

Docket Item #5
BAR CASE #2004-0280
BAR Meeting
April 27, 2005

ISSUE: New residential building
APPLICANT: Anna Maria & Michael Dechert
LOCATION: 804 Pendleton Street
ZONE: RB Residential

BOARD ACTION, February 23, 2005: Deferred for restudy, 6-0.

On a motion by Mr. Zuckerkandel, seconded by Ms. Sample, the Board voted to defer the application for certificate of appropriateness of a new residential building for restudy. The vote on the motion was 6-0.

REASON: The Board agreed that the building had too much mass, particularly as seen from the east and west sides. Most felt the height was too great and needed to be reduced. All agreed that the house as proposed was out of scale for the site. Several Board members complemented the applicant for the design of the front facade and on the courtyard plan, which lessens the impact of the long side wall on the neighbors to the east. The Board encouraged the applicant to be respectful of the architectural character of the neighborhood. The Board encouraged the applicant to work with his neighbors to resolve the design and encroachment issues. Specific suggestions made by the Board included the following:

- Reduce overall height and mass to achieve a more appropriate scale;
- Reduce perceived mass as seen from the sides to achieve a more appropriate scale;
- Use a gable rather than a mansard;
- Use a sloping roof;
- Eliminate the dormers;
- Eliminate or reduce the exposed basement and use light wells instead;
- Use a more traditional dog leg footprint;
- Use siding rather than brick to give a lighter feel;
- Break up the two story inset panel on the west side;
- Reduce the number of inset panels and/or use some other means of relief for the exposed walls;

Ms. Kelley questioned code issues concerning the width of the rear door and stairs and requested more detailed drawings or cut sheets for the railings and skylights. Mr. Cromley recommended that the applicant consider paving the alley alongside 806 Pendleton Street to minimize damage

during construction.

SPEAKERS: Michael Dechert, applicant, spoke in support. He explained that there was great variety in size in the district and a number of buildings of similar scale. He described Pendleton Street as a street in evolution and his design as one that sought to meld various elements and ages. He explained that the basement was to house his home studio and that the attic was to serve as a book storage area, and thus he sought to get natural light into these areas. He expressed a willingness to consider eliminating the dormers, retaining the tree in rear yard and working with neighbors on construction and encroachment issues. He read into the record letters of support from Mr. and Mrs. Hendershot of 526 North Columbus Street and Mr. Mabudian, owner of 809 Pendleton Street.

Bob Griffiths, homeowner at 802 Pendleton Street, spoke in opposition. He felt the proposed house was too tall and out of scale for the street. He expressed concerns about the existing fences along the east property line and the maple tree in the rear yard of 804 Pendleton Street.

Deborah Plunkett, homeowner at 534 North Columbus Street, spoke in opposition. She expressed concern over the size of the proposed house and impacts on privacy at 534 North Columbus Street. She questioned how the house as designed could meet zoning requirements for FAR.

Mary McMillian, homeowner at 530 North Columbus Street, spoke in opposition. She spoke of the history of the neighborhood and the 500 block of North Columbus Street in particular. She asked that the applicant honor and recognize the simplicity and basic character of the neighborhood in his design. She encouraged the applicant and neighbors to build on the existing spirit of community by working together to achieve a design that was pleasing to all.

Joe Fitzgerald, homeowner at 532 North Columbus Street, spoke in opposition. He expressed concerns about his fence and shed which extend over or to the property line with 804 Pendleton Street. He felt the massiveness of the house was uncharacteristic of the neighborhood and noted that it would be visible from many directions.

Anton Scheffer, owner of 806 & 808 Pendleton Street, spoke in support. He felt the design was elegant and classy. He believed the side elevations were appropriate and felt that the applicant and he would be able to work out issues of flashing. However, he was concerned about how the alleys alongside his properties would fare during construction. He asked that the city pave the 12' alley.

Jannine Hazel, Code Enforcement, explained that the alleys were the responsibility of T & ES not Code Enforcement.

Wanda Carter, homeowner at 221 North West Street, spoke in support. She explained that she and her sister had built a similar house in 1996 and faced a similar situation. She expressed her belief that the house had worked out well and wished the applicant well.

