

Docket Item # 8
BAR CASE #2004-0125

BAR Meeting
June 23, 2004

ISSUES: Conceptual review of a new condominium building

APPLICANT: Cameron Street, LLC

LOCATION: 1115 Cameron Street & 200 North Henry Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial Downtown Zone

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff recommends conceptual approval of the proposal to construct a 64-unit condominium building with underground parking on an approximately one-acre site occupied by the former Hopkins Warehouse and All Tune and Lube buildings. This approval is predicated upon the removal of a portion of the fourth floor as discussed below.

Although the proposal is quite large, staff supports the proposed approach, because the building has been designed as a series of rowhouses, townhouses and an apartment building that have been constructed over time. The intent of this approach is to reduce the perceived scale of the proposed block-long project into a series of smaller volumes, making the building more compatible in appearance and character with the context of the adjoining neighborhoods. The design draws from building types and architectural elements found in both the Parker-Gray and the Old and Historic



Site Aerial



Applicant’s Proposed Cameron Street Elevation

Alexandria Districts as well as more generalized historic building references. The approach is one which conforms to the Board’s *Design Guidelines* for new residential construction (Chapter 6), which has been used City-wide, and which has been endorsed by the Planning Commission and City Council.

While staff supports the overall approach, and believes that the project is generally well designed for a conceptual application, staff is concerned about the perceived mass and the lack of variation in height. Therefore, staff is recommending that three to four units be eliminated from the fourth story at the corner of Cameron and Henry Streets. This will provide more variation in height and a better transition in scale to the adjoining scale of the buildings to the east, as discussed in more detail below. Staff does not recommend approval of the proposal without elimination of a portion of the fourth floor at the corner of Cameron and Henry Streets.

In addition, staff has included recommendations regarding the architectural hyphens, setbacks, balconies, entrances and proportions for some of the buildings as outlined below.

II. PROPOSED APPLICATION:

Review by the BAR of the demolition request (BAR #2004-0124) and conceptual design represent the first of three approval steps. If the conceptual design and necessary demolitions are approved, the application will then require approval of a development special use permit and site plan by the Planning Commission and the City Council. If the SUP is granted, the details of the proposal will be finalized and an application will be made to the BAR for a certificate of appropriateness.

The purpose of the conceptual design review is for the BAR to make a finding of appropriateness on the *scale, mass and architectural character* of the proposed project. Subsequently, after approval of the SUP, the BAR will review detailed plans and will focus on materials, proportions, relationships between architectural elements and the detailing of specific elements such as cornices, windows and doors for a determination that the final design complies with the Board’s Standards and the *Design Guidelines* in all respects.

III. BACKGROUND:

A. Site Description

The 1.0 acre site occupies half of a city block and is bounded by Cameron Street on the south, Henry Street on the east, and Fayette Street on the west. The site consists of two lots and contains two buildings – a one-story furniture warehouse (Hopkins Warehouse) and a one-story service station (All Tune and Lube; presently vacant). The site is essentially flat (the maximum grade change on the site is 3.3 feet) and is almost entirely covered with impervious surfaces.

The remainder of the block is developed with one- and two-story buildings hosting a mix of uses, including auto repair, a tire store, a bookstore, hair salons, a restaurant, and a church. The surrounding blocks to the east, north, and west are also developed with one- and two-story buildings, hosting uses which include homes, restaurants, fraternal organizations, and retail uses. The block to the south, across Cameron Street, is developed with a seven-story, tiered office and retail building and a two-and-a-half story residence.



Property to South



North End of Subject Block

B. Description of Proposal

The applicant is proposing to demolish the service station and warehouse and construct a four-story condominium building containing 64 dwelling units. Although the building is predominantly four stories, the west side of the building facing Fayette Street is only three stories. Terraces will be located on the top of the three-story section. The building will be built nearly to the street line on Cameron, but set back approximately 8 feet on Henry Street and approximately 12 feet on Fayette Street. The building will be U-shaped, with its primary entrance on Cameron Street and an interior courtyard on the north side of the building. Surface parking for visitors will be provided along the north property line, and underground parking will be provided for residents. A single driveway on Fayette Street, at the north end of the site, will provide access to both the surface and underground parking areas.

