

Docket Item #11
BAR CASE# 2005-00105

BAR Meeting
May 25, 2005

ISSUE: Concept Approval - alterations and alterations

APPLICANT: William Cromley

LOCATION: 1210 Queen Street

ZONE: CRMU-M/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends concept approval with the following conditions:

- 1) That the roof of the addition be flat;
- 2) That there be no thru-wall air conditioning units;
- 3) That the HVAC units be located on the west side of the third story roof deck;
- 4) That the front elevation of the third story addition be symmetrical and,
- 5) That the west elevation be thoughtfully designed to provide visual relief for the long wall.

NOTE: Docket item #10 must be approved before this docket item can be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting concept approval of alterations and a third story addition in order to adaptively reuse the early 20th century warehouse structure as an 8-unit residential condominium. The existing flat roofed, brick building has two stories above a partially exposed basement and measures 30' wide by 100' long. The applicant proposes to add a third story with a smaller footprint centered over the existing second story. The exterior of the existing building will not change significantly in appearance except that it will be renovated with new windows and doors and repointed masonry.

BAR concept approval is required when the proposal requires Planning Commission review for a Special Use Permit (SUP) and when Planning and Zoning Staff determines that the proposal requires preliminary review because the design would be a principal determining factor in the ultimate approval by other bodies. In addition to the BAR approval currently requested, the proposed project will require:

1. SUP#2005-0049 - Approval by Planning Commission and City Council of a Special Use permit with site plan, a request to increase the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for a building addition and a parking reduction because of the change from commercial to residential use.
2. Approval by BAR of Certificate of Appropriateness for final design of alterations and addition.

The SUP case is scheduled for the June 7, 2005 Planning Commission Docket and for the June 21, 2005 City Council Docket. The BAR review of the final design will follow the Council approval of the Special Use Permit.

The present case, BAR conceptual approval, requires that the Board make findings *based on the appropriateness of scale, mass and general architectural character*. Detailed design elements such as colors, window and door details, etc. will be considered when the applicant requests final approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness, if and when the project is approved by Planning Commission and Council.

Project Description

Alterations:

The exterior of the existing building will remain essentially unchanged. The exterior brick will be repointed as necessary. The existing two-over-two double hung wood windows, which are badly deteriorated, will be replaced with new two-over-two double hung windows. The existing doors, which are also deteriorated and largely non-original, will be replaced with half-glazed doors. The main entrance of the building will be shifted from the front to the center of the east side. Two existing windows on the east side will be lengthened to become doors and will be accessed by a small stoop with railing. The doors are shown as fully glazed and have a two light transom above. The existing front entrance will not be functional but will be accessed by stairs. The existing non-original stairway will be replaced by a new double sided stairway. The basement level opening to the right of the front door, which is currently bricked in, will be reopened to serve as a window. The existing basement level door to the left of the front door will be closed down to become a window and both basement windows will have window wells surrounded by railings. The existing basement level openings on the east elevation will be reopened and elongated to serve as windows for the basement units. Window wells will be constructed for each of these windows. The four wider openings on the east elevation appear to have served as freight doors. At least one of these has been altered to have two windows with wood panels below. All these openings will be doorways with a pair of half glazed, inward swinging doors and a metal railing on the exterior. The rear (south) elevation will have nine new windows inserted in the brick facade, three each in the basement, first and second stories. The windows are shown as two-over-two windows with flat arches. An exterior egress stairs will extend from ground to third story on the western portion of the rear elevation. The stairs will be covered and will have a footprint of 9.5' by 8'. The west elevation which is on the property line will be unchanged except that two bricked in openings will be redone with brick to match.

New addition:

The existing roof structure will be removed and rebuilt several feet lower. Thus the new third story addition built on the lower roof will be sunk down 3'6" below the top of the parapet. The addition will only add 5' to the existing height of the building, raising the total height from 27' to 32'. Its 84' long and 24' wide footprint will be centered on top of the second story and will be surrounded by a roof deck on all four sides. The existing parapet of the building will serve as the "railing" for the roof deck. The deck will have a depth of 8' at the front and back and 3' at the sides. The addition will have a flat roof supported by a projecting cornice. The front (north), east side and rear (south) elevations will be composed of a series of full-length windows and doors separated by pilasters. Staff understands from the applicant that the design of these elevations is still under development but that ultimately the intent is for the structure to have a light appearance with glazing the predominant architectural feature. The front elevation is shown as having five openings framed by three pilasters and having solid corners. The center opening has a multi-light window. The outer openings have sliding doors with two lights at the top. The east elevation has two sets of four multi-light windows framed by pilasters flanking a central section with three sliding doors. As on the front elevation, the sliding doors have two lights at the top. Again, the corners are treated as a solid rather than a void. The rear elevation is a mirror

image of the front. The west elevation has no openings and is shown with eight pilasters spaced in a way that reflects their arrangement on the east elevation of the addition. No materials have been provided for the project at this time. Materials will be reviewed as part of the final design approval.



