

Docket Item # 5  
BAR CASE #2006-0117

BAR Meeting  
June 28, 2006

**ISSUE:** Demolition and Capsulation  
**APPLICANT:** Donald Walsh by John Savage  
**LOCATION:** 323 Buchanan Street  
**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

**\*\*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.

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting an approval of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate portions of the rear of 323 Buchanan Street for a one story addition. The addition will extend the full width of the rear facade on the first story, covering an original door and window and replacing the existing rear stoop.



**Figure 1** Existing rear elevation

The rear elevation is visible through the block views, particularly from Boyle Street. The lower portion of the rear elevation is screened by a 6' high fence.

**II. HISTORY:**

The semi-detached townhouse at 323 Buchanan Street was constructed circa 1944, according to building permit #3628-31, dated February 24, 1944. The townhouse was part of a development by Rayley Construction Corporation on Boyle, Buchanan and Princess Streets designed by the well-known Washington architect George Santmyers. The development included twelve pairs of houses and two rows of five houses.

George Santmyers (1889-1960), a Washington, D.C. native, was one of the most important architects of residential buildings in the Washington metropolitan area during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. He designed literally thousands of individual rowhouses in Washington, DC and hundreds of apartment buildings in Washington, D.C., and Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties. Santmyers was one of the principal architects for Harry Wardman as he developed residential complexes in numerous areas of the District of Columbia. In Alexandria he designed both apartment buildings and rowhouses in both of the historic districts as well as in other sections of the City.

The two-story, cinder block, brick-faced residence is typical of working class urban rowhouses of the period. The simple, flat roofed buildings in this development are embellished with restrained Colonial Revival detailing: projecting brick rowlock with dentils, brick quoins, and multi-light windows and doors. The house at 323 Buchanan Street is an end unit in a row of five houses.

The Board has previously approved demolition/capsulation at the rear of buildings within this development. Recent examples include the removal of deck and alteration of openings at 321 Buchanan Street and at 1618 Boyle Street (BAR Case #2002-017, 2/27/2002 and BAR Case #2003-0166, 7/23/2003) and the capsulation/demolition of the entire rear wall at 1610 Boyle Street for a two story rear addition (BAR Case #2002-0259, 10/23/2002).

**III. ANALYSIS:**

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, 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

Staff believes none of the above criteria are applicable in this case. The mid-20th century house at 323 Buchanan Street is of a type that is fairly ubiquitous and exhibits little design significance. The rear elevation, which will be affected by the proposed demolition/capsulation, is purely utilitarian in character, lacking any architectural embellishments or noteworthy design features.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application 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 be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Historic Alexandria:

Proposed plans seem appropriate, except for reduction of the second-story window on the rear facade which would alter the second-story fenestration of the entire row-house complex. It would be preferable to retain the original size window.

Alexandria Archaeology:

There is low potential for this project to disturb significant archaeological resources. No archaeological action is required.