IV. STAFF ANALYSIS:

The subject property is identified in the Braddock Road Metro Station Small Area Plan as a potential redevelopment site, and represents one of the largest redevelopment sites in the Parker Gray District. The site is located on the visually prominent intersection of Henry and Cameron Streets. It is located within the Parker Gray Historic District, but lies near the edge of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

The site therefore serves as an important transition property between the two historic districts. While any development of the site must of course be designed in the context of its location within the Parker Gray District, its proximity to the Old and Historic District must also be taken into consideration. The proposed plan generally provides a transition between the higher density area to the south and the lower density areas to the north, east and west. As the architectural context of the immediately adjoining blockfaces is characterized by an unusual diversity of building types, sizes, periods and styles and by a lack of cohesive streetscapes, the design must by necessity draw from a wider area, including both the Parker-Gray and Old and Historic Alexandria Districts, as well as from more generalized historic building types for architectural inspiration.

The applicant is proposing a single building, portions of which will have three stories and portions of which will have four stories. Much of the four-story portion of the building will have the appearance of three stories, with a strong cornice at the third story and a fourth story concealed in a “roof” with dormers. The scale of the building is broken down into a series of smaller volumes, treated as different residential building types and styles, to make the building more compatible in appearance, scale and overall character with the adjoining neighborhoods. Staff believes this approach is in conformance with the Board’s *Design Guidelines* for new residential construction (Chapter 6), which address all aspects of building design from the general, including siting, massing, height and width, to the more particular, including style, roof form, fenestration, architectural detailing and materials. For each of these aspects, the *Guidelines* direct the applicant to look to the predominant characteristics of the immediately surrounding buildings and those in the historic districts beyond.

The primary area of concern for staff is the proposed four story element on the corner of Cameron and Henry Streets. Staff does not support this proposed mass and scale adjacent to the primarily two- and three-story buildings to the east on Henry Street and along Cameron Street. Therefore, staff believes that a critical component of the staff recommendation of approval is the elimination of three to four units from the fourth level of the Henry / Cameron corner of the apartment segment of the building. Without this reduction, staff believes the proposed mass is not compatible with the context of the adjoining neighborhoods.



Building to East

At this time, staff has several other comments as well. While some may appear rather specific for a concept review, all potentially impact on the footprint, building envelope and layout of the apartments which will be developed and solidified in the next phase prior to the applicant’s return to the BAR for final approval of the design and thus should be addressed at this time.

V. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. Cameron Street Facade Description:

The Cameron Street elevation is the longest elevation (230 feet) and contains the principal entrance for the condominium building. The building steps down from four stories at Henry Street at the east end to three stories near the corner with Fayette Street at the west end. It consists of three sections, the longest being the four-story apartment house segment followed by



Applicant’s Proposed Cameron Street Elevation

the section consisting of three identical three-story rowhouses with full mansards and finally, at the corner of Fayette and Henry Streets, a two-story house with full mansard. The corner house and four story rowhouses are linked by a smaller segment intended to appear as a hyphen or wing. The three sections are discussed in detail below:

Apartment Segment

This segment, which wraps the corner and extends north up Henry Street, suggests a mid-size apartment building of the early 20th century. It is shown as brick with cast stone, wood, stucco and metal details. It has a highly regular fenestration pattern and classical revival detailing, including a porticoed and pedimented entrance bay, a rusticated base, lintels with keystones and heavy cornices. The strong horizontal emphasis, created by the rusticated base and by the cornices between the third and fourth stories and at the top of building, is countered by the vertical division of the Cameron Street facade into three large sections with the central entrance section recessed approximately 2 feet from the two flanking sections. Further vertical emphasis is provided by the three-story bays on the flanking sections. These bays project approximately two feet. The entrance bay is highlighted by a series of balconies and french doors or paired windows with decorative heads rising above the columned portico at the first story. Similarly, the center bay of the flanking sections is highlighted by a three story projecting bay which has recessed balconies with french doors or paired windows on each floor. The projecting bay terminates in an open balcony at the fourth story.