****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.

UPDATE: The applicant has revised the plans to attempt to meet the concerns expressed at the February 23, 2005 meeting. The most significant alterations address the concerns about the mass, height and scale of the house. The applicant has maintained the original concept of two blocks linked by a hyphen but has altered the footprint to create longer and narrower block at the rear. The block at the rear of the house has been pulled back from the east side property line by 3' and extends 5' further to the rear of the property. The house remains a two story house with full third story attic and raised basement, but the overall height of the house has been lowered by 1'4" and the roof form has been changed to a full mansard on all sides.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the proposed new single family house to reduce the overall height. Alternatively, if the Board decides to approve the project, the following conditions should be included as part of the approval:

1. The following statements must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:

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.

The applicant should not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

2. A PLOT PLAN showing all improvements and alterations to the site must be approved by T & ES prior to issuance of a building permit.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new single family house to be constructed on the 23.42' wide by 100' long lot at 804 Pendleton Street. The lot is the only undeveloped parcel on the blockface. To the left of the lot is the two story frame house at 802 Pendleton Street. Although rather diminutive in size, 802 Pendleton Street has an usually wide street elevation of 5 bays. To the right of the lot is a pair of very small two story frame houses, each only two bays wide.



Figure 1 - 800 block of Pendleton

The proposed new house will be visible from Pendleton Street and the public alleys to the west and south of the property. In addition, the house will likely be visible in through-block views from Columbus and Alfred Streets.

The proposed house will extend across the entire width of the lot at the front and will be 31' high. It will be three stories with a raised basement and will be three bays wide. The house will have a “C”-shaped footprint with two unequal blocks at either end linked by a narrow hyphen on the west side of the property, creating a courtyard opening to the east side of the property. Thus, the east side of the house will be broken down into two masses while the west side will be a single 57' long wall with no penetrations. The house will be clad in brick on the north (front) and south (rear) facades, stucco and with some brick on the east and west sides. (A brick sample will be available for the Board’s inspection at the hearing). The roof will be clad in standing seam metal/Batten interne metal. There will be wood trim, wood windows, wood doors and round metal down spouts and half round metal gutters. The front windows will have true divided lights, while the rear and side windows will be “not real divided light.” In a previous conversation with the applicant he indicated that the windows would have fixed exterior grids. The window sills and lintels will be brick soldier courses.

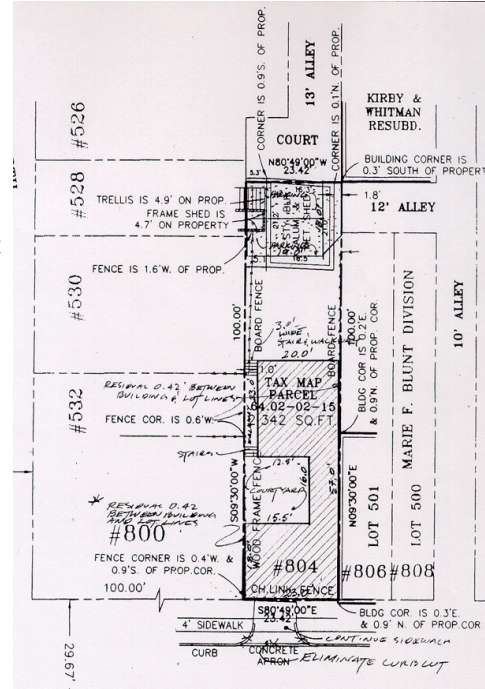


Figure 2 Proposed site plan

The front (north) elevation will appear as a two story house with a full height mansard roof and raised basement. The front door will be on the right side of the elevation at street level. The elevation shows a six-panel door while the door detail shows a four-panel door set within a heavy door surround with a rectangular transom and an oculus window above. A globe shaped light fixture will be located to the left of the door. A single step brick stoop will lead to the door. There will be two four-light windows to the left of the door lighting the basement level, which will be just under 4' above grade in height. The first story will have two two-over-two windows to the left of the door. These windows will be approximately 5.5' in height. The window height will slightly less in the second story where there will be three evenly spaced two-over-two windows.

