

Docket Item #3
BAR CASE #2003-0319

BAR Meeting
January 28, 2004

ISSUE: Replacement windows and alterations

APPLICANT: William Fagg

LOCATION: 416 North Henry 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 front light fixture and deferral of the replacement windows to consider:

1. Repair and retention of the steel casement windows; or,
2. If repair is not possible, replacement with aluminum or aluminum clad windows which more closely replicate the configuration and operation of the existing windows.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant's Description of Undertaking:

"To replace front windows with Andersen windows and to install a porch lamp."

Issue:

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness to replace the three steel casement windows on the front facade with Andersen Narroline double hung sash and frame. The existing casement windows have two leaves, each with three panes and a fixed transom with two lights above. The proposed replacement windows will have a one-over-one configuration. The frame and sash are constructed of wood, but the exterior of the sash is clad in vinyl. The windows on the rear are modern one-over-one replacement windows installed prior to the present owner's acquisition of the property. These will remain in place. In addition to the windows, the applicant proposes to install a coach lantern type light on the left side of the front entrance. The fixture will have a brass finish.

History and Analysis:

The two story cinder block, brick faced rowhouse at 416 North Henry Street was constructed circa 1938 as one in a row of twelve dwellings (404 to 426 North Henry Street) (Permit #1696, 5/20/1938). The unit at 408 North Henry Street has since been demolished. While there is no record of Board approval of replacement windows for these buildings, only three in the row retain the original steel casement windows on the front (414, 416 & 420 North Henry Street). Most have had replacement windows installed in the rear as well. The replacement windows are consistent in configuration: all one-over-one double hung windows, but vary in material. In 1993, the Board heard a request to replace the steel windows at 420 North Henry Street with double hung wood windows. After deferring the case to allow the applicant to consider alternatives and obtain cost estimates, the Board approved the replacement of the rear windows with double hung wood windows, but required the retention and repair of the front windows (BAR Case #93-41PG, 12/22/1993). A site visit establishes that the front windows remain in place at 420 North Henry Street. However, it appears doubtful that any repair was done.

The Board has reviewed a number of requests for replacement of steel casement windows over the years and has responded on a case-by-case basis, rather than developing a uniform policy. As noted above, the Board previously approved repair, rather than replacement, of the steel windows at 420 North Henry Street. On June 25, 2003, the Board deferred for restudy a request to replace the steel casement windows at 621 ½ North Alfred Street with vinyl one-over-one windows (BAR Case #2003-0134). Although four of the six houses in this row had replacement windows of a variety of materials and configurations, the Board did not feel the proposed windows were

acceptable for the front facade and recommended restudy to consider either wood or aluminum clad wood windows that would more closely replicate the configuration of the original windows. On the other hand, the Board recently approved vinyl slider windows to replace steel casement windows at 1310 Princess Street (BAR Case # 2003-185, 9/24/2003). The Board's decision was made reluctantly and was based on a desire to maintain as uniform as possible an appearance within this four unit Art Moderne building. The building had already had vinyl replacement windows installed in two other units with the first replacements having been installed prior to seeking Board approval (BAR Case #99-0120, 8/11/99 and BAR Case #99-0244, 1/12/2000).

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

This case presents a difficult question; one which is likely to come before the Board with increasing frequency as the many similar mid-20th century houses in Parker Gray are acquired by new residents. Typically, the metal casement windows are *the* character defining feature of these houses. These windows have extremely thin members and come in a variety of configurations, often involving combinations of fixed and movable sash, making them quite different in appearance from the wood windows that preceded them.

The *Design Guidelines* and general preservation principles call for the retention and repair of historic windows whenever possible, noting that windows are "a principal character defining feature of a building" (Windows - Page 1). Where replacement must occur, the *Guidelines* state that "replacement windows should be appropriate to the historic period of the architectural style of the building." (Windows - Page 2) Therefore, Staff recommends that the applicant first investigate repair and retention of the windows and, if desired, interior storm windows. Blaine Window Repair Service, located in Silver Spring, Maryland may be able to assist the applicant. If repair is not possible, Staff could support the replacement of the metal casement windows, but believes the replacement windows should more closely reflect the configuration and operation of the original multi-light casement windows. In addition, Staff believes that aluminum or aluminum clad wood windows, though not the original material, would be preferable to vinyl clad. The Design Guidelines clearly discourage the use of vinyl in the historic districts (Windows - Page 2). Lastly, Staff notes that the replacement windows should have fixed exterior muntins, rather than sandwich or snap-in muntins. Staff would be happy to assist the applicant with sources for replacement windows as well.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 A construction permit is required for the proposed project.

Historic Alexandria:

“The change from casement windows to this wood replacement is a character defining change. Is there any way to consider a replacement window style which gives the same look as the casement but provides the energy efficiency?”