

Docket Item # 5
BAR CASE # 2008-0150

BAR Meeting
September 24, 2008

ISSUE: Permit to Demolish

APPLICANT: EYA, LLC and Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority (ARHA)
by Joanna Frizzell

LOCATION: 918 North Columbus Street, 998 & 898 North Alfred Street, 801 & 808
Madison Street

ZONE: RB/Residential

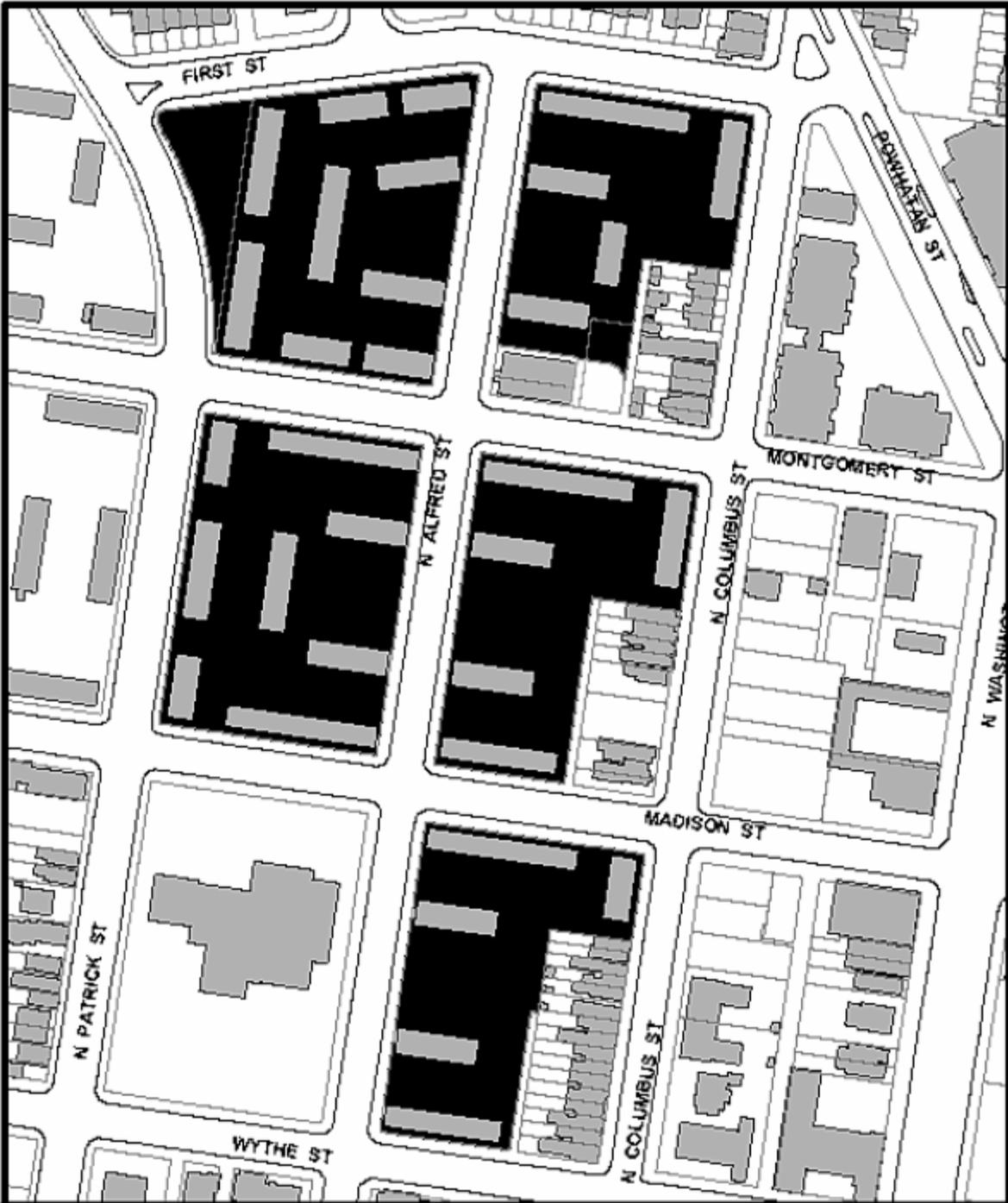
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish with the following conditions:

1. That the applicant provide a written history of the James Bland Homes project, which at a minimum contains information of the date of construction, any major alterations, information about persons or events associated with James Bland Homes, general architectural characteristics, and background on the architect. The history should be prepared by an historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications and approved by Historic Preservation Section Planning Staff.
2. That the applicant provide archival quality photographic documentation to HABS/HAER Standards (Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record), consisting of large scale 4" x 5" negative black and white record photographs.
3. That the applicant provide to the City measured drawings of the buildings in the James Bland development to HABS/HAER Standards (Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record). The drawings should include floor plans and elevations at a minimum scale of 1/4" = 1'. Drawings may be in pencil or ink on vellum or mylar on sheets with maximum dimensions of 30" x 42".
4. Prior to the issuance of the Demolition Permit, that two sets of the photographs together with one set of negatives and the measures drawings and written history shall be completed, approved by Staff, and deposited at the Alexandria Black History Museum and the Special Collections of the Barrett Library.
5. To insure that significant information is not lost as a result of the current development project, the applicant shall hire an archaeological consultant to complete a Documentary Study. The Documentary Study shall be completed prior to the first submission of the final site plan or January 1, 2009 (whichever is earlier). If the Documentary Study indicates that the property has the potential to yield significant buried resources, the applicant shall hire an archaeological consultant to complete an

- Archaeological Evaluation. The Archaeological Evaluation will need to be completed in concert with demolition activities. If significant resources are discovered, the consultant shall complete a Resource Management Plan, as outlined in the *City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards*. Preservation measures presented in the Resource Management Plan, as approved by the City Archaeologist, will be implemented.
6. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Basement/Foundation plans, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, Sheet piling and Shoring, etc.) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
 - a. All required archaeological preservation measures shall be completed prior to ground-disturbing activities (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of the Zoning Ordinance) or a Resource Management Plan must be in place to recover significant resources in concert with construction activities. To confirm, call Alexandria Archaeology at (703) 838-4399.
 - b. The applicant/developer shall 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.
 - c. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
 7. The final site plan shall not be released until the City archaeologist confirms that all archaeological field work has been completed or that an approved Resource Management Plan is in place.
 8. Certificates of Occupancy will not be issued for this property until the final archaeological report has been received and approved by the City Archaeologist.

****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. In the case of a certificate or permit for a project that requires a site plan under section 11-400 of this ordinance, the 12 month period of time shall be stayed until final approval thereof by the planning commission or city council.

****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



BAR CASE #2008-0150/0151 9/24/2008



NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish from the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review in order to demolish the existing housing development known as James Bland Homes, bordered by First Street to the north, North Patrick Street to the west, North Columbus Street on the east, and Wythe Street to south, with the addresses of 918 N. Columbus Street, 898 and 998 N. Alfred Street, 801 and 808 Madison Street, in order to construct a new residential development consisting of townhouses, triplex flats, and multifamily buildings, with a total of 379 units, with below-grade and surface parking.

The existing James Bland Homes project contains 194 public housing units, within 35 multifamily buildings, on 8.5 acres in a five block area. Three of the five blocks that front North Columbus Street have a total of 32 privately owned townhouses that are not part of the redevelopment project.

The proposed demolition will occur in phases, over an approximately 5 year time frame, one block at a time. As proposed, all 35 of the existing multi-family buildings will be demolished.

II. HISTORY:

According to the information compiled for the nomination of the Parker-Gray District to the National Register of Historic Places, the James Bland Homes project was built in two different phases, with a four-block area constructed in 1954 and a final block (known as the James Bland Addition) constructed in 1959. The James Bland Homes project was one of several public housing projects that were located and constructed in the Parker-Gray neighborhood during and following World War II. These projects were designed in streamlined styles found in Alexandria, including Colonial Revival and Prairie (four-square).