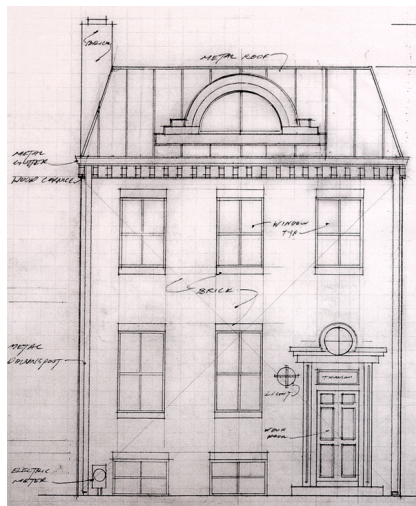


Figure 3 Proposed north (front) elevation

There will be a bracketed wood cornice at the base of the metal roof. No detail drawings were provided for the cornice. The third or attic story will have a single large semicircular window divided into two lights in a decorative frame constructed of metal and wood. There will be a gutter across the front and downspouts at either corner. The electrical meter will be located just above grade at the right side of the front elevation.

The front elevation differs from the prior submission in several respects. The overall height is 1'4" lower due to a lower third story and smaller cornice. The first story windows are shorter than in the previous iteration and thus closer in size to the second story windows. The basement windows are now at grade rather than raised slightly above with exposed sills. As mentioned above, the cornice is smaller and simpler. The roof now is a true mansard, with sloping sides, rather than the faux cornice of the previous design. Instead of three small gabled dormers there is now one large semi-circular dormer.



Figure 4 Previous north elevation

The 57' long west elevation will be partially obscured by the adjacent houses at 806 and 808 Pendleton Street. The attic level and the rear 17' of the proposed house will extend beyond the neighboring houses at 806 and 808 Pendleton Street and will be visible in oblique views from Pendleton Street and the alley. It may also be partially visible from Alfred Street. The wall will be stucco with brick wrapping the corners. Third story will consist of the two mansards on the front and rear blocks linked by the lower hypen section, also treated as a mansard. The sides of the attic story dormers will be visible at either end, clad in metal roofing. There will be a gutter and fascia board at the base of the roof running the length of the west elevation.

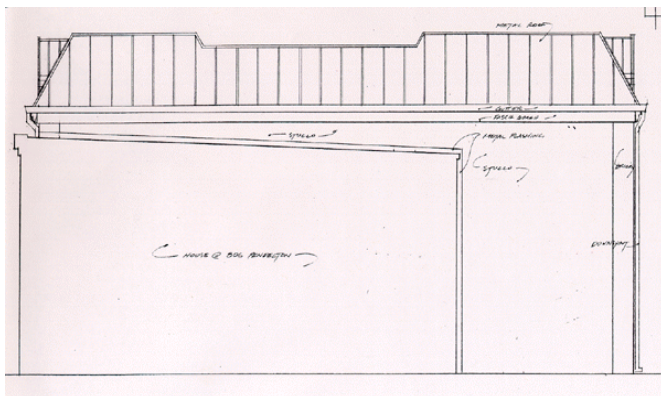


Figure 5 Proposed west elevation

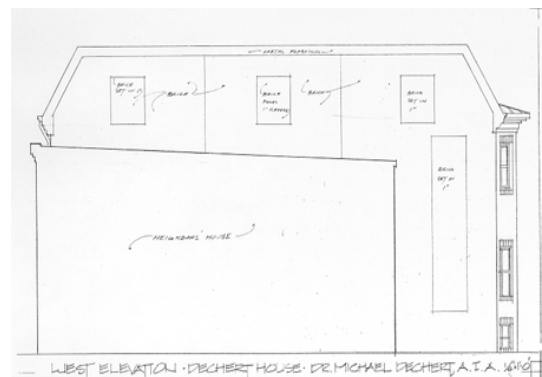


Figure 6 Previous west elevation

This elevation is now 1' 4" lower and 5' longer than previously. It is no longer entirely brick, but mostly stucco with a strip of brick at either end. The inset panels have been eliminated. The roofline now consists of three mansard forms rather than a flat topped brick wall.

