

Docket Item #7
BAR CASE #2004-0124

BAR Meeting
June 23, 2004

ISSUE: Permit to demolish warehouse and service station

APPLICANT: Cameron Street LLC

LOCATION: 1115 Cameron Street & 200 North Henry Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial Downtown Zone

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that no Demolition Permit is approved until a construction permit has been issued for the project.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish to demolish the two buildings located on the property comprising the southern half of the block bounded by Cameron, Fayette, Queen and Henry Streets. The property is proposed to be redeveloped with a 64-condominium building.

Hopkins Furniture Warehouse

The larger of the two extant buildings is the former Hopkins Furniture Company warehouse located at the corner of Cameron and Fayette Streets. The building footprint covers the western half of the site. Two stories in height with a flat roof, 136' wide and 176' long, the warehouse is essentially a large brick rectangle. The loading bay and pedestrian entrance are located on the shorter, south facade, which faces Cameron Street. The loading bay projects several feet from the face of the building and contains three large roll-up steel doors while the pedestrian entrance has a glass and metal entry system. Sections of blue finished corrugated steel siding above and beside the doors define the two entrances. A sign consisting of white pin mounted letters at the west end of the Cameron Street facade reads, "Hopkins Furniture Warehouse." A similar sign is located on south end of the east facade, near Cameron Street. Other than the sign and two flush metal service doors at the north end, the long east facade is an unrelieved brick wall. The west facade, facing Fayette Street, is similarly devoid of features, with one flush metal service door at the north end. The north facade, which abuts a single story auto repair facility, is also an unrelieved brick wall.



Figure 1 - South & east facades Hopkins Warehouse



Figure 2 - North & west facades Hopkins Warehouse

Service Station

A small, single story, L-shaped service station building is located near the center of the eastern half of the site. It is surrounded by an asphalt parking area. Rectangular in plan, the building is oriented to the east and Henry Street. A small wing extends from the back (west side) of the building on the southern end. Constructed of masonry and clad in false brick siding, the building has a flat roof concealed by a false mansard which wraps the east and south facades. The mansard is clad in asphalt and has a cross gable in the south end which is covered in wood-grained embossed metal. The Henry Street facade has three service bays with roll-up steel doors to the north and a store area to the south with two large windows flanking a centered doorway. These would have been glass but are now covered in plywood. The south facade has three doors and two windows, all of which have been boarded up. The north facade has two large windows, currently boarded up.



Figure 3 - South & east facades of service station



Figure 4 - North & east facades of service station

II. HISTORY:

According to Alexandria Archeology, a house may have been present on the property as early as 1810 and there were free African American households on the street face in 1830. By the time of the Civil War and continuing through the first decades of the 20th century, the property on which the two buildings are located served as a railroad yard. Railroad tracks ran down both Henry Street and Fayette Street on either side of the property. The 1877 Hopkins Atlas shows the property belonging to the Alexandria & Washington Railroad and a railroad siding curving off from the Alexandria & Fredericksburg line to enter the property on the Fayette Street side. In 1877 there is only a small passenger station located at the corner of Cameron and Fayette Streets. By 1896, there is also a larger freight house toward the Henry Street side of the property. By 1902, the freight house had been replaced by an even larger, two-story building with offices on the second floor. However, by 1921, the site was cleared of structures and remained vacant in 1931, based on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of those years.

No permits could be located for the construction of the service station. However, it does not appear on the 1941 Sanborn, but a 1948 permit for an adjacent building shows the footprint of a filling station located in the same vicinity as the present building, indicating a date of circa 1944. A 1972 permit describes renovations to the building for Texaco (Permit #29176, 5/31/1972).

The mansard roof and brick cladding were added in that renovation. Although no permit records were found, there is evidence to suggest that the building has been expanded to the rear and by a bay to the north. The only BAR record for the service station is an 1989 approval for a sign for Agip-Steuart (BAR Case #89-13, 5/10/1989).

In 1948, a tiny (8' x 12') steel framed structure clad in aluminum siding with a glass front was added at the north end of the property along Henry Street (Permit #4452, 12/2/1948). The building, which served as a restaurant known as "Earl's Kitchen," was expanded in 1952 and 1967, but has not been extant for some time.

The Hopkins Furniture Company erected the large brick warehouse in 1969 (Permit #7034, 7/13/1969). The building was designed by the Alexandria architectural firm of Vosbeck & Ward. The building has been vacant for a number of years. There is no record of BAR approvals for this building, which predates the establishment of the Parker-Gray District and appears to have been subject to few if any alterations over the years.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

Staff does not believe either the 1969 warehouse or circa 1944 service station building meet the above criteria. They are common building types, undistinguished architecturally and have no known historical significance.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the condition that no Demolition Permit is approved until a construction permit has been issued for the project.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Tax records indicate that a house may have been present on this property by 1810. There were free African American households on this street face in 1830, but the exact addresses are unknown. By the time of the Civil War, the lot had become the site of the Alexandria and Washington Railroad station. A warehouse and service station currently occupy the property. While the more recent construction has probably destroyed most of the surface evidence of 19th-century activities on this lot, it is possible that some more deeply buried archaeological resources may remain.

- C-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

- C-2 The above statement (in C-1) must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.