

Docket Item #6  
BAR CASE # 2011-0179

BAR Meeting  
September 7, 2011

**ISSUE:** Alterations (Window and Door Replacement)

**APPLICANT:** Charles Kohler

**LOCATION:** 516 North Columbus Street

**ZONE:** RB / Residential Townhouse Zone

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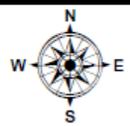
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness application with the condition that the transom window be replaced with a two-light, simulated-divided light, 5/8" width putty profile muntin, with stiles and rails to match as closely as possible to the original. The transom must meet the Alexandria Window Performance Specifications.

**\*\*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 #2011-0179**



## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting an after-the-fact Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the front door and transom and three windows on the first and second stories of the facade, at 516 North Columbus Street. The existing windows were painted, single-glazed six over six, 5/8" muntin, wood windows and the front door was a painted, six-paneled wood with a two-light transom. The applicant is requesting approval of natural stained, simulated-divided light, 7/8" muntin, double-glazed wood-windows manufactured by Jeld-Wen and a natural-stained six-paneled wood door with single-light transom.

## **II. HISTORY**

This brick, two-story dwelling is located on the west side of North Columbus Street and is part of a collection of eight townhouses constructed prior to 1902 when the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps first show this block. Staff has not physically examined the building's framing to date it more closely but there have been several examples recently that were initially believed to be early 19<sup>th</sup> century which, upon closer examination, turned out to be constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The boundary of the Old and Historic and Parker-Gray Historic Districts lies between 516 North Columbus Street and 518 North Columbus Street. Staff was not able to locate any previous BAR approvals.

## **III. ANALYSIS**

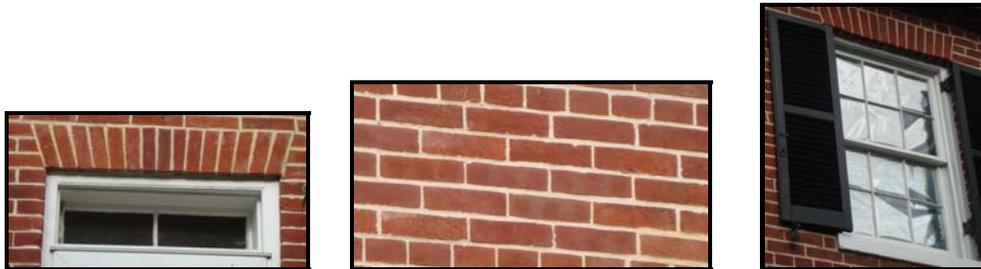
The proposed alterations comply with the Zoning Ordinance.

Reviewing after-the-fact applications is always a challenge for the BAR. Removal of historic features from buildings can have a detrimental impact to a historic resource and can have the potential to substantially alter the integrity of a historic district. For this reason, the Zoning Ordinance requires that homeowners contact the BAR staff prior to making any exterior changes or alterations to ensure that irreparable damage is not done.

Since the existing windows and doors have been removed and disposed, the BAR is left only with historic documentation and architectural clues to provide information on what materials would have been original to the building. Sanborn Insurance maps illustrate that the eight townhouses in this row (506-520) were all constructed during the same time. Additionally, a site visit has revealed that these townhouses were built as four mirror image pairs (see image below.)



An examination of these buildings revealed that the original front elevation features were likely 6/6, 5/8" muntin, single-glazed wood windows with operable shutters, six-panel wood doors, two--light transoms, brick jack arches, and denticulated brick cornices (as shown below). These vernacular Colonial Revival features are atypical for the late Victorian-era but, as Staff and the BAR are discovering, groups of these remarkably accurate Federal Revival style buildings were constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century in several pockets throughout Old Town with both 2/2 and 6/6 windows.



An evaluation and finding regarding the proposed new door and windows must be based upon their compatibility with these original architectural features and the Board's recently adopted *Window Policy*. Staff generally has no objection to the proposed door and window replacement. The wood, six-panel front door is a stylistically appropriate -replacement in-kind and consistent with the BAR's Guidelines for *Permitted Maintenance of Exterior Architectural Features* (Zoning Ordinance Section 10-109).

The proposed Jeld-Wen windows are high quality and meet the *Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications* in the Board's *Window Policy* with three exceptions. First, the proposed transom is not a historically appropriate design. Based on what appears to be the original transom on several adjacent dwellings, a two-light configuration would have been the original light pattern. Second, the stiles on each side of the transom sash are very wide and do not match the original, or any transom sash that Staff is aware of. The Alexandria Performance Specifications require that the "dimensions and proportions of the window rails, stiles, muntins, frames sill and exterior trim must match historically appropriate window proportions." Staff recommends that the Board require that the transom be replaced with one with more historically accurate proportions.

Third, double-glazed windows may only replace original sash on buildings constructed after 1930 and insulated glass may not be used in multi-pane sash on the front façade of any 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings because they are typically located immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. The *Window Policy* specifically states that “Double-glazed (insulated) and simulated divided-light painted wood windows may be used throughout on buildings or additions constructed after 1930, when Thermopane insulated glass windows were invented.”

However, several issues complicate this particular case. Both Boards have approved double-glazed windows on several other buildings on this block<sup>1</sup>, though this was prior to recent adoption of the window policy. Fortunately, the buildings are set back from the sidewalk and separated by a small, landscaped front yard, so visibility of the insulated glass thickness is limited from the public way. In addition, whether 2/2 or 6/6 windows were original to these eight buildings, they all have 6/6 windows now and installation of 2/2 windows on this one dwelling would be visually odd in this context. Staff, therefore, reluctantly recommends approval of the existing simulated divided-light 6/6 windows in this location.

Finally, the existing windows, front door, and exterior trim are all stained and not painted. While stained exterior trim is not something Staff believes is historically appropriate, stained finishes do not last very long on the exterior due to weather and they will likely have to be painted soon. Further, as the BAR has chosen, by practice, not to regulate paint colors, staff has no objection to stained trim at this location.

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness, as amended, for the existing front door and windows but with replacement of the transom in a more historically appropriate design.

#### **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 are required for window and door replacement in a historic district.

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<sup>1</sup> 508 N Columbus Window Replacement - Approved by BAR on 2/2/2005 for SDL, 7/8” wood windows  
510 N Columbus Window Replacement - Approved by BAR on 8/18/2004 for SDL or TDL 7/8” wood windows

V. IMAGES



Figure 1. Proposed Door and Window Replacement



Figure 2. Proposed Door & Transom Replacement