

Docket Item #4
BAR CASE #2003-0254

BAR Meeting
November 12, 2003

ISSUE: Addition & alterations

APPLICANT: Amy Maddox

LOCATION: 403 North West Street

ZONE: RB/Residential

****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 for addition and alterations with the following conditions:

1. That the use of fiber cement siding be limited to the new addition;
2. That the nails not show in the installation of the fiber cement siding; and,
3. That smooth (non-simulated wood grain) fiber cement siding be installed.

NOTE:

Docket item #3 must be approved before this docket item can be considered.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant's Description of the Undertaking:

- " Rebuild bathroom structure (16.6 x 6.2) extending footprint by 37.7 square feet; keep existing roofline and single window placement. (Drawing attached)
- " Rebuild exterior to match rest of the structure using cement board, painted to match (Paint samples attached.)
- " Request use of cement board (to match German lap style) along the 44.8 length side of house and the 6.2 back alley view ground level. Maintenance of the pine board siding is a severe maintenance hardship, requiring removal of neighbor's fence; and the 2.8 feet of property makes annual maintenance difficult. The original hard pine has been replaced with inferior young growth pine, which requires stripping and maintenance every 18-32 months.
- " Request use of cedar board (milled to match German lap siding used on the structure) on front and back of original structure that are visible by street and alley. The original hard pine has been replaced with inferior young growth pine, which requires stripping and maintenance every 18-32 months.
- " Push alley-side fence to end of property line to eliminate current parking pad, which brings the property into compliance with open space rules for a net gain of open space.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for a new one story addition replacing the existing north side addition and for the installation of cedar siding on the front and back of the house and fiber cement siding on the north side.

Addition

The proposed new addition is approximately 38 square feet larger than the existing. Unlike the existing addition, which protrudes from the center of the north wall of the ell, leaving several feet of the ell exposed at either end, the proposed new addition extends the full 16.2' length of the north wall of the ell. In addition, it will extend out further from the north wall of the ell, filling in the north side yard to the property line. As the main block is removed by 2.5' from the north property line, the proposed new addition will project out 2' beyond the main block on the north side. However, as it will be located 28.6' from the face of the main block and another 11.7' from the public sidewalk, it is not anticipated that the addition will be readily visible. The addition will have a shed roof and will be 10.5' at its highest point. The roof will be clad in rubber

membrane roofing. The walls will be clad in German lap fiber cement siding with a 5" reveal. The siding will extend to the ground, concealing the foundation. The trim will be wood. All but the rear elevation will be blind. That elevation will have a single, double hung wood window.

Siding

According to the applicant, the existing pine siding is in poor repair and difficult to maintain. Thus, the applicant proposes to replace the pine siding with cedar siding on the front and back of the existing house. The new wood siding will be German lap siding with a 5" reveal, matching the appearance of the existing siding. However, on the north side of the existing house, the applicant proposes to replace the pine siding with fiber cement siding. The fiber cement siding will also be German lap with a 5" reveal. The applicant will repaint the house in Benjamin Moore paint Sussex Green and Nantucket Gray colors. Samples of the proposed colors will be included in the Board members packets.

The last item in the applicant's description of undertakings, eliminating the current parking pad, has been deleted from the project as unnecessary. There is no *net* loss of open space resulting from the proposed addition and thus no need to recoup open space by eliminating parking.

The house is visible from West Street and the public alley at the rear. Views of the north side of the house, where the proposed addition is located are limited. A 6' high wood fence at the rear of the property limits views of the lower portion of the house at the rear.

History and Analysis:

As discussed in docket item #3, the house at 403 North West Street is a pair with 401 North West Street and one of three pairs on North West Street (401 - 411 North West Street) and a pair around the corner on Princess Street (1315-1317 Princess Street) that appear to have constructed from the same plans circa 1909. While there is no record of BAR review for 403 North West Street, Staff has administratively approved permits for in-kind replacement of wood, German lap siding and for replacing vinyl windows with wood windows (BLD#95-00753, 5/1/1995 and BLD#96-00304, 3/15/1996). In a similar case in 2002, the Board approved alterations, including the installation of fiber cement siding, on portions of 407 North West Street (BAR Case #2002-0062, 4/24/2002).

The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements. The proposed addition is placed in an area where existing ground level open space is less than 8' in width and thus can not be counted as open space. Therefore, while the proposed addition is larger than the existing, the open space remains the same 731 square feet as it currently is.

Staff believes the proposed addition is acceptable. As discussed in docket item #3, Staff generally would prefer an addition which did not obscure the original L-shaped footprint. However, the footprint was already obscured by the previous addition. Simple in design and modest in size, the proposed addition is compatible with the architectural character of the existing building and neighboring houses. Furthermore, it is not expected to be readily visible.

The applicant proposes to clad the new addition and the north side of the existing house in fiber cement siding. All other elevations of the existing house will be replaced with cedar siding to match the existing pine German lap siding. Building permits for 403 North West Street suggest that at least portions of the siding have been replaced within the last 10 years. The Board has reviewed a number of applications for the use of fiber cement siding and has adopted the following policy with respect to the product:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
5. That smooth (non-simulated wood grain) siding be installed.
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

The proposed use of fiber cement on the new addition is in keeping with the Board's policy. However, in the opinion of Staff, the use of fiber cement on the north side of the existing house does not comply with item #1, that fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure. The fiber cement would be installed on the circa 1909 structure. While the siding on the north side probably is replacement siding, it is wood and appears to be in-kind replacement of the original German lap wood siding.

On the other hand, the Board has approved the use of fiber cement on historic houses in certain circumstances. Earlier this year, the Board approved fiber cement on the north side of the late 19th century house at 523 North Patrick Street (BAR Case #2003-0129, 7/23/03). In that case, the Board felt that the narrowness of the space between the house and the neighbor to the north made the wall difficult to maintain. In addition, in 2002 the Board approved the installation of fiber cement siding on a portion of the north wall at 407 North West Street (BAR Case #2002-0062, 4/24/2002). This project was financed by the City's Office of Housing. Fiber cement siding was proposed as a way of limiting the maintenance needs for the homeowner who was both elderly and disabled. While the applicant requested fiber cement for the entire north elevation and rear of 407 North West Street, the Board did not approve its use on the main block, but confined it to the less visible wall of the rear ell.

To conclude, based on the Board's policy and on commonly accepted preservation philosophy which discourages the use of synthetic, non-historic materials, Staff recommends that the fiber cement be approved only for the new addition and that the cedar siding be used on the north side of the existing house, as it is on the front and rear. However, if the Board is inclined to approve fiber cement siding on the north wall of the historic building, Staff recommends that it be applied only to the ell and not to the main block. Lastly, Staff notes items #4 and #5 of the Board's fiber cement policy and recommends that they be conditions to the approval.

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 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 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-7 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.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

I am concerned about the use of cementitious siding on the front of a building, and the removal of pine siding. Staff to BAR will need to review the condition of the current siding.

Alexandria Archeology:

There is a low potential for this project to disturb significant archaeological resources. No archaeological action is required.