

Docket Item #3  
BAR CASE #2004-0081

BAR Meeting  
May 26, 2004

**ISSUE:** After-the-fact fence  
**APPLICANT:** Helen Boyd  
**LOCATION:** 636 North Columbus Street  
**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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**\*\*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.

### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the existing high wood picket fence and gate at 636 North Columbus Street, located at the corner of North Columbus Street and Wythe Street. According to materials provided by the applicant, the fence is a French Gothic style fence manufactured by Fenclo, Inc. It is painted white. The approximately 30" high fence extends along the edge of the front yard facing North Columbus Street and turns back to the house in line with the side wall along Wythe Street. The fence and gate replace a hedge that was recently removed for a sewer replacement project.

The applicant's family first contacted Staff regarding the installation of a fence in March 2004 and filed a complete application on April 26, 2004. The fence was erected without prior BAR approval in late April or the early May 2004.

### **II. HISTORY**

The two story brick end unit rowhouse at 636 North Columbus Street was constructed along with 632 and 634 North Columbus Street between 1921 and 1931, based on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. Nearly all the houses on the blockface have fences enclosing the front yards. Most of the fences are chain link. Several have been replaced in recent years, apparently without Board approval, with wood picket fences.

### **III. ANALYSIS**

The fence, less than 42" high, complies with zoning ordinance requirements conditional upon encroachment approval.

A portion of the front yards, approximately 4.7' back from the edge of the sidewalk, along the 600 block of North Columbus Street are within City right-of-way. Thus all fences located at the edge of the sidewalk along the 600 block of North Columbus Street are encroaching on City property. There is no record of an encroachment ordinance for the fences, many of which have been in place for decades. The Departments of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services are aware of this issue and have agreed that Planning and Zoning will file for an encroachment ordinance for the entire block, eliminating the need for the property owners to undertake this process on an individual basis.

The fence at 636 North Columbus Street encroaches into the City right-of-way along North Columbus Street. The encroachment is a strip of property 17.9' wide by 4.7' deep. The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services has approved the fence, conditioned upon the future approval of the encroachment ordinance to be handled by Planning and Zoning.

In the opinion of Staff, the white picket fence is acceptable. The front yards on this blockface have historically been enclosed with fences and most currently have fences extending to the edge of the sidewalk. Thus, the fence at 636 North Columbus Street continues the predominant pattern of the blockface. Staff believes the picket fence is compatible with the character of the

house, which exhibits modest references to the Colonial Revival style. Wood picket fences are among the fence types recommended by the Design Guidelines (Fences - Page 2). Furthermore, the Guidelines recommend that wood fences be painted or stained (Fences - Page 3).

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the existing white wood picket fence.

**CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Enforcement:

“No comments.”

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”