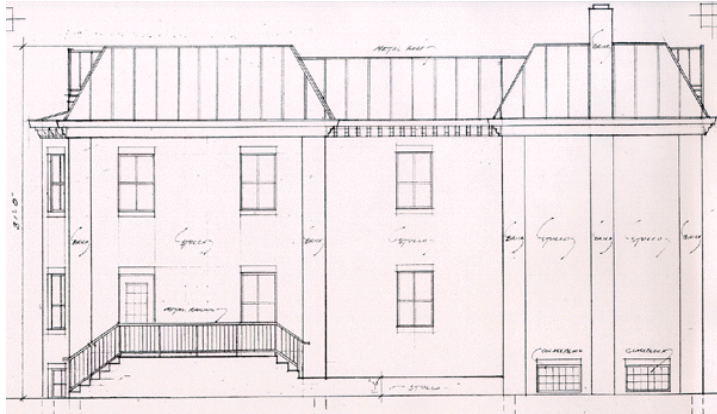


Figure 7 Proposed east elevation

As described above, the east elevation is divided into a front and rear block with central courtyard and hyphen beyond. The east elevation will be visible in oblique views from Pendleton Street and may be visible in through-block views from Columbus Street. The 18' long front block will be located on the east property line. The wall will be stucco with brick strips defining the corners and, the location of the chimney at the center of the block. The only openings on the east elevation of the front block are two windows filled with fire rated glass block at the basement level. The third story will consist of a full mansard roof resting on a simple cornice. The side of the attic story dormer will be visible beyond.

The rear block will be 23' long and will be located 3' from the property line allowing it to have penetrations. Like the front block, the wall will be stucco with brick strips defining the corners. A 3 1/2' high stoop will run across the face of the rear block giving access to a side door and leading to the center courtyard. The stoop will have a metal railing and will be clad in stucco. There will be a multi-light door on the left side in the first story and a two-over-two window in the right side. There will be two two-over-two windows in the second story, aligned with the openings below. The third story will consist of a full mansard roof resting on a simple cornice. The side of the attic story dormer will be visible beyond.

The hyphen section will stucco walls and will have a two-over-two window centered in the first and second stories. It too will have a mansard roof, but the cornice here will have brackets like that in front. The interior walls (south and north) facing on the courtyard are not expected to be visible from the public right-of-way. However, the applicant has provided drawing for the courtyard elevation south. It will be clad in stucco and will have a multilight french door centered in the first story and a two-over-two window directly above it in the second. There will be a skylight in the mansard roof and the mansard will be supported by a bracketed cornice.

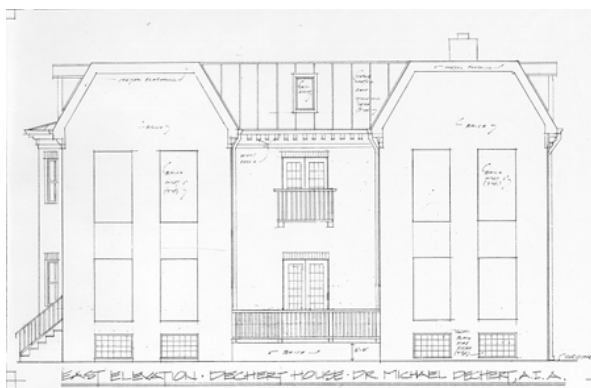


Figure 8 Previous east elevation

The east elevation has changed considerably from the previous design. In addition to the lowered height and the use of a full mansard for the third story, the rear block has been pushed back from the east property line by 3' and extended to the rear by 5'. As a result of the removal from the property line, the rear block can now have opening in accordance with the building code. There are now three windows and a door where there was a blank facade. The hyphen now has windows where it previously had french doors.

The patio has been lowered by 6" so that it is now 1'6" above grade. The east facing skylight on the hypen roof has been eliminated.

The south (rear) elevation will be visible from the alleys to the south and west and may be visible in through block views. The south elevation will appear as a two story house with a full height mansard roof and raised basement. There will be a two story, angled bay on the right side of the elevation. To the right of the bay there will be the steps leading to the stoop that runs along the east side of the rear block. The bay will have four-light windows in each face on the basement level and narrow two-over-two windows on the first and second stories. The bay will have a wood cornice and metal roof. The left side of the south elevation will have a multi pane door leading to the basement on the left and a four-light basement window on the right. The door will have an oculus window above. There will be a two-over-two window in the first story on the right side. There will be two two-over-two windows in the second story. The third or attic story will have a single large semicircular window divided into two lights in a decorative frame constructed of metal and wood, like that at the front. The metal clad mansard roof will terminate in a wood cornice with brackets. A gutter will run across the rear elevation and a downspout will be located at the left corner.