Figure 1 - Front (north) elevation



Figure 2 - East side elevation



Figure 3 - Rear (south) elevation

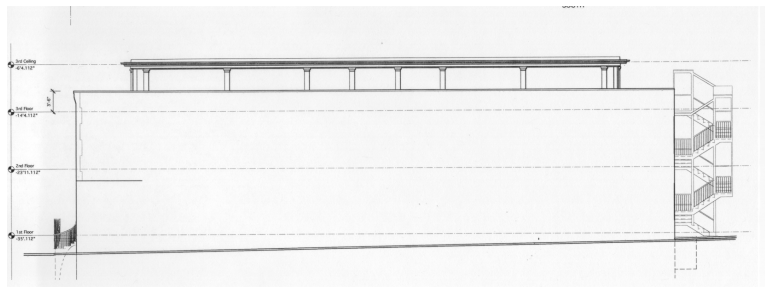


Figure 4 - West side elevation



ALEXANDRIA LAUNDRY
Figure 5 - Front perspective from Queen Street



Figure 6 - East side and front perspective from Fayette Street

building retains a high level of architectural integrity.

III. ANALYSIS:

The subject property is zoned CRMU-M, commercial residential mixed use medium. The applicant is requesting approval of a Development Special Use Permit to increase the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and to waive the required off-street parking to convert the building from commercial to residential use. The FAR increase and parking reduction are not matters before the Board of Architectural Review; they will be heard by the Planning Commission and the City Council.

Staff supports the reuse of this significant historic building and the sensitive renovation of the existing building. The building will be restored to close to its original appearance and condition. The few alterations made to existing openings are discreet and respectful of the original fenestration patterns and proportions. The new openings are confined to the rear, the least visible elevation.

In general, a rooftop addition is not a preferred approach for an addition to an historic building. Preferably, an addition is located in a less prominent location on a building, such as towards the rear, so as not to distract from or overwhelm the historic building. A highly visible rooftop addition can significantly alter the massing and proportions of the historic building. However, in this case, Staff believes the applicant has successfully minimized the impact of the addition in several ways:

- The addition is set back 3' from the sides and 8' from the front and rear of the existing building;
- The height of the addition is kept to a minimum and the addition set down into the existing building with the new, lower second story roof ;
- The flat roof of the addition lowers the profile and visibility of the addition; and,
- The design of the addition is as light as possible, consisting mostly of glazing with very little solid wall and the thinnest of members between the glazed areas.

In further support of the proposed rooftop addition, the applicant offers plentiful evidence that historic industrial and warehouse structures frequently had rooftop structures known as monitors, to provide ventilation and light to the floors below, and argues that the proposed addition is akin to a monitor and therefore an appropriate form for this warehouse building. Staff acknowledges that monitors were in common to industrial and warehouse buildings at the turn of the twentieth century, when this building was constructed. Staff notes that most monitors were not as large in proportion to the building they rested on as the proposed addition is. However, there are examples of large monitors similar in scale to that proposed. In addition, there are examples of rooftop additions, not meant as monitors, which, with time, have come to be considered historic and contributing to the significance of the original building.

What Staff believes is key here is whether this addition is respectful of the historic building, appropriate in design and compatible with the neighborhood. Staff believes it is. Because of its setbacks and the lightness of the design, the addition does not overwhelm the historic building. It

is respectful of the design of the original building without being replicative. Its rectangular form, flat roof and series of windows reflects the historic building. However, its setbacks and lighter design, with glazing rather than masonry predominating, serve to distinguish it from the historic building. The design of the addition, in as much as it can be determined at this stage, is simple and quiet, allowing the historic building to be visually dominant. In all these respects, the addition complies with the *Design Guidelines* for Additions to Commercial Buildings.

