

Docket Item # 3  
BAR CASE # 2007-0136

BAR Meeting  
October 24, 2007

**ISSUE:** Addition and Alterations

**APPLICANT:** Saharat Prompol

**LOCATION:** 419 North West Street

**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff again recommends deferral of the application for further restudy to address issues of mass, scale and architectural compatibility. However, should the Board approve the addition and alterations, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the following statement appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

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; and,

2. That Staff review and approve the proposed brick prior to construction.

**BOARD ACTION, SEPTEMBER 26, 2007:** The Board combined discussion of item # 6 & 7. On a motion by Mr. Meick, seconded by Mr. Lloyd, the Board voted to defer the application for restudy.

**REASON:** The Board agreed with the staff analysis that the design should be restudied to address issues of mass, scale and architectural compatibility. The Board felt that it would be necessary to reduce the size of the proposed addition to achieve compatibility with the existing house and neighboring buildings.

**SPEAKERS:** Ziad Demian, project architect, spoke in support.  
Saharat Prompol, applicant, spoke in support.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy to address issues of mass, scale and architectural compatibility. However, should the Board approve the addition and alterations, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the following statement appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

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; and,

2. That Staff review and approve the proposed brick prior to construction.

**\*\*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)

**Update:** The applicant has made modifications to the plans for alterations and an addition in response to the comments of the Board at the September 26, 2007 hearing. The alterations are as follows:

1. The size of the addition has been reduced from 2,958 sf to 2,765 sf –a total reduction of 193 sf.
2. The north exterior wall of the stair tower shifted by 2 feet from the property line.
3. The south exterior wall of the main addition shifted by 2 feet to the north to align with the footprint of the existing building.
4. The sloped roof of the main addition has been replaced by a flat roof and reduced in height from 30'-0" to 28'-9".
5. The height of the stair tower has been reduced from 27'9" to 27'3".

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

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a certificate of appropriateness for a new three story rear addition and alterations to the existing two story house.

Alterations

The main block of the existing house will be altered in two respects. First, the applicant proposes to add a brick parapet along the edge of the roof at the front (west) and north and south sides. The new brick will match the existing brick. The existing house is approximately 22' high at the front. With the parapet, the height will be raised to 24'. The parapet is intended to hide the HVAC units to be placed on the roof and to reduce the difference in height between the main block at the front and the proposed new addition behind it. Secondly, the applicant proposes to add a one story front porch. The porch will be offset from the north corner by approximately 2' and will extend to the south corner, where it will turn the corner and continue along the south side above the first story windows as an unsupported overhang projecting 2' from the face of the building. The porch will have a brick foundation, metal roof and simple wood posts and railing. The porch posts will be square section as will the pickets of the railing. The design of the porch is slightly altered from the previous design in that the roof is now flat rather than hipped.

Addition

The majority of the proposed new addition will be in the form of a rectangular block located directly behind the existing main block. This block will be the same width as the existing main block. This represents a reduction in width from the previous of 2' as the south wall of the addition projected beyond the existing in the previous design. A smaller rectangular block functioning as a stair tower will be located on the north side adjacent to both the existing main block and the new addition, projecting beyond their plane toward the north by 4'6". This represents a reduction in width of 2' as the stair tower extended to the north property line in the previous design. The third story of the addition will have a smaller footprint than the lower two levels and will have an open deck on the south side and a covered deck on the east side. The addition has a varied roofline composed of flat

roofs at various heights. Previously, the three story portion of the addition was under a roof which sloped up toward the rear. That roof had been 30' at the highest point, at the rear, and approximately 27'6" at the lowest point, a section on the south side at the front. The current design has a consistent roof height of 28'9". The stair tower on the north side was 27'9" in height and is now 27'3". The addition as currently proposed will increase the net floor area of the house from 1031 square feet to 2,765 sf. Previously, the net floor area had been 2958 square feet.

The addition will be clad in painted wood siding, wood panels and red brick. The roof will be metal. The windows and doors will be wood, manufactured by Marvin. The trim will be wood. The siding, panels, doors and windows and trim will be painted white.

