

Docket Item #6
BAR CASE #2004-0142

BAR Meeting
July 28, 2004

ISSUE: Replacement wall/fence
APPLICANT: Linda Lewis
LOCATION: 315 North Payne 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 north and south lines of the replacement wall and fence are pulled in to align with the north and south side property lines;
2. That the encroachment ordinance is approved by City Council; and,
3. That the plans for the front stoop of the house are revised and approved by Staff prior to construction.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the existing brick retaining wall and chain link fence with a new brick wall and decorative metal fence. As shown on the plans, the new wall will be on the same footprint as the existing wall and will be 4.5' high. The proposed brick is a variegated red brick ("Smithsonian" by Boaral Bricks). The location of the steps from sidewalk to front yard will be shifted slightly to the north to align with the front door. The wall to either side of the steps will be curved and the steps will flare out at the bottom. The steps will be brick. A curved handrail will be located on the wall on either side of the steps. The new 3.5' high fence will be metal with a black finish. It will have pickets and a row of rings at the top and bottom rails. The fence extends across the front (west) side of the property, with a gate at the top of the stairs, and back along the north and south sides to meet the front edge of the house on the north side and an existing fence on the south side.

In addition, the applicant is seeking approval for an alteration of the stoop at the front door of the two story frame house. The existing stoop is a simple rectangular two-step stoop of brick. The proposed stoop is also brick with two steps, but is circular in form and extends well beyond the present stoop, wrapping the front corner of the house.

II. HISTORY:

The 1877 Hopkins Atlas shows a building on or near the subject property. The building shown on that map has an almost square footprint. It is possible that this early building is at the core of the free-standing, two story, frame house with rectangular footprint that exists today at 315 North Payne Street. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas does not cover this area of the city until 1902. The 1902 map shows a house with a similar footprint to the present historic portion of the house. This footprint was expanded to the south sometime between 1931 and 1941. In 1992, the Board of Architectural Review approved various alterations at 315 North Payne Street, including replacement of the existing aluminum siding with wood siding and a handrail to be located alongside the steps in the retaining wall (BAR Case #92-37PG, 10/28/1991). More recently, in 2003, the Board approved demolition/capsulation and a new rear addition (BAR Case #s 2003-0015 & 2003-0016, 3/26/2003). That addition is nearing completion.

The date of the existing brick retaining wall and chain link fence is unknown, but probably is mid-20th century.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alteration complies with the zoning ordinance requirements. Section 7-202(A)(1)

of the zoning ordinance permits in any required yard open fences which do not exceed 3.5 feet in height. The height of the retaining wall is not included in the measurement of fence height.

The existing retaining wall and fence extend approximately 6' beyond the front (west) property line into the City right-of-way. In addition, the north and south sides of the wall and fence are both several inches off of the side property lines. Staff could not locate any evidence of a prior encroachment approval. Several other properties on the block face extend varying amounts into City right-of-way, though none as far as 315 North Payne Street. The applicant is requesting approval of a replacement wall on the footprint of the existing wall and therefore must obtain approval of the encroachment from City Council prior to obtaining a building permit. The Departments of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services will support an application for encroachment which maintains the status quo at the front (west), but is aligned with the property lines on the north and south sides.

Staff believes the proposed replacement wall and fence are acceptable. While the proposed curved brick wall, flaring steps and ornamental metal fence and gate are somewhat more ornate than is warranted for this simple vernacular house, it will have a more historical appearance than the existing wall topped with a chain link fence.

Staff questions the appropriateness of the proposed replacement stoop. The circular stoop which wraps the corner of the house is highly unusual and not historically appropriate for a house of this period and type. Staff would prefer to see a simple rectangular stoop as currently exists or one which somehow incorporates curving elements but is not so extreme as that proposed.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the north and south lines of the replacement wall and fence are pulled in to align with the north and south side property lines;
2. That the encroachment ordinance is approved by City Council; and,
3. That the plans for the front stoop of the house are revised and approved by Staff prior to construction.

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 Construction permits are required for this project.

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”

Transportation and Environmental Services:

“The existing retaining wall and fence encroach upon the city right of way as do several other properties in the immediate neighborhood. T&ES has no wish to disturb the status quo. However, T&ES will not approve a building permit for the replacement of the wall/fencing unless the applicant obtains a formal Encroachment to legitimize the proposed improvements. T&ES would support such an application.”