Staff believes the proposed plans for the building are compatible with the district. As noted above, the renovation of the building will restore a neighborhood landmark to its former prominence. Staff believes the proposed addition will be compatible with the district in terms of its design. The only issue in question is the added height. There is considerable variation in height in the square in which the property is located and the surrounding blocks. The heights in the square range from the approximately 12' high, one story commercial building immediately adjacent to the subject property at 1212 Queen Street to the three story residence at 1205 Cameron Street. The later was approved by the BAR in 2001 (BAR Case #2001-00048, 5/23/2001). The residential and commercial buildings across Queen Street from the subject property are two stories or two stories with lofts and raised foundations. However, the tallest of these, at 1217 -1221 Queen Street, are 34' in height from grade. These were approved by the BAR in 1998 (BAR Case #98-0030PG, 3/11/1998). The proposed third story addition at 1210 Queen Street will add another story and 5' in height to the existing two story building, bringing the total height to 32'. Thus, as proposed the building will be several feet lower than a number of buildings in the same square and across the street. Moreover, the additional story will be designed to minimize its visual prominence. Staff believes it will not overwhelm the neighboring buildings or be incompatible with the surrounding area which is characterized by a considerable diversity of building types, sizes and heights.

Staff notes that rooftop additions have been approved in both the historic districts. Within the Parker-Gray Historic District, the Board recently approved a third story addition for a two story freestanding brick residence at 421 North Fayette Street (BAR Case #2005-00054 & 00055, 4/27/2005) and for a freestanding frame residence at 512 North Alfred Street (BAR Case #2002-00282 & 00283, 11/8/2003).

Staff does have some minor concerns:

Addition roof :

The applicant previously proposed a roof with a gentle barrel curve and continues to advocate for this form. Staff requested that the roof be flat to ensure that the addition was as unobtrusive and low as possible. Staff believes it is important that the roof remain flat.

HVAC mechanicals:

The plans submitted for BAR concept approval do not indicate how the building will be air conditioned. Staff believes through-the-wall units would be unacceptable. Staff assumes that individual central air conditioning systems will be installed for each condominium unit. Any HVAC condensing units must be located on the west side of the third story roof deck. Any other location would entail an unacceptable diminishment of open space. The units must not be visible

above the parapet.

Front elevation of addition:

Staff notes that the front elevation of the addition is slightly asymmetrical, with the two windows on the right smaller than those on the left and only one pilaster on the left where there are two on the right. Given the strictly symmetrical design of the historic building, Staff believes the front elevation of the addition must be symmetrical as well.

West elevation of addition:

This 86' long wall will be visible from numerous vantage points. Having no openings it has the potential to be oppressive. Staff is concerned that as much attention be given to this elevation as to the east elevation. The concept plans show pilasters arrayed along the facade. This device may prove to be adequate, but as shown it appears insufficient.

In conclusion, Staff believes the proposed concept is appropriate in its scale, mass and general architectural character.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends concept approval with the following conditions:

- 1) That the roof of the addition be flat;
- 2) That there be no thru-wall air conditioning units;
- 3) That the HVAC units be located on the west side of the third story roof deck;
- 4) That the front elevation of the third story addition be symmetrical and,
- 5) That the west elevation be thoughtfully designed to provide visual relief for the long wall.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- R-1 Prior to submission of the Final Site Plan #1, the developer shall provide a fire flow analysis by a certified licensed fire protection engineer to assure adequate water supply for the structure being considered.
- R-2 An automatic fire suppression system and monitored fire alarm system will be required for this structure. Provide location of fire department connection. FDC shall be within 100 feet of a fire hydrant as measured along the travelway.
- C-1 The building height must be kept under 50 feet or ladder truck access will be required.
- C-2 Several exterior walls are located within 5 feet of interior lot lines and shall have a minimum 1 hour fire rating without openings.
- C-3 This structure will be required to have handicap accessible units in accordance with Chapter 11 of the USBC. Provide information on the structure will comply with required exits, parking, and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- C-4 This project is a Change of use from F-1, Factory to R-2, Residential. A change of use and new Certificate of Occupancy is required..
- C-5 Before a building permit can be issued on any proposed future alterations, a certification is required from the owner or owner's agent that the building has been inspected by a licensed asbestos inspector for the presence of asbestos (USBC 112.1.4).
- C-6 A separate tap is required for the building fire service connection.
- C-7 A Certificate of occupancy shall be obtained prior to any occupancy of the building or portion thereof, in accordance with USBC 119.0.
- C-8 The developer shall provide a building code analysis with the following building code data on the plan: a) use group; b) number of stories; c) type of construction; d) floor area per floor ; e) fire protection plan.
- C-9 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-10 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-11 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-12 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-13 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-14 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.

Historic Alexandria:

“I think this is an interesting concept.”

Transportation and Environmental Services:

No comments.