

Docket Item #3
BAR CASE #2007-0089

BAR Meeting
May 23, 2007

ISSUE: After-the-fact alterations
APPLICANT: Catherine Murphy by Scott Mitchell
LOCATION: 529 North Alfred Street
ZONE: RB/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the synthetic trim on the front façade of the house be removed and replaced with wood trim;
2. That the applicant obtain a building permit for the exterior work including but not limited to the creation of a new opening and installation of a sliding door and full length window in the rear wall;
3. That the stockade fence be replaced with a wood flat board fence to be no higher than 6', located entirely on the subject property, and stained or painted; and,
4. That the above items be completed within one month of the approval.

****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: Docket item #2 must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval for alterations to the two story frame house at 529 North Alfred Street. The following description of work is based on the applicant's description and the limited "before" photographs available. The alterations include the following:

Front

Siding – The bricktex was removed to reveal wood siding underneath. The front façade had two widths of wood siding, both apparently original. The angled two story bay was clad in a fairly common width of bevel siding, probably with an approximately 4" reveal. The left side of the front façade with the entrance door and window above was clad in a narrower bevel siding, perhaps 2" in width. Staff assumes this was part of the original architectural intent. The original siding was replaced with new cedar siding, all in the same width, assumed to be approximately a 4" reveal.

Windows – The windows on the front appeared to have been the original wood windows with true divided lights. The three larger windows were two-over-two while the four smaller windows on the sides of the projecting bay were one-over-one. According to Mr. Mitchell, all the windows have been replaced with thermal glazed wood windows with true divided lights by Lincoln Windows. The configuration of the new front windows matches the previous windows.

Trim – The wood trim around the windows and at the corners of the projecting bay was replaced with new synthetic PVC type trim.

The new siding, trim and windows were painted.

Rear

Siding - The applicant did not provide any before renovation pictures of the rear. However, a photograph in the file of the neighboring property at 527 North Alfred Street shows a portion of the rear façade prior to the work. It appears to have been clad in wood siding with an approximately 4" reveal. The one story addition is assumed to have been painted cinderblock but there is no photograph showing it. The entire front and rear façade, including the cinderblock addition, are now clad in cedar siding. The new siding appears to have a similar reveal (approximately 4") to that which was on the rear prior to the renovation.

Windows – The photograph in the file of the neighboring property which shows a portion of the rear façade shows wood windows with a six-over-six configuration. These could be original as it was relatively common in this period to use old fashioned multi-light windows on the less important facades while using two-over-two or one-over-one on the front façade. According to Mr. Mitchell, all the windows have been replaced with thermal glazed wood windows with true divided lights by Lincoln Windows. The configuration of the new rear windows is two-over-two.

Alterations to rear wall of one story addition - The original single door and small window have been replaced by a large sliding door with fixed full length window. The material and manufacturer of the door and window is unknown.

Fence – A new 6' high stockade style wood fence was installed replacing an existing fence, which may also have been stockade. On April 22, 2007, at the request of Mr. Mitchell, Staff provided administrative approval to replace the inappropriate stockade fence with an appropriate board fence no higher than 6'. As of May 15, 2007, that work has not been undertaken and the stockade fence remains.

The front of the property is visible from Alfred Street. The rear of the property is visible from Pendleton Street and from the public alley behind the house. Views to the first story at the rear are limited by the 6' high fence.

II. HISTORY:

As discussed in docket item #2, the two story frame house at 529 North Alfred Street is an end unit in a row of 11 houses (509 through 529 North Alfred Street) which were constructed prior to 1902 and may date to the last decade of the 19th century. Over the years the house at 529 North Alfred Street underwent a number of alterations including residing the front in bricktex siding and “enclosing” the rear porch with cinderblock to create a one story rear addition. On October 19, 2005, the property was purchased by Rosemont LLC. BAR Staff approved a building permit for interior alterations only on March 3, 2006. The work exceeded the approval and included the above alterations to the exterior. Since the end of November 2006, when Staff became aware of the unapproved work, Staff has sought to bring the project to the Board for approval.

On January 24, 2007, the Board approved a permit to demolish and alterations for the neighboring property at 527 North Alfred Street (BAR Case #s 2006-00265 & 00266).

III. ANALYSIS:

The after the fact demolition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

While pleased that this formerly deteriorating historic property has been thoroughly renovated, Staff strongly objects to the fact that the Board was denied the opportunity to review and comment on the work prior to its completion.

In general, the project appears to be acceptable, however Staff would have recommended some changes to the project, if it had been provided the opportunity.

Siding – According to the *Design Guidelines*, a central tenet of the philosophy of historic preservation is that original historic fabric should be retained and repaired rather than replaced (Siding – Page 1). Staff did not have an opportunity to examine the siding to assess whether retention might have been possible. However, the photographs indicate that the siding on the front was deteriorated. The *Guidelines* also note that siding is one of the principal character defining elements of a building (Siding – Page 1). On the front, the two different sizes of siding appear to have been installed intentionally. This was probably intended to add variety and

interest to the main façade and reflects the Victorian love of variety in patterns and textures. If given the opportunity, Staff would have recommended retaining the two different siding types.

Staff reluctantly accepts the siding as installed. According to the applicant, wood replacement siding was used on both the front and rear. The type and width of the siding appears to match the larger size original siding.

Windows – As with siding, the *Design Guidelines* note the importance of windows as a character defining feature and urge their repair and retention whenever possible (Windows – Pages 1 & 2). Staff was not afforded an opportunity to examine the existing windows prior to their removal to determine if retention was possible. However, the photographs indicate that they were significantly deteriorated and Staff did allow the replacement of the original windows, also deteriorated, in the adjacent property at 527 North Alfred Street. The *Design Guidelines* state that the preferred window type is single glazed true divided light window (Windows – Page 2). According to the applicant the installed windows are true divided lights, with wood muntin bars extending from the outside through to the inside. However, the thermal glazing, with the two layers of glass separated by a significant space, gives them a very different appearance from a true divided light in a single glazed window. Regrettably, there is little if any difference between the appearance of these windows and a simulated divided light which has a spacer bar between the two layers of glass. Staff notes that the same windows were approved for 527 North Alfred Street (BAR Case # 2006-00266, January 24, 2007).

The configuration of the windows on the front matches that of the original. However, the six over six windows on the rear were replaced by two over two windows. While not duplicating the configuration of the previous and assumed original windows, the new windows do match the front and are a type used in the period of construction.

Staff reluctantly accepts the replacement windows. In the future, Staff would recommend that when true divided light windows are desired for an authentically historic appearance, the windows also have single glazing.

Trim – The *Design Guidelines* encourage the use of historically appropriate replacement materials, noting that incremental acceptance of non-historic materials “can result in the loss of the historical architectural appearance of the surviving fabric of the historic districts” (Replacement Materials). Staff objects to the use of synthetic trim on the front façade of the house and recommends that it be replaced wherever it was used on this highly accessible façade.

Alterations to rear wall of one story addition - Staff has no objection to these alterations. The addition dates from the mid-20th century and the alterations are compatible with the historic character of the house.

However, Staff notes that the alteration of a window or door opening requires a permit. This work was not included in the approved permit (BLD2006-00655, 3/3/2007). That permit was for interior work only and had this particular alteration, as well as all other exterior alterations, removed from the plans. Therefore, the applicant will need to obtain a building permit for this work.

Fence – The *Design Guidelines* clearly state that stockade type fences are not acceptable (Fences – Page 2). The applicant had administrative approval to replace the existing fence with a board on board wood fence no higher than 6’ and entirely on the subject property. As this has not yet been completed, Staff recommends that it be included as a condition of the approval.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the synthetic trim on the front façade of the house be removed and replaced with wood trim;
2. That the applicant obtain a building permit for the exterior work including but limited to the creation of a new opening and installation of a sliding door and full length window in the rear wall;
3. That the stockade fence be replaced with a wood flat board fence to be no higher than 6’, located entirely on the subject property, and stained or painted; and,
4. That the above items be completed within one month of the approval.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Additions and alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit (USBC 108.1). Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application (USBC 109.1).
- C-3 A Construction permit will be required for the proposed project.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Historic Alexandria:

No comments