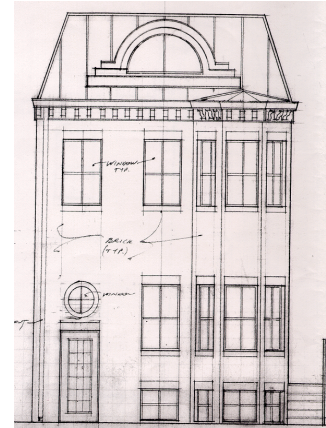


Figure 9 Proposed south (rear) elevation

This elevation has had a number of changes. It is 3' narrower than previously as it is set back from the east property line by 3'. The bay has shifted to the far right (east) side of the elevation. The fenestration changes include the elimination of the rear door exiting from the kitchen (now shifted to the east elevation), and of the french doors on the first story. The door to the basement level is now the only door. The two gabled dormers have been replaced by the single large dormer. The areaway for the HVAC units that was located at the base of the facade has been eliminated. The HVAC units are now located beneath the stoop on the east side.



Figure 10 Previous south (rear) elevation

The curb cut and concrete apron that currently exist at the front of 804 Pendleton Street will be removed and the sidewalk will be continued across the face of the property. The existing chain link fence will be removed. There will be two parking spaces provided in the rear of the lot in the vicinity of the shed which is to be demolished. The configuration of the parking spaces has changed from a V-shape in the previous submission to a simple rectangle. The applicant expects to return to the Board at another time with a request for fencing and a vehicular gate.

Staff notes that the plat shows numerous existing structures, including fences, a trellis and the house at 806 Pendleton Street that encroach on the property. The applicant is encouraged to discuss how each of these encroachments will be handled with the respective property owners

well in advance of construction. Staff is aware that the owner of 806 Pendleton Street and the applicant have begun discussions regarding drainage issues and how the buildings will be joined. As shown, the west wall of the proposed building will adjoin 806 Pendleton Street along its east wall. This condition is traditional throughout the densely built historic areas of Alexandria and is recommended from a maintenance standpoint.

II. HISTORY:

The lot was subdivided in the early twentieth century but never developed, except for the construction of a metal clad frame shed at the rear of the lot between 1921 and 1931. The Board first approved the prior owner's proposal to build a house on this lot at the hearing of September 23, 1998 (BAR Case #98-0144). The proposed dwelling was re-approved by the Board at the hearing of March 22, 2000 (BAR Case #2000-0033).

On September 22, 2004, the Board approved the installation of a 7' high board fence at 802 Pendleton Street (BAR Case #2004-0199).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed house complies with the zoning ordinance requirements. Code Enforcement initially had concerns relating to openings on the east side but is now satisfied that the design complies with code.

Staff does not know whether that applicant consulted with the neighboring property owners as strongly recommended by the Board at the previous meeting. Staff appreciates several minor alterations that appear to respond to the concerns of the east side neighbors, including: the elimination of the skylight and large french doors on the east facade of the hyphen, the lowering of the hyphen roof and the lowering of the courtyard. The inclusion of windows on the east elevation of the rear block may be viewed as the neighbors as a further intrusion on their privacy, but they also help to break up the mass of the rear block.

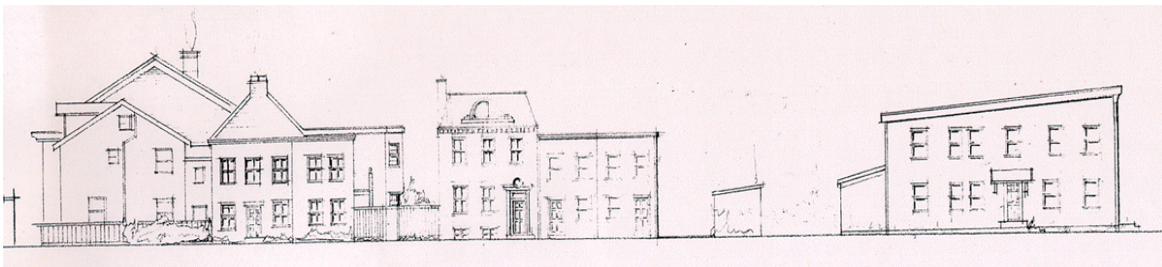


Figure 11 Proposed streetscape



Figure 12 Previous streetscape

While the revised design is an improvement over the previous design, Staff feels that more work is needed to ensure that the new building is compatible with the scale of the neighborhood. Specific aspects of the revised design are addressed in more detail below:

Height The height is lower, but only by 1'4". This reduction is helpful but not sufficient to bring the building into scale with the neighboring properties. As discussed in the previous Staff report, the immediately adjacent properties at 802, 806 and 808 Pendelton Street, which create the setting for the proposed building, are diminutive even by Parker-Gray standards. All are built on the ground with no foundation visible. None of the buildings are likely to be much over 20' in height. Similarly, the houses around the corner on the east side of the 500 block of Alfred Street are exceptionally narrow and not particularly tall.. Staff would like to see a more substantial reduction in height. One past recommendation that deserves consideration is stepping the building down toward the rear. This is the traditional pattern for the historic districts. If no further reductions can be made in the height of the third story, the applicant should eliminate or substantially reduce the exposed basement and use light wells instead.