Rowhouse Segment:

This segment consists of three identical rowhouses in a manner reminiscent of the Queen Anne style. The face of this segment is even with the face of the flanking sections in the apartment segment. The townhouses have three stories with a full-height mansard roof as the fourth story. They are shown as brick with wood and trim and shingled roofs. They have three bays with the right or east side bay of each house having an entry door in the first story and a two story oriel bay above. This bay is open and treated as a balcony. The two left side or western bays have a two-over-two window in each bay on the first through third stories. The fourth story has a double width dormer which functions as a balcony on the right or east side and a dormer with single window centered over the two left side bays.

Corner House Segment:

This segment has its primary elevation on Cameron Street and wraps the corner with a secondary elevation on Fayette Street. It is intended to have the appearance of a large single-family home with hyphen or ell extending to the east along Cameron Street. The main block of the house is set back from the sidewalk by approximately 8 feet while the hyphen section is set back 6 feet. The two story brick main block has a third story in the full mansard roof. It evokes the Second Empire style and makes an intentional reference to the historic house on the southwest corner of Cameron and Henry Streets (1100 Cameron Street). The main block is five bays wide with the entrance in the center bay. Details include a door surround with segmental arched pediment, two-over-two windows, a watertable, a bracketed cornice. The mansard roof has a pronounced curve, is shingled and has two dormers with segmental arched pediments.

The hyphen section is shown as brick with a sloped metal roof and inset porches with wood railings and posts on the second and third stories. The hyphen has three bays on each story with a door in the westernmost bay of the first story. All other bays have multi-light windows or french doors.

B. Cameron Street Staff Recommendations:

Overall, staff believes that the streetscape consisting of an apartment building, three rowhouses and a large single-family house, is appropriate for the scale and fabric of this portion of the City. However, staff cannot support the lack of variation in the roof line or the scale of the apartment building segment as it relates to the buildings to the east, on Henry and Cameron Streets. Therefore, staff is recommending that three to four units on fourth floor of the apartment segment be eliminated to provide more variation in the type roof heights (as depicted in Exhibit A below) and a building more compatible with the small scale buildings to the east. The reduction in height will make the apartment segment more consistent with other buildings of this type that are found within the City. Additionally, it will enable the building to read as primarily a two- and three-story building, more compatible with the two-story buildings which are predominant in the Parker Gray District.

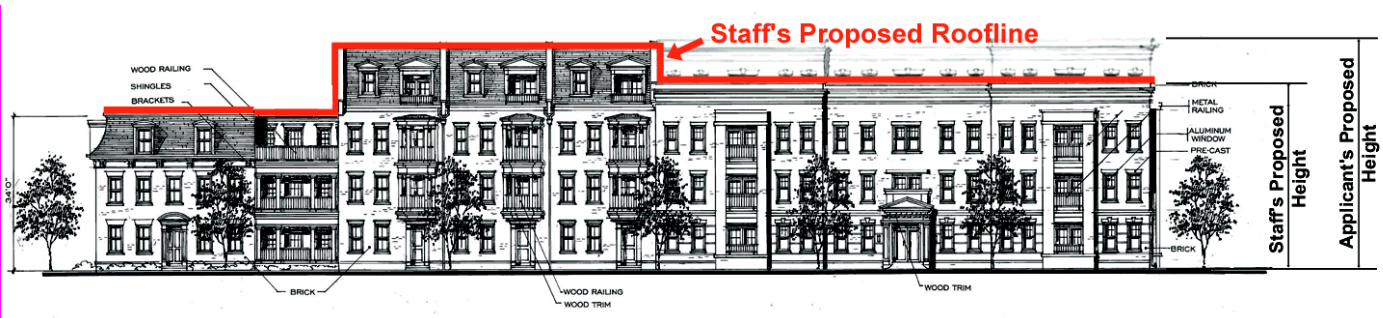


Exhibit A

Another staff concern is the lack of building articulation for the buildings. Staff is recommending that the building footprints be revised to provide more variation, as generally depicted in Exhibit B below.



