

Docket Item #5
BAR CASE# 2005-00052

BAR Meeting
March 23, 2005

ISSUE: Demolition
APPLICANT: Darrell Jones
LOCATION: 1018 Queen Street
ZONE: CL/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish as submitted.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish for the removal of the entire roof structure of the existing two story frame house and for demolition and capsulation at a number of locations on the rear (south) and east side facades. The roof structure is being removed to allow the ceiling heights to be raised throughout the house. The existing ceiling heights in the rear portion of the house are approximately 7', a height the applicant finds unlivable. The new roof structure will allow ceilings of at least 8' throughout. The applicant also intends to remove all interior walls and floors within the exterior shell to facilitate the raising of the ceilings. As this work is on the interior, it is not under the Board's purview.

All exterior walls will be retained in place. However, the applicant also proposes a number of alterations to openings on the rear (south) and east side facades which will entail both demolition and capsulation of the existing walls. The work on the rear (south) facade is limited to the first story where a long rectangular window is to be replaced with a new window that is both wider and shorter. The work on the east side facade is more extensive and involves considerable rearrangement of the location of five windows and a door on the first and second stories.

The property is visible from the public alley at the rear as well as from Queen Street. The existing rear fence largely obscures views of the first story of the rear (south) facade and the east side of the house. This fence will be replaced with a 6' high solid wood fence. The existing roof is not visible from Queen Street as it is located behind the Italianate cornice. It is only minimally visible from the rear.



Figure 1 Existing north elevation



Figure 2 Existing south elevation

II. HISTORY:

The date of construction for the two story, detached frame house is somewhat uncertain, although it almost certainly predates 1901. There appears to have been a building in the vicinity of 1018 Queen Street as early as 1877. However the building shown on the 1877 Hopkins Atlas and subsequent 1891 and 1896 Sanborn maps has a somewhat different footprint from the existing building. Not until 1901 does the Sanborn map show a building with the same footprint as the existing, including the rear ell and one story front porch. The flat roofed house with Italianate cornice is typical of houses built in Alexandria from the 1870s through the 1910s.

On November 10, 2004, the Board approved the demolition of the one story front porch at the front of the house and the one story cinderblock shed in the rear yard (BAR Case #2005-0238).

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, Sec. 10-205(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

In the opinion of Staff, criteria #s 4 & 6 are applicable. The proposed demolition of the entire roof structure represents a significant loss of the original fabric of the historic house. In addition, while inconvenient for the applicant, the low roof height is typical of many of Alexandria's historic houses. It is particularly characteristic of the historic housing stock of the Parker-Gray District. The district, which was home to a largely working class population, is characterized by the generally small scale of its buildings. On the other hand, Staff does not believe the limited demolition/capsulation requested for the rear (south) and east side facades would rise to the level of any of the above criteria.

The *Design Guidelines* state that “[t]he Boards are extremely conscious of the need to preserve the existing building resources of the historic districts” and that “generally speaking, there must be a compelling reason for the demolition, either in whole or in part” (Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 2). On the other hand, the *Guidelines* state that “the Boards are also sympathetic to the needs of building owners to make contemporary use of a property”

(Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 1).

The applicant maintains that the requested demolition is necessary to his use of the property. Staff notes that Parker-Gray Board has approved other instances of demolition and/or capsulation of the roof structure of historic houses: at 512 North Alfred Street for a new third story (BAR Case #2002-0282 & 0283, 11/18/2002) and at 516 North Alfred Street to provide a higher ceiling height (BAR Case #2002-0237 & 238, 3/5/2003). In both these cases, the original roofline was readily visible from the public right-of-way and the new roof is not only higher, but different in form.

Staff is willing to accept the proposed demolition of the roof only because this element of the house is largely unseen by the public. The existing flat roof is hidden from view on Queen Street by the Italiante cornice at the front of the house. There is a narrow public alley at the rear of the house, running between Henry and Patrick streets, but it appears to be used only by residents of the block. Even when viewed from the rear, the existing roof is not readily visible, due to its low slope. The proposed new flat roof will not significantly alter the perception of the house. Staff is not particularly concerned with the limited demolition/capsulation proposed for the rear (south) and east side facades as these are secondary facades and the areas where the work will occur are not readily visible.

Staff has worked with the applicant at some length to arrive at the current proposal. At one point, the applicant was proposing to leave only the front facade standing, and to construct an entirely new house on the same footprint behind the facade. Thus, as substantial as it is, the current demolition request is a considerable improvement over the previous proposal.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff reluctantly recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish as submitted.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”

Alexandria Archeology:

F-1 Tax records indicate that free African American households were located on this street face in 1810, 1830 and 1850; the block was part of the African American neighborhood known as Uptown. During the Civil War, the area at the corner of Patrick and Queen Streets on this block contained stables for the Mounted Provost Guards. The G.M. Hopkins insurance map indicates that a structure was present on this lot by 1877. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into military activities and residential life, perhaps relating to African Americans, in 19th-century Alexandria.

R-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.

R-2 The above statement must appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.