

Docket Item #5
BAR CASE #2003-0263

BAR Meeting
November 12, 2003

ISSUE: HVAC and alterations

APPLICANT: William Willard

LOCATION: 917 Princess 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 with the following conditions:

1. That the brickwork extending the parapet wall on the east side match the existing brickwork as closely as possible;
2. That the condensor units in the side yard be located as close to each other as possible, as far below grade as possible and as far to the north end of the yard as possible;
3. That the piping from the condensor units be installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible;
4. That the condensor units in the side yard be further screened with landscaping;
5. That the rooftop fan and ventilator be moved off the gable roof to a less obtrusive location or, if that is not possible, be moved to behind the bell tower; and,
6. That the fan and ventilator be painted to match the color of the roof.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant s Description of Undertaking:

HVAC and alterations.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for several exterior alterations described below:

Mechanical Equipment for Sanctuary HVAC System

The Third Baptist Church at 917 Princess Street consists of a two story brick sanctuary with one and two story additions on the rear and east sides housing administrative and fellowship uses. The existing HVAC system is inadequate for the sanctuary. There are presently three rooftop mechanical units located on the flat portion of the roof directly behind the sanctuary. These units, which are not visible from the ground, will be disconnected and abandoned in place. Much of the equipment for the new HVAC system will be located within the ceiling above the sanctuary. However, the applicant proposes to place two new condensor units in the small walled yard on the Patrick Street side of the sanctuary. According to the applicant the condensers must be in as close proximity to the air handlers as possible. As the air handlers are in the attic toward the front of the sanctuary, this is the preferred location. Each unit will measure approximately 6.5' long, 3' wide and 3' high and will rest on a concrete slab. According to the applicant, the slab will be set 1" below grade, to help reduce the visibility of the units. Four separate lines of piping will run at grade from the units to a point several feet to the south before entering the building. An existing brick wall, approximately 4' high separates the side yard from the adjacent public sidewalk. There is an open metal gate in the south end of the wall which allows views into the side yard.

Another exterior alteration related to the new sanctuary HVAC system is the proposed installation of a supply fan and pressure relief ventilator on the sanctuary roof. This alteration only became known to Staff when the working drawings and a building permit application were submitted for the interior renovation of the church on November 4, 2002. Staff approved the

plans for interior work only, excluding the HVAC condensers described above and the rooftop fan and ventilator, pending Board approval (BLD2003-02613). The fan will be square in shape and constructed of galvanized steel. It will measure 47 ½" by 47 ½" and will project 27" above the roof surface. The ventilator will be round in shape and constructed of aluminum. It will have a diameter of 48" at the top and will rise approximately 30" above the roof. The fan will be located on the west slope of the roof and the ventilator on the east slope. Each will be approximately 12' back from the front of the building and approximately 1/3 of the way down the slope of the roof.

Screening for Mechanical Equipment for Fellowship Hall HVAC System

The 1990 planning for the new fellowship hall addition included an HVAC system to service the new area. Records indicate that the Staff and Board were concerned that the new rooftop mechanical units be screened to the greatest extent possible. The parapet wall above the arcade linking the sanctuary and fellowship hall on the east side of the building was designed specifically to screen the mechanical equipment. On October 1, 2003, a permit was issued to replace that equipment (MEC2003-01899). Planning and Zoning Staff approved the application, with the understanding that it would be direct replacement, i.e. replacement with units of the same size and in the same location. However, as installed, the equipment is clearly visible above the parapet wall. According to the applicant, this project was unrelated to the sanctuary renovation which his firm is designing. However, the applicant has agreed to address the after-the-fact installation and proposes to extend the existing parapet wall upward by six courses of brick and either reinstalling the existing metal coping or installing new coping to match the existing.

Paint Removal

The applicant had initially sought approval to clad the front facade of the church in brick, eliminating several unused or unwanted window openings as part of the refacing. At the request of Staff, the church reconsidered this proposal. The applicant now proposes to remove the existing maroon paint using Peel Away, a DuPont product. It is assumed that, once stripped, the original hard pressed brick and butter joints will be in good condition and will not require any further treatment. There is some concern that the eastern front entryway may not match the rest of the facade. According to those familiar with the property, at some time, this entryway was damaged and rebuilt. The treatment of this entryway will be evaluated once stripped. The existing windows, doors and trimwork will remain and will be repainted.