Exhibit B

The three rowhouses should be recessed from the apartment segment. The hyphen wall on the first story should also be recessed and a porch added at the front to give it a more authentic expression. The porches should be flush with or behind the face of the house to the west. Staff believes the open balcony treatment of the two-story bays and large dormers on the three rowhouses is not appropriate and that these elements must be enclosed and treated in a more traditional manner. Staff is also recommending that the balcony elements above the porch on the apartment building entrance be simplified. As the apartment building segment at the corner of Cameron Street is one of the most visually prominent sections of the project, staff is recommending that high quality building materials, such as precast, be used for the base and other architectural elements. Lastly, to enliven the street, and give the building authenticity, staff strongly recommends that the doors on the rowhouse and townhouse facades on all three street faces be operational.

C. Henry Street Facade Description:

The Henry Street elevation is 159 feet long and consists of three major segments. Starting from the south at the corner with Cameron Street is the continuation of the apartment segment. This segment is intended to have the appearance of a secondary elevation of a mid-size apartment block with recessed wing extending to the north. The apartment segment is followed by a four-bay, gable-roofed townhouse and a two-bay hyphen. The Henry Street elevation is terminated by a substantial, five-bay, gable-roofed townhouse segment on the north end.



Applicant’s Proposed Henry Street Elevation

Apartment Segment

As on Cameron Street, the apartment is shown as brick with cast stone, wood, stucco and metal details. While similar to the Cameron Street elevation, it lacks the visually prominent central entrance bay. It consists of a large, seven-bay section which is broken in the center by a three-story projecting bay with recessed balconies containing french doors or paired windows, similar to those on Cameron Street. The elevation is divided horizontally by a rusticated base and cornice between the third and fourth stories. A five-bay section to the north of the seven-bay section is recessed by approximately 2 feet and is intended to appear as a wing to the apartment. Therefore, it lacks the projecting bay feature and parapet wall of the more prominent sections on Cameron and Henry Streets.

Four-Bay Townhouse Segment

This segment has the appearance of a large brick Federal-style townhouse. It is three stories with the fourth story in the “gable” roof. The metal roof sloped to appear as a gable, is punctuated by three pedimented dormers. A short, two-bay hyphen separates the four-bay townhouse from the five-bay townhouse to the north. This section is recessed 2 feet from the face of the adjoining sections. It is shown as brick with wood trim and a metal roof. The roof line of the hyphen is lower than the adjacent segments and there is no dormer in the roof. It has a door with a simple classical surround centered in the first story and a recessed porch in the two upper stories. These stories each contain two windows or doors.

Five-Bay Townhouse Segment

This segment has the appearance of a substantial brick townhouse with a melding of Greek Revival and Italianate stylistic influences. Five bays wide, the house has a center bay that is strongly emphasized with a Greek Revival style entrance with sidelights on the first story and above on the second and third stories, balconies with paired windows or french doors. The two bays on either side of the center bay have identical two-over-two windows with heavy, hooded window frames. The fourth story appears to have the appearance of a metal clad gable roof. A wide, pedimented dormer with paired windows is located in the center of the roof.

D. Henry Street Staff Recommendations:

As previously discussed, staff is recommending that the height of the multi-family building be reduced to appear to be three stories as generally depicted in Exhibit C below. In addition, staff is recommending that the hyphen element be reduced in height and be setback a minimum of 2 feet from the adjoining townhouses. As with the hyphen on Cameron Street, it should have more authentic expression with the masonry wall on the first story recessed and a porch element added at the front. Staff believes the stacked balconies in the center bay of the northern townhouse unit are alien to the Greek Revival/Italianate style architectural character of this segment and should be simplified or eliminated.