#### Addition – west elevation

The addition will project above the existing house by a story and beyond the existing house on both the north by 4'6". The third story will project approximately 4'9" above the main block of the house which will have added height with the new brick parapet. The west elevation of this portion of the third story addition will have no openings. It is not clear from the drawing what it will be clad in. On the north will be the stair tower. The narrow end of this three story rectangular block faces the west. It will be clad in wood siding and will have a long narrow window divided into three sections separated by wood panels. On the south side, the addition has been pulled in even with the existing house and thus will not be as visible. The overhang, trellis and entrance steps to the addition will be visible on the south side.

#### Addition – south elevation

The addition will be composed of three major blocks on the south side. In the forefront and toward the rear or east will be a two story brick block having a single, 6' by 6' square window in the first story at the east end. In the current design, this block is even with the plane of the existing house. Previously it projected beyond it by 2'. This brick block will support a deck at the third story level that will be surrounded by a wood railing. Set in behind the brick block will be the plane of the three story block. This section had a sloping roof rising to 30' at the back. The roof is now flat and a consistent 28'9". This section will be clad in wood siding and will have vertical trim strips defining the bays and horizontal strips defining the stories. A new entrance to the house will be located on the south side, accessed by a new brick terrace with wood railing and trellis over the entrance area. The door will be a French door with glazing above and wood panels below. A full length window will be located to the right of the French doors, functioning as a sidelight. Paired long windows with wood panels below will be located in the second and third stories directly above the entrance. There will be two additional window groupings of this same design on the third story, overlooking the deck. The stair tower, located on the north side, will be visible above the existing main block and the new three story block. It will have a flat roof, no openings and will be clad in wood siding.

Addition – east elevation

The east (rear) elevation will also be composed of three major blocks. Two of these will be narrower than in the previous design: the two story block, reduced in width by 2' will now be no wider than the existing house and the stair tower will also be 2' narrower. In the forefront will be the two story block and, set back 4' above this, the third story. The three story stair tower on the north side will be in the background, set back 21' from the face of the two story block. The two story block will have a brick pier at the left side where it wraps around from the south side. Beyond this, it will have a narrow strip of wood siding and then a large expanse of glazing. There will be French doors and a large full length window on the first story. The second story will have the same, only the positions of the door and window will be the reverse of those below. The second story door will have a wood railing at the base. The two story block will support a deck for the third story that will be surrounded by a wood railing. The third story east elevation will have a French door with a sidelight on the left side. Previously this entrance also had a transom. The right side will be clad in wood siding. The east elevation of the stair tower will match that of the west elevation with a long narrow window divided into three sections separated by wood panels within a wall clad in wood siding. There will be a brick planter at the base of the stair tower.

Addition – north elevation

Again, the north elevation is composed of three major blocks; the three story stair tower at the forefront, the three story portion of the addition set back 6'6", and the narrow sliver of two story addition at the east end. The 17'7" wide north wall of the stair tower section will be without openings. It will be clad in wood siding with a narrow strip of wood panels at the west end. Horizontal wood trim strips will define the three stories. Beyond this will be the three story addition which is broken into two fields, one clad in brick and one in siding. There will be a window in each story. A rectangular window will be located in the first and the second story near the west end of this section. A long horizontally oriented window will be located in the third story, more or less centered in the section. On the same plane with the three story section is a narrow two story section that is almost entirely glazed, consisting of a full length window in the first and second stories and supporting the third story deck with wood railing. The only modification in this elevation is the change in the roof over the three story section from sloped to flat.

The addition will be readily visible from a number of vantage points along North West Street and is anticipated to be visible in through-block views from Oronoco Street to the north.