Pre-James Bland Homes

As the established Alexandria street grid expanded in the 19th-century into the area now known as Parker-Gray, most of the buildings consisted of residential structures of one and two stories, with intermittent service related buildings. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and photographs from the 1930s and 1940s show wood-framed buildings, of a vernacular architectural expression, with minimal detailing. One photograph from the late 1920s or 1930s, of the 800 block of Wythe Street, shows one-story buildings that resemble mill housing, in a dilapidated condition. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show alleys within the blocks in this area, running north to south. Structures are also shown located off the alleys, ranging from actual dwellings to service structures.

James Bland in the Context of Other Public Housing

The prolific Alexandrian architect Joseph Saunders designed James Bland Homes, utilizing a Colonial Revival design, in a garden-style residential setting. The use of the Colonial Revival style found in the Parker-Gray neighborhood is evidenced by Saunderson's designs for the public housing located in the north end of the district, between 1945 and 1959. The oldest phase of the public housing dates to 1942, located in the 900 blocks of North Patrick and North Henry Streets

and the 1000 blocks of Montgomery Street, was actually part of the Samuel Madden Homes project.

The majority of the Samuel Madden Homes development was a complex located several blocks east of the Parker-Gray boundary, close to the Potomac River. Although a government initiative mainly to build houses on a multi-block site east of the district, the project was justified as a blight clearance. The “blighted” area cleared as part of the Samuel Madden Homes, which began in 1942, extended well-beyond the site of the new construction. It included most of the land north of Madison within the Parker-Gray neighborhood. After it was cleared, some of the land became the location of temporary houses built to provide housing for displaced residents while Samuel Madden was being constructed. Beginning in 1954, the three-block area from Wythe Street to First Street, between North Alfred and North Columbus, and the adjoining blocks, between Madison, Montgomery, North Alfred, and North Patrick Street, became the site of the first phase of James Bland Homes.

In 1959, the block bounded by Montgomery, First, North Patrick, and North Alfred streets became the final phase of construction for the James Bland Homes project. Between the five blocks covered by the James Bland Homes project and the two adjoining blocks containing a portion of Samuel Madden, there was little variation in the architectural design and detailing of the units. The lay-out of the project was adjusted to meet the angled streets in both the earliest and last phases of construction. Where the street pattern allowed for longer buildings, some were constructed on an apartment building model, with flats on each of the two stories, in contrast to the townhouse design used on the majority of the units. The middle phases of the projects had the least variations in both the dimensions of the block-sized site and in the units and garden spaces developed on the sites. However, one variable in the 1954 phase of the project is that the portion of the site along Columbus Street stepped around pre-existing houses, so that the public houses only occupy half of each block on that side of the street.

As previously mentioned, Joseph Saunders used a streamlined Colonial Revival design in a garden-style setting for the Samuel Madden Homes and James Bland Homes. The design involves side-gabled rowhouses, sometimes with six or more repeated in a row, placed around landscaped garden areas that are oriented to face into the north-south streets. The individual units have very little ornamentation, but the detailing is all consistent with the Colonial Revival style, incorporating brick walls, side-gabled forms, pedimented architraves at main entrances to the units, wood lintels, and multi-pane double hung window sashes. Although the units are notably repetitious, the longest rows are along east-west streets that pass through the projects. Some units with wood siding and inset porches were placed in the centers of rows facing the north-south streets to accentuate the character and symmetry of the houses with respect to the garden spaces. About 60% of the houses were placed in “C-shaped” arrangements to form rectangular shared gardens, with the garden areas having carefully landscaped trees and shrubbery.

The public housing units in the Parker-Gray area include at least three other projects, two of which are located in the boundaries of the proposed Parker-Gray National Register of Historic Places District. The earliest public housing in the area is Ramsey Houses, which are a set of four American foursquare house forms built in 1942, containing multiple units (three contain four units and one has three units). Ramsey Houses are located on the east side of Patrick Street

between Pendleton and Wythe streets, and have stucco exteriors and low hipped roofs. Ramsey Houses reflect modest detailing associated with the Craftsman and Prairie styles. The other housing projects in the Parker-Gray area include Jefferson Village, a late Modern or Post-Modern complex at West and Princess Streets, built