Mass The use of a full mansard roof throughout appears to help to reduce the perception of mass. Not only does it provide a third story which slopes away from the face of the building but it breaks up the elevation by introducing another material at the third story. The impact of this alteration is particularly visible on the west elevation. The alterations to the footprint are less easy to assess. The applicant has maintained, and actually increased by a minimal amount, the gross square footage of the building on the first and second stories while shifting the dimensions of the rear block. Rather than the original almost square block, it is now a longer, narrower form. It seems that the impacts have simply shifted along with the dimensions. Now, while the rear block no longer presses up against the east property line, it is longer on both the east and west sides by 5'.

Material Similarly, Staff is of two minds about the change in the material of the east and west walls from brick to stucco. Staff assumes this alteration was in response to suggestions that a lighter material might help to reduce the perception of mass and that the use of brick trim on these elevations was to help in breaking up the mass. In general Staff does not like to see stucco and brick used in combination as it has a false appearance and is a convention more commonly seen in suburban construction. The applicant apparently is unwilling to consider using wood (or Hardiplank) to lighten the appearance, as was previously suggested. Alternatively, the applicant might consider using brick throughout, as in the previous submission, but painting it a lighter color. Staff recognizes that the painting previously unpainted masonry surfaces is discouraged in the historic districts (*Design Guidelines*, Paint Colors - Page 1). However, that prohibition is intended to apply more to historic buildings and to preserve red brick rows. Here, the building is new and the adjacent properties are frame or already painted masonry.

Staff has the following additional comments:

- The front door is now shown as a six panel and a four panel. Staff believes a four panel door is more appropriate to the nouveau Empire appearance of the house and works better with the surround.

- The dormer windows appear somewhat overscaled;
- Staff would prefer the use of stone, wood or cast stone lintels to the proposed soldier course sills and lintels, but will not object to their use here.
- The side and rear windows are described as having applied grids or as being “not real divided lights.” The *Design Guidelines* recommend the use of true divided light windows, but allow the use of windows with fixed muntins on rear elevations with minimal visibility from the public right-of-way. If applied muntins are used, they should be fixed and raised. Flat muntins and snap in muntins are discouraged (Windows - page 2).
- No details were given for the proposed skylights. Staff notes that the *Design Guidelines* recommend that skylights have integral shades to prevent light seepage at nighttime (Skylights - page 2).
- Specification sheets should be provided for the windows, doors skylights, railing and roofing material.
- A detail drawing should be provided for the dormer window surround.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the proposed new single family house to further reduce the overall height. Alternatively, if the Board decides to approve the project, Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archeology and Transportation & Environmental Services and recommends that they be included as a condition of the approval.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The proposed project contains door and window openings along the interior walkway which is located within 3 feet of the interior lot line. This condition is not in compliance with C-1 below. Glass block is also shown along the interior property line and is in conflict with C-1 below.

- F-2 Basement areas shall comply with emergency escape provisions of the USBC for habitable spaces.

- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance.

- C-2 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.

- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.

- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.

- C-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-7 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

- C-8 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

- C-9 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office

prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Historic Alexandria:

The oculus design is replicated throughout the design. Not sure if this is appropriate for the period of this reproduction building.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Tax records indicate the presence of a free African American household in the vicinity of this property in 1830. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic life, perhaps relating to African Americans, during the 19th century.
- 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 applicant should not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
- R-3 The above statements must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- R-1 A PLOT PLAN showing all improvements and alterations to the site must be approved by T&ES prior to issuance of a building permit.
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity.
- R-3 An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet.
- C-1 Pay sanitary sewer tap fee prior to issuance of a building permit.(Sec. 5-6-25)
- C-2 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES.(Sec. 5-3-61)