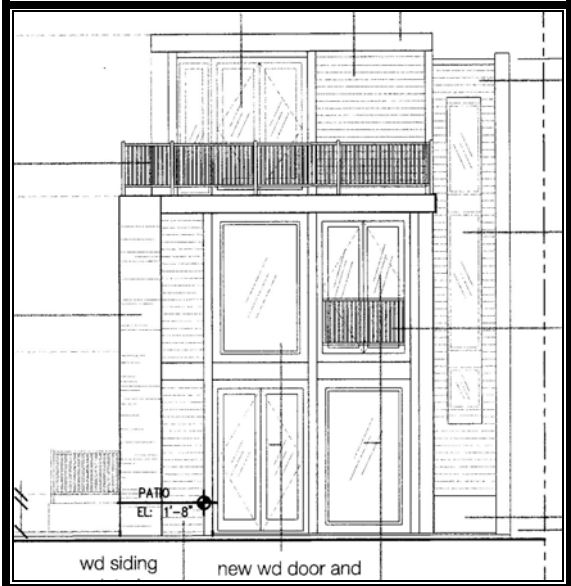


Figure 1: Proposed east elevation

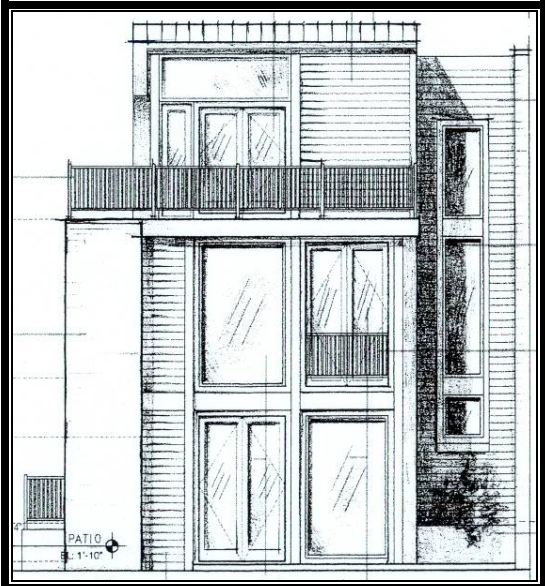


Figure 2: Previously proposed east elevation  
7/25/2007

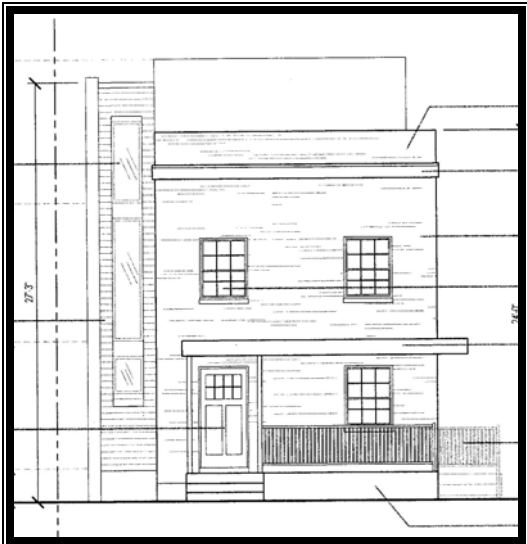


Figure 3: Proposed west elevation



Figure 4: Previously proposed west elevation,  
7/25/2007

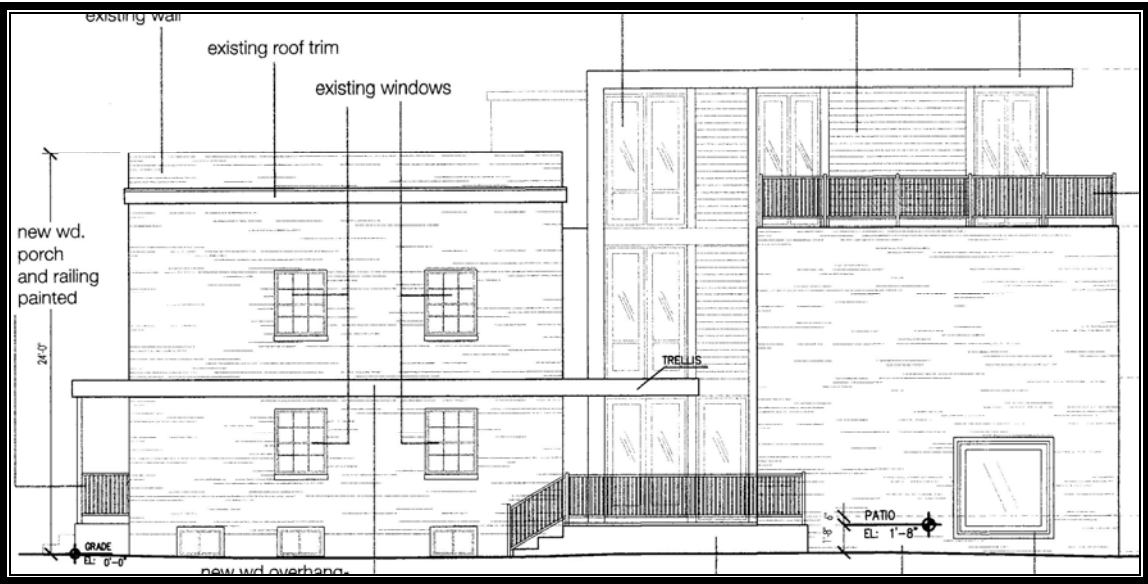


Figure 5: Proposed south elevation

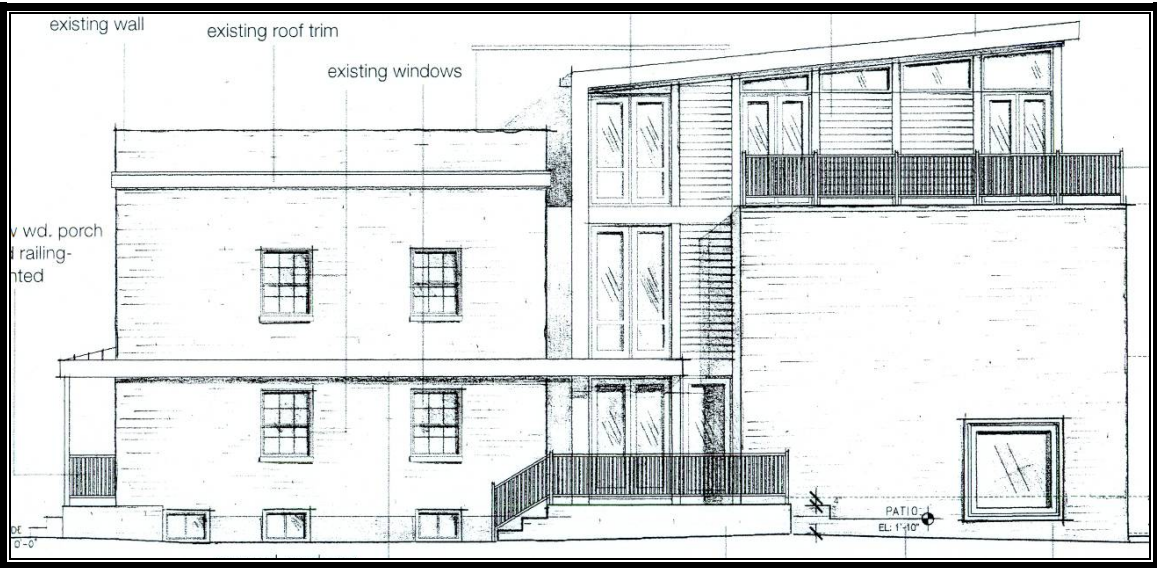


Figure 6: Previously proposed south elevation, 7/25/2007



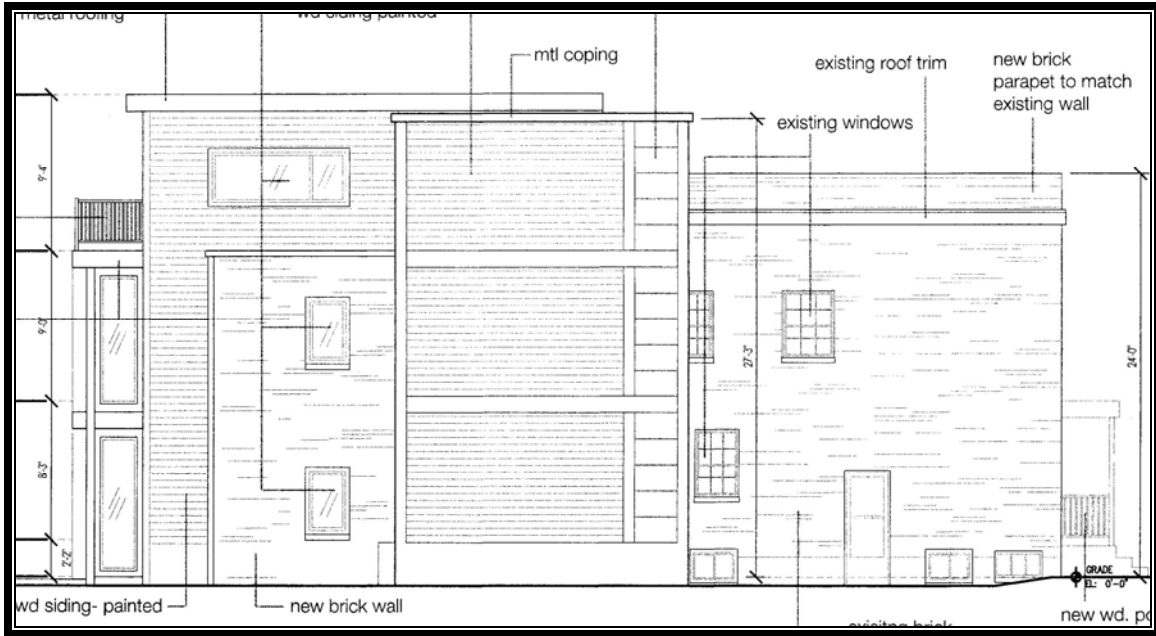


Figure 7: Proposed north elevation

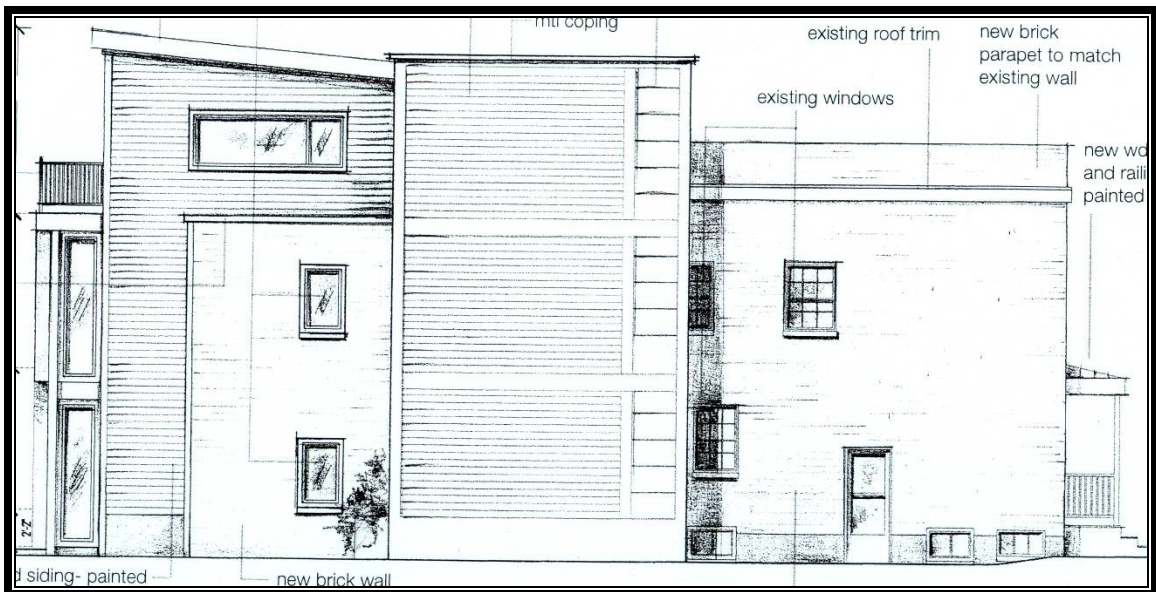


Figure 8: Previously proposed north elevation, 7/25/2007

## **II. HISTORY:**

As discussed in docket item #2, the free-standing, two story brick house at 419 North West Street appears to have been constructed circa 1938. The one story addition to the rear was added at a later date. There is no record of prior BAR reviews for this property.

## **III. ANALYSIS:**

The property in subject is zoned RB, residential. The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements. However, the proposed trellis roof must be at least 80% open to be deducted from FAR.

As stated in the previous report, the property at 419 North West Street presents unusual opportunities and challenges. The large lot provides an opportunity for a substantially larger building than the existing, very modest house. Like most of the Parker Gray district, the property is zoned RB, which has a floor area ratio of .75 the lot area, allowing a house with a net floor area (FAR) of 2,962 square foot. The existing house has a net floor area of only 1,031 square feet. On the other hand, the *Design Guidelines* for residential additions caution that additions should not overwhelm the existing structure or neighboring buildings (Residential Additions – Page 6). Located as it is on a relatively loosely developed block and surrounded by properties with open side yards, the lot also provides many opportunities for views of a proposed rear addition. Unlike the more typical case in the historic districts where there are strings of attached rowhouses blocking views to the rear from the street and preventing additions from being seen in direct relation to the main block of the house at the front, here the addition will be seen in context with the existing house and with neighboring buildings. For the most part, the neighboring buildings on both sides of the 400 block of North West Street and on all sides of the square bounded by North West, Oronoco, North Payne, and Princess Streets are small in scale.

