

Docket Item #7
BAR CASE #2003-0184

BAR Meeting
September 24, 2003

ISSUE: Demolition/capsulation

APPLICANT: David Elsberg

LOCATION: 1310 Princess Street

ZONE: RB/Residential

8/27/03 - Deferred by applicant prior to meeting

****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 the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

NOTE:

This docket item requires a roll call vote.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant s Description of the Undertaking:

Replace windows (metal) with vinyl windows similar to the neighbor s, demolish rear storage attached to the house and build 15' x 15' 2" addition on first floor.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting a permit to demolish/capsulate to remove a small frame addition at the rear of the two story brick house and to demolish a portion of the rear wall of the house on the first story. The area to be demolished/capsulated is approximately 11.5' wide and 15' high. The applicant is also requesting approval to replace all the windows in the existing house. However, it appears that the size of the window openings will not be altered.

Previous plans, submitted for the August 27, 2003 hearing, but withdrawn by the applicant just prior to the hearing to allow for restudy based on Staff comments, called for capsulation/demolition of a wider section of the rear wall. The proposed demolition/capsulation would have entailed the elimination of the south face of the rear corner window. The current plans reduce the width of the area to be affected by 4', thereby preserving the window opening on the rear.

The front and west side of the house are visible from Princess Street. The rear of the house is visible from the public alley behind the house, but the lower portion is screened by the 6' high rear fence.

History and Analysis:

The residences at 1304-1310 Princess Street are a four-unit, Art Moderne, brick-faced concrete block row designed by Alexandria architect Paul S. Lubienski in 1941. The rowlock and contrasting brick streamlining, the stepped parapet, and the rolled steel casement windows (particularly the corner windows) are characteristic of the Moderne style. There is no record of Board review of alterations at 1310 Princess Street. The unit is largely unaltered, except for the small frame addition at the rear. Staff was unable to locate a building permit for the existing rear addition. It appears to have evolved from an open rear porch and probably had no permit.

In considering a Permit to Demolish or Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, Sec. 10-205(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 and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (5) 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?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

Staff does not believe any of the above criteria are met. The demolition of the modern, frame addition at the rear of the house is a welcome improvement. This shed-like structure was apparently constructed without a permit. The proposed capsulation/demolition on the rear wall of the c. 1941 building is modest and preserves the distinctive corner window at the rear. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

Would appreciate consideration of wood windows.

Alexandria Archeology:

F-1 The G.M. Hopkins insurance map from 1877 does not show any development on this property. By 1907, according to the Sanborn map, a coal yard is present. The property therefore has low potential to yield significant archaeological resources. No archaeological action is required.