Exhibit C

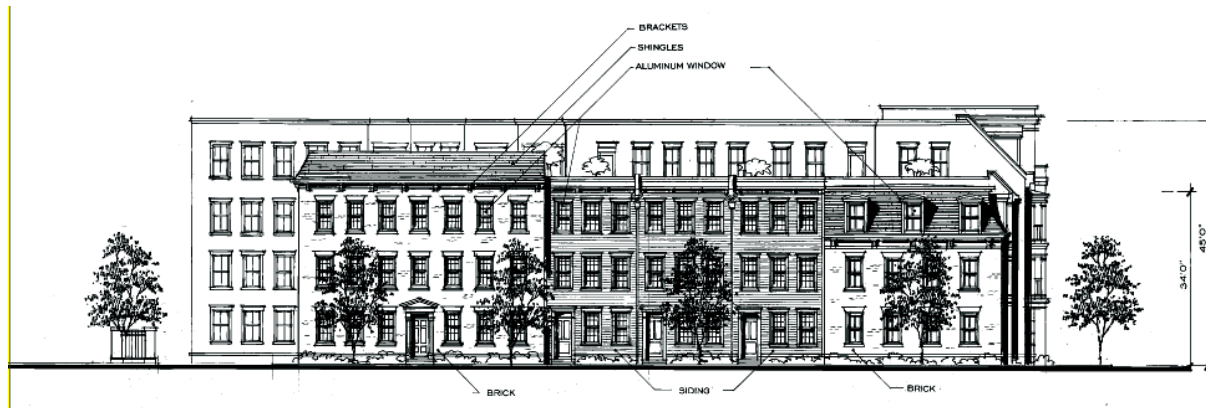
E. Fayette Street Description:

The Fayette Street elevation is the shortest (132.5 feet) and is intended to be lower and smaller in scale in response to the buildings on the west side of the 200 block of Fayette Street and the generally smaller scale of the Parker-Gray District. In addition, the entire elevation is set back from the sidewalk by approximately 15 feet to recall the front yards that are provided for many houses of the District, such as the row of houses in the 400 block of North West Street.



West Street Townhomes

It is staff’s understanding that the areas in front of the “buildings” composing the elevation will be treated as individual front yards. The elevation starts at the south end with the secondary facade of the corner house segment and continues to the north with a row of three, three story frame houses and a large brick house with hip roof.



Applicant’s Proposed Fayette Street Elevation

Corner House Segment

This segment is treated as the secondary facade of the mansard roofed detached house at the west end of the Cameron Street elevation. It is similar to the Cameron Street elevation but has four bays rather than five and does not have an entrance. Three dormers light the full-height mansard to provide a third story.

Three Story Rowhouses

To the north of the corner house segment is a group of three identical three-story rowhouses. These are recessed approximately 1 foot back from the face of the corner house segment to the south and seven-bay townhouse segment to the north. The houses are shown as being clad in “siding,” giving them the appearance of frame houses. They each have three bays with a door in the left (north) bay on the first story and identical double-hung, multi-light, windows in all other bays. They appear to terminate in a bracketed cornice supporting a shallow half-mansard roof.

Seven-Bay Townhouse Segment

At seven bays, this segment is the widest of the “house” type segments. It is brick with a shingled hip roof which turns the corner to extend along the north facade. It has a pedimented entrance flanked by pilasters in the center bay on the first story. All other bays have identical double-hung, multi-light windows.

West Elevation

The west elevation of the fourth story will rise above the three-story section fronting Fayette Street. It is not, however, expected to be prominent in the perception of the building. It will be located at a substantial distance from the Fayette Street elevation. The closest four-story segment will be approximately 40 feet back from the face of the three-story rowhouse segment. The west wall of the northern wing of the building along Henry Street will be set approximately 184 feet back from the face of the building on Fayette Street. The applicant has prepared a sight line study which demonstrates that the fourth story will not be readily visible when looking east from the intersection of Fayette and Cameron Streets. The elevation drawings indicate that this facade will be treated simply with highly regular fenestration and that there will be some modulation of the west wall of the Henry Street wing through the use of shallow setbacks.

F. Fayette Street Staff Recommendations:

Staff believes the Fayette Street facade is generally well resolved in mass, scale and architectural character, except for the facade on the northern portion of the building. At seven bays wide the townhouse is at least two bays wider than the grander houses of this style in Alexandria. Staff is recommending that this building be designed as a four-bay townhouse with an additive element that is setback approximately 2 feet as generally depicted in Exhibit D. The roof for the additive element should be different than the main body of the house and should also be a different material from the brick main block, such as wood. In addition, staff does not believe the 1 foot setback currently shown for the three townhouses is sufficient and should be increased to at least 2 feet.