The visibility of the addition means that not only is size and massing a factor, but also its architectural character. In its design, it must be compatible with the architectural character of not only the house to which it is attached, but to the surrounding neighborhood. These factors need not be constraints or impediments to the new addition, but they do require that the addition be handled with a great deal of skill and sensitivity. It should be possible to design a substantial addition in a modern vocabulary that will work in this context. However, it must be approached in a very thoughtful and respectful manner.

### **Size and Scale**

In general, Staff and the Board are not comfortable with additions that approach the size of the existing house, even when the addition is less visible than that proposed for 419 North West Street. In keeping with long accepted historic preservation philosophy, the thought is that the historic portion of the building should remain the predominant element. An addition that approaches or surpasses the size of the existing house shifts the weight of the building from old to new. In addition, it is likely to overwhelm visually

and to appear out of scale with the original portion of the building and with neighboring buildings. While the zoning regulations provide the outer parameters for the largest possible structure allowed on any given lot, the historic district regulations give the Board the authority to determine what size addition is appropriate for that property, given the historic character of the surrounding district and the nature of the existing house.

Few if any residential additions of this size have been constructed in Parker-Gray. The house at 429 North West Street does have an unusually large addition which is sited to the side and at the back of the historic house. This addition was approved by the Board at its eighth meeting on June 11, 1986 (BAR Case #86-15PG). It should be noted that, as large as it is, the zoning ordinance would have allowed a substantially larger addition than that which was built because of the exceptionally large lot. It is unlikely that the same addition would be approved today. A large addition, designed by Mr. Demian, the architect for the present project, was approved by the Board two years ago and has been constructed at 421 North Fayette Street (BAR Case #2005-0055, 4/27/2005). This addition added living space in the attic above the existing two story house and added a three story rear addition which also wrapped around the south side. However, the addition was not proportionately as large in relation to the existing house as the one now proposed for 419 North West Street. The addition at 421 North Fayette Street added 1,375 net square feet to the existing 1,262 net square feet (108% increase). With the new addition, the house remained well below the allowable FAR.

The current project at 419 North West Street seeks to add 1734 net square feet to the existing 1031 net square feet (a 168% increase). Staff continues to believe the size of the addition is out of scale with the existing house and with the modest houses that characterize the neighborhood. The modified design eliminates less than 200 sf from the former total of 2,958 sf. Staff does not consider this a serious attempt to address Board and Staff concerns about the size of the project and recommends that the applicant continue to explore ways to reduce the size of the addition.

### **Architectural Character**

The *Design Guidelines* make it clear that whether an addition uses an historical vocabulary or one which is more modern, it must be respectful of the building to which it is appended and compatible with the surrounding district.

The Boards generally prefer addition designs that are respectful of the existing structure and which seek to be background statements or which echo the design elements of the existing structure (Residential Additions - Page 5).

Another approach to a design for a residential addition is one which creates a distinct yet compatible contrast with the original building through the use of differing materials, colors and the abstraction of the principal design elements of the original building (Residential Additions - Page 5).

Staff believes the modified design is an improvement over the previous in its effort to be compatible with the character of the existing house or the district. The 1938 house at 419

North West Street is very basic and does not offer much in the way of design elements to draw from. However, it does offer its own scale, massing, roofline, materials, rhythms and fenestration sizes and patterns as well a faint Colonial Revival flavor. The surrounding houses tend to be earlier, dating to the turn-of-the last century and reflecting the popular Queen Anne, 2<sup>nd</sup> Empire and Italianate styles of that period. The addition, as modified is at least more harmonious with the existing building if not with the older neighbors. The flat roof of the three story addition and the flat roof of the new porch help to tie the old and new sections of the building together and provide quieter appearance overall. The revised design reduces the extent of the projections on the addition's north and south sides, helping to make the design less competitive with the existing house and somewhat less visible within the neighborhood. However, Staff continues to believe more could be done to increase the architectural compatibility of the addition.

