

Docket Item #8
BAR CASE #2003-0185

BAR Meeting
September 24, 2003

ISSUE: Addition and alterations

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:

- 1) approval of the addition; and,
- 2) deferral of the window replacement to consider either repair and retention of the existing windows or replacement with windows of a more appropriate design and material.

NOTE:

Docket item #7 must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

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 certificate of appropriateness to construct a new one story, brick, rear addition, replacing the existing frame addition. In addition, the applicant wishes to replace the existing rolled steel casement windows with vinyl sliding windows similar to those found at 1304 and 1306 Princess Street. The proposed addition and alterations are described in detail below:

Addition

The proposed addition differs somewhat from that described above in the applicant s description of undertaking. Just prior to the August 27, 2003 hearing, the applicant requested that the case be deferred to allow for revisions to be made to the design in response to Staff comments. Initially, the 15'2" wide by 15' long addition, extended across nearly the entire width of the rear of the existing two story brick semi-detached rowhouse, thereby eliminating the south face of rear corner window. Staff recommended that the addition be pulled back enough to allow the window to remain. The design now before the Board does just this, with the west side wall of the addition set back 4' from the west side wall of the existing house, preserving the window.

The proposed one story addition is 11'6" wide and 22' long. The existing house is 15'6" wide and just over 26' long. The one story addition will be clad in brick to match the existing house. It will have a shed roof sloping from front to back and clad in dark gray fiberglass shingles. A frieze board and gutter matching that on the existing house will be located at the end of the roof at the rear (south) elevation. A flat glass skylight will be centered in the roof. According to the applicant, the skylight will be manufactured by Velux and will have a 5" curb. The east side elevation will have a 5' wide sliding door in the north side of the facade and a vinyl slider window in the south side. The door will be vinyl and each panel will have flat interior muntins dividing it into six lights. The window will be a vinyl slider with flat, interior muntins dividing each sash into four lights. The sill will be rowlock brick. An exterior light fixture will be located between the door and window. A 12' wide by 20' long brick patio will be located along the east side of the addition. At 2' above grade, it will be accessed by two brick steps on the north and south ends. Two brick steps will lead from the patio to the sliding door. The rear

(south) elevation will have a single centered window, which will match that in the east side elevation. The west side elevation will be without openings or architectural features. The applicant has confirmed that the 22' long east wall will be clad in brick.

A new HVAC unit will be located on the ground, near the east property line in the rear yard. The unit will not be visible from the public right-of-way due to the rear fence. The shed at the south end of the property will remain as will the wood fencing. The chain link fence in the front yard will be removed. There are no plans to replace the fencing in the front at this time.

Replacement windows

The applicant is seeking to replace all of the existing steel casement windows with vinyl sliding windows. The existing windows consist of combinations of fixed and casement sections. The first story, front window has a fixed center portion of three lights, flanked by casements, each with three lights. A fixed, three light transom spans the top of the window. The window terminates in a round post at the western corner of the building and an identical window unit is located perpendicular to the front window on the west side of the house, creating a corner window. The second story west corner window arrangement is identical, except that these windows do not have the transom. This same arrangement is again repeated at the west corner on the first and second stories at the rear of the house. In addition, there is a three-light horizontal window at the front basement level and a three-light vertical casement at the east side of the second story in the rear, lighting the bathroom.

The replacement windows differ from the existing windows in a number of respects, but will be very similar to those at 1304 and 1306 Princess Street. The proposed vinyl windows will be sliders, rather than casement. They will have four lights per sash at the first story corner windows and three lights per sash at the second story. The proposed bathroom window will be a casement with no divisions. The basement window will have two lights. The windows will have insulated glass with flat, interior muntins creating the appearance of lights.

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' rear fence.

History and Analysis:

As described in docket item #7, 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. Despite being divided into four single-family units, this development is a visually unified whole. 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. The four-unit building is arguably the best example of the Art Moderne style in the Parker-Gray and Old and Historic Districts.

There is no record of Board review of alterations at 1310 Princess Street. Each of the other units in the row has been before the Board. On June 26, 2002, the Board approved a new front fence at 1308 Princess Street (BAR Case #2002-148). On January 12, 2000, the Board approved

replacement windows at 1306 Princess Street (BAR Case #99-0244). On August 11, 1999, the Board approved after-the-fact replacement windows at 1304 Princess Street (BAR Case #99-0120). On June 24, 1992, the Board approved alterations and a fence at 1308 Princess Street (BAR Case #92-17PG).

The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff believes the rear addition is acceptable and recommends approval. As mentioned above, in response to Staff comments, the applicant reconfigured the addition to allow for the retention of the rear corner window. As a result, the addition is both narrower and longer than it was in the first iteration, which was distributed to, but not reviewed by the Board. Staff has some concern about the impact of the 22' long blind wall facing the neighbor to the east, at 1308 Princess Street. However, that property has a wood porch which projects out from the rear of the house along the common property line, covering at least some of the addition. In addition a 6' high wood fence divides the properties and provides screening. Staff believes the design of the proposed addition is generally acceptable. The *Design Guidelines* do discourage the use of vinyl windows and those with internal or flat, snap-in muntins (Windows - Page 2). However, with the west wall of the addition pulled back 4' from the edge of the main block, the addition will be only minimally visible, if at all, from Princess Street. In addition, as noted above, the rear elevation will be largely obscured by the rear fence. Under these conditions, Staff could be willing to accept the vinyl windows and door on the new rear addition, particularly if vinyl windows are *not* used on the existing building. Whatever the material used for the new rear addition windows and door, Staff believes the design would be improved by omitting the false muntins and using fully glazed units instead. Another suggestion with regard to the design of the addition is that the addition would be more in keeping with the aesthetic of the original design if its sloping roof were hidden behind flat parapets, as the roof on the 1941 Art-Moderne block is. However, given that the addition will be so minimally visible, Staff is not incorporating these comments as recommendations.

With regard to the proposed replacement windows, Staff would prefer to see the existing windows repaired and retained. The *Design Guidelines* note that windows are a principal character defining feature of a building (Windows - Page 1). This is particularly the case with the four-unit Art Moderne building at 1304-1310 Princess Street. The windows in the end units are set perpendicular to each other at the corners, creating light-filled voids in the masonry building that celebrate the capabilities of modern construction techniques. The simultaneously taut and light appearance of the rolled steel windows is not replicated by any other window type and contributes to the modernity of the design and the crispness of the corner window feature. It is possible to restore the steel windows and interior storms can be obtained to reduce energy loss in winter months.

However, if the original steel windows are determined to be beyond repair, Staff would prefer wood or aluminum replacement windows that match the existing windows as closely as possible in appearance and function. These windows should have fixed exterior muntins. While the proposed vinyl windows would match those at 1304 and 1306 Princess Street, they would differ from the original in operation and configuration, as well as material.

Staff does note that the Board previously approved the vinyl windows at 1304 and 1306 Princess Street. In the first case, the Board reluctantly approved the window replacement which came as an after-the-fact installation (BAR Case #99-0120). In the second case, the Board noted that while they did not typically approve vinyl windows, each application must be looked at on a case-by-case basis (BAR Case #99-0244). In both of these cases, Staff recommended denial. Staff believes the present case should be considered on its own merits and not on the precedent of the two prior cases.

In conclusion, Staff recommends approval of the addition as submitted and restudy of the window replacement for repair and retention of the existing windows or replacement with windows of a more appropriate design and material.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 All exterior walls within 3 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided.
- C-2 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.
- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-8 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.
- C-9 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

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.