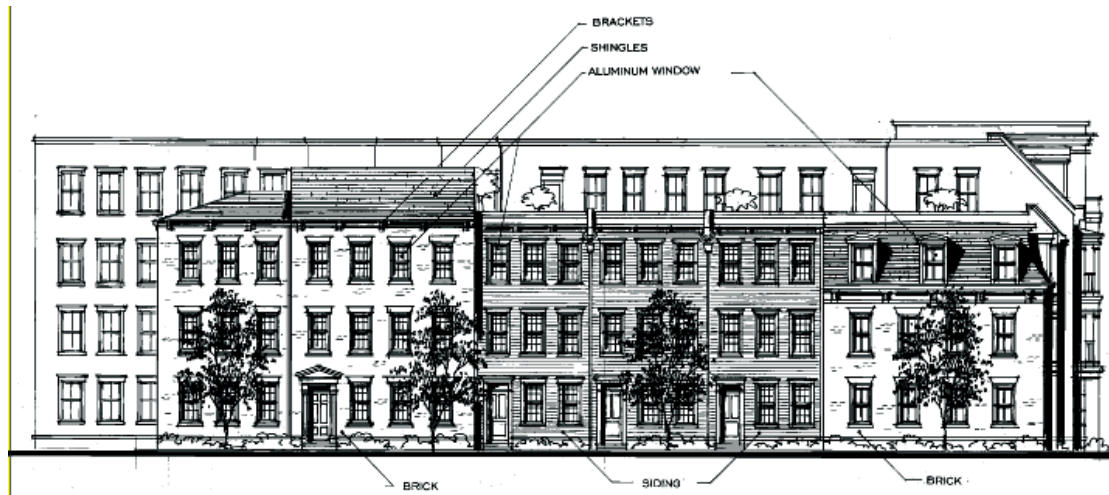


Exhibit D

VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends approval of the conceptual application subject to the following:

Cameron Street

1. The apartment segment of the building on the corner of Cameron Street and Henry Street shall be revised to appear as a three-story building by eliminating units on the fourth floor as generally depicted in *Attachment # 1*.
2. The three rowhouses on Cameron Street shall be setback 2-4 feet from the adjoining apartment building; and the architectural hyphen shall be setback as generally depicted in *Attachment # 1*.
3. The architectural hyphen shall be revised to have a more authentic appearance. The roof of the hyphen shall be changed to a flat roof and the roof of the balcony on the third floor shall be eliminated. The open porch and balcony element shall begin at the first level with one additional covered balcony on the second floor and an open balcony at the third floor; the face of the balcony and porch elements shall not project forward past the adjacent building faces. The exterior wall behind the porch or balconies shall be recessed a minimum of 4 feet from the front of the balconies.
4. The fourth-floor dormer/balconies for the rowhouses on Cameron Street shall be revised to be enclosed with windows to be true dormer windows.
5. The two-story bay/balconies for the three rowhouses on Cameron Street shall be enclosed with windows to be more typical Queen Anne type bays.
6. The architectural elements above the entrance porch for the apartment segment shall be simplified.

Henry Street:

7. The apartment segment on the corner of Cameron Street and Henry Street shall be revised to appear as a three-story building by eliminating units on the fourth floor as generally depicted in *Attachment # 2*.
8. The roof for the architectural hyphen shall be lowered to its least possible height while accommodating the egress stair from the fourth floor. The first floor shall be treated as a porch element and not as a masonry wall.
9. The architectural elements above the entrance porch for the northernmost townhouse shall be simplified.

Fayette Street:

10. The northern townhouse element shall be revised to be a four-bay townhouse with an additive element as generally depicted in *Attachment # 3*. The roof for the four-bay element shall be a hipped roof.
11. The three central rowhouses shall be recessed 2 feet from the adjoining buildings.

Overall:

12. The northern elevation shall provide window fenestration and materials comparable to the style of each unit in the front and side of the building.
13. First floor door shall be fully operational for each unit.