservation philosophy perspective, Staff believes that the new windows should be subtly distinguished from the original windows so that an architectural historian can readily tell that these are a later addition.

If the Board supports installation of the two new windows, staff recommends that the sash be a 1/1 or 2/2 muntin pattern, that the profile of the window trim be slightly differentiated from the historic windows and the window balance mechanisms are modern and do not utilize a weight and chain system.

Staff supports the removal of the chain-link and 6’ high picket fence as these fences are not compatible with the existing mid-19<sup>th</sup> century dwelling.

**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

Code Administration:

C-1 Building permits will be required to install additional windows and to remove/demolish existing fencing. (**no building permit required to remove the fence**)

C-2 Framing details of the window opening must be submitted with the permit application.

**V. IMAGES:**

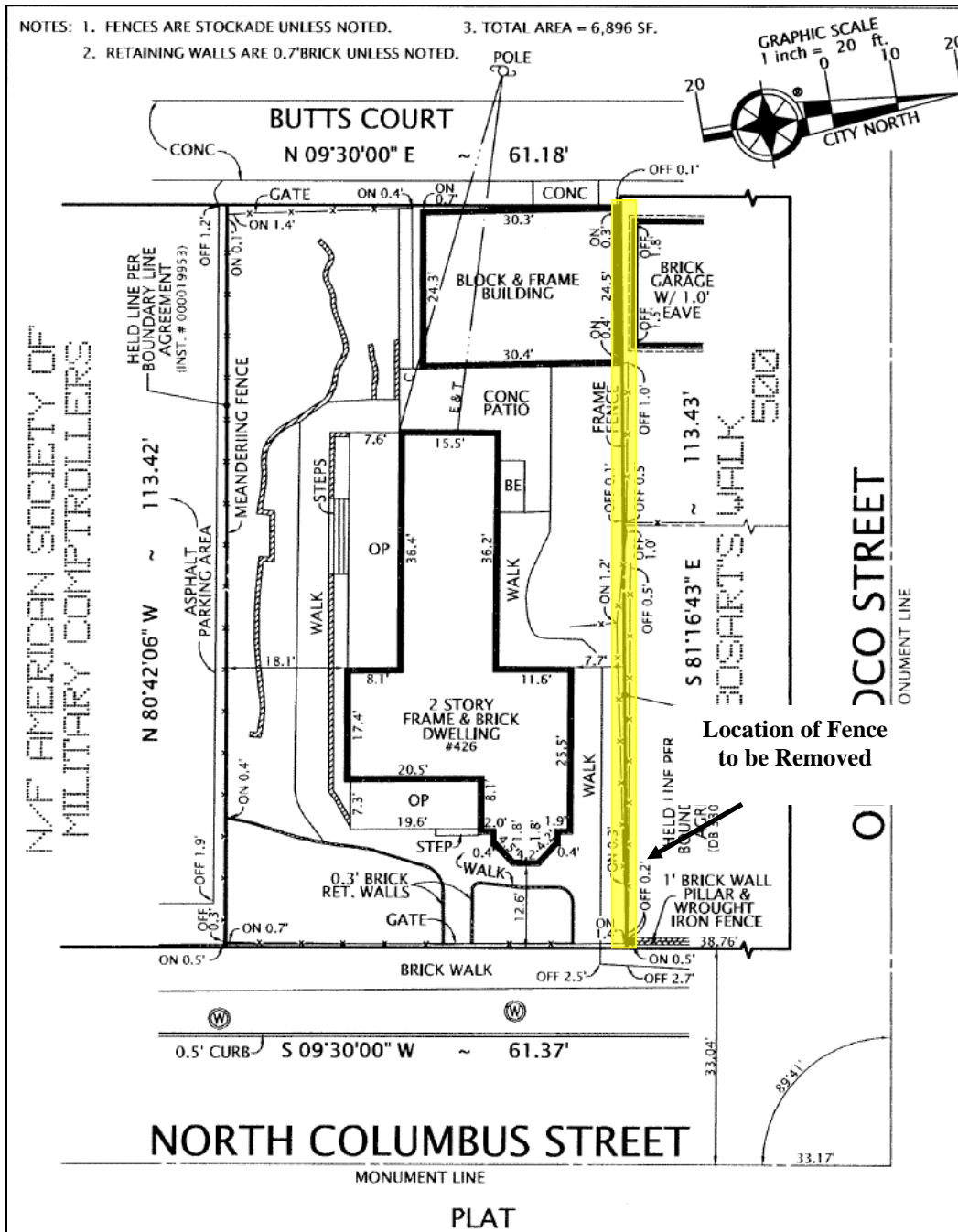
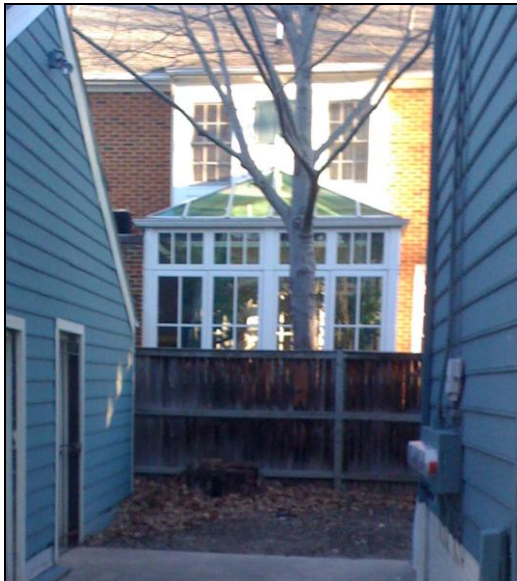


Figure 1: Site Plan





**Figure 2: Front Elevation of Dwelling**



**Figure 3: View of Fences to be Removed**



**Figure 4: View of Existing Elevation**



**Figure 5: View of Proposed Windows to be installed**