History and Analysis:

By 1877, the Colored Third Baptist Church stood at the northeast corner of Princess and North Patrick, as shown in the Hopkins Atlas of that year. The present brick building with square corner bell tower and simplified Gothic detailing appears to have been constructed between 1891 and 1896. A single-story addition was constructed at the rear of the sanctuary circa 1948. More recently, a two story Gothic style addition was constructed across the rear of the building, incorporating the earlier single-story addition and extending out on the east side of the building. The Board worked extensively with the church and Lewis & Associates, a local architectural firm, on that design and gave final approval for the plans on May 9, 1990 (BAR Case #90-5PG). The building was completed in 1991. In 2001, the Board approved paving the existing gravel

parking lot on the east side of the building (BAR Case #2001-280, 11/28/01).

First, Staff appreciates that the church was willing to reconsider its plans to reface the church. The Third Baptist Church has great significance to the community, both through its history and as an architectural landmark. It is a fine example of a late-19th century church with Gothic detailing and every attempt should be made to preserve the historic facade. The proposed use of Peel Away to strip the existing paint from the facade is acceptable. Peel Away is routinely used on historic masonry buildings without any adverse effects. The Peel Away system has the advantage of containing the paint that is removed within the gel-like solvent which is then peeled away using the special Peel Away paper, making it particularly suitable for lead paint removal. There are other solvent-base strippers which could also be safely used for a restoration project such as this, provided the proper procedures are followed. The brick underneath the paint is expected to be a hard pressed brick with a fine, smooth surface and red color. The situation with the eastern entryway will be evaluated once it has been stripped. If the entryway brickwork is significantly different from the rest of the facade, it may be acceptable to paint it to more closely match the rest of the facade.

Staff has concerns about the proliferation of HVAC equipment on the exterior of the building. The HVAC upgrade of the fellowship hall appears to have been undertaken as a separate project from the sanctuary upgrade and both appear to have been designed with little consideration of the exterior appearance of the historic church building. Staff believes the proposed raising of the existing screen wall to hide the new fellowship hall rooftop units is acceptable, providing the brickwork matches the existing in all respects. Assuming that it is not possible to locate the new condenser units on the flat rooftop behind the sanctuary, where the existing HVAC units will be abandoned, Staff believes the proposed placement of the ground level units in the Patrick Street side yard could be acceptable, with some modifications. The two units should be moved as far to the north as possible to minimize the view through the open ironwork gate. They should be placed as close together as possible. Staff was lead to believe that they would only need to be separated by 3' to allow room for maintenance, rather than the 6' shown on the plans. They should be sunk as deeply as possible. The revised plans should clearly indicate the dimensions, including height of the HVAC units as installed. If possible, the piping should be copper, to help it to visually blend into the surroundings. It should enter the building as soon as possible and in the least obtrusive location possible. Lastly, Staff recommends that the yard be landscaped with shrubs to further screen the mechanical equipment.

The proposed new rooftop vents located on either side of the gable roof of the sanctuary are highly problematic. The best possible solution would be to eliminate them altogether or move them off the highly visible sanctuary roof. However, if that is not possible, they should be clustered together on the west slope of the roof behind the bell tower. This location is screened in front by the decorative brick wall which runs between the side of the tower and the gable roof. The mass of the tower itself would screen views of the equipment from the west. The equipment should be painted to match the color of the roof as closely as possible.

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the proposed alterations with the following conditions:

1. That the brickwork extending the parapet wall on the east side match the existing brickwork as closely as possible;
2. That the condensor units in the side yard be located as close to each other as possible, as far below grade as possible and as far to the north end of the yard as possible;
3. That the piping from the condensor units be installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible;
4. That the condensor units in the side yard be further screened with landscaping;
5. That the rooftop fan and ventilator be moved off the gable roof to a less obtrusive location or, if that is not possible, be moved to behind the bell tower; and,
6. That the fan and ventilator be painted to match the color of the roof.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 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.

Historic Alexandria:

No Comment.