### **Height, Massing, and Form**

Again, the *Design Guidelines* offer recommendations with regard to these aspects of the design of an addition and, not surprisingly, they call for additions that respect the existing building and prevailing characteristics of the blockface (Residential Additions - Pages 6 & 7). This addition differs from the surrounding single family residences in several ways. With the exception perhaps of the house at 429 North West Street which is discussed above, this proposal is a story taller than the other houses in the neighborhood and it places the taller and larger mass in the rear where traditionally, the massing steps down. The modification of the roof over the third story from sloping to flat does help to quiet the design, but it means that the roof is higher at the front, where it rises 4'9" above the main block . Overall, the reduction in height is minimal—rather than being 30' at its highest point, it is now 28'9" all over. The form of the addition, with its varied rooflines and planes, continues to be complex, in part from an effort to break down the mass and make it appear smaller. However, this complexity of forms, as well as complexity of surface materials, rooflines and window types, is contrary to the local historical building tradition in which additions tend to be simpler than the main block. The nontraditional massing, complex form and height will result in the addition having a much more prominent visual profile in the neighborhood than is desired for an addition in an historic district. Rather than serving as a background building, it will attract attention.

To conclude, in the opinion of Staff, while the modifications are helpful, they do not go far enough. The proposed addition still appears to overwhelm the existing house and neighbors. Staff continues to believe the addition can be made more compatible by reducing it to two stories above grade, simplifying the massing and rooflines and using an architectural vocabulary more closely related to the existing building and its neighbors.

### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff again recommends deferral of the application for restudy to address issues of mass, scale and architectural compatibility. However, should the Board approve the addition and alterations, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the following statement appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

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; and,

2. That Staff review and approve the proposed brick prior to construction.

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.
- C-2 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 110.3).
- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully details the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit. Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application. The plans must include all dimensions, construction alterations details, kitchen equipment, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.
- C-7 The new handrails must comply with USBC for a minimum/maximum height of 30 to 34 inches. The ends must extend 12" beyond the top and bottom risers. The handgrip position must not be more than 2-1/4" in cross-sectional dimension, or the shape must provide an equivalent gripping surface. The handgrip portion must have a smooth surface with no sharp corners. The space between the wall and handrail must not be less than 1-1/2".
- C-8 The new stairs must comply with USBC for riser and tread dimensions.
- C-9 Guardrail height and openings must comply with USBC 1012.2 and 1012.3.
- C-10 Handrails must comply with USBC 1009.11.

- C- 11 Sheeting and shoring shall not extend beyond the property line; except when the developer has obtained a written release from adjacent property owners which has been recorded in the land records; or through an approved encroachment process.
- 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 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-14 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides of the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.
- C-15 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-16 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:

R – Approve as submitted.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 The G.M. Hopkins insurance map shows that by 1877, at least one structure was present on the block bounded by West, Oronoco, Princess and Payne streets. The lot therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities of African Americans in 19<sup>th</sup>-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 the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

**FINDINGS**

- F1. An approved Plot Plan must be attached to the building permit application. The Plot Plan is required because the submitted documentation indicates that the area of the new building footprint exceeds the area of the existing building footprint by more than 100%.
- In general, a Plot Plan is required when construction of a proposed addition:
- Results in a new building footprint that exceeds the area of the existing building footprint by 100% or more.
  - Results in less than 50% of the existing first floor exterior walls, in their entirety, remaining. The walls must comprise the footprint of the existing building and shall be measured in linear feet. The remaining walls must remain as exterior walls. The definition of a first floor exterior wall is that it must have its finished floor surface entirely above grade.
  - Results in land disturbance associated with the project of 2,500 square feet or greater in area. The disturbed area will be determined by adding a minimum of 10' to the perimeter of the building (or addition) footprint and calculating the area within the increased perimeter. In addition, a 10 foot wide access path from the edge of the disturbed area to the street or paved driveway must be included in the disturbed area calculation. Provision must be made for stockpile, staging, dumpsters and material storage areas within the limits of disturbance.
  - Changes to existing grade elevation of 1-foot or greater.
  - Changes to existing drainage patterns. (TES)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- R1. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 8-1-22 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (TES)
- R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (TES)
- R3. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (TES)
- R4. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (TES)
- R5. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (TES)



- R6. Compliance with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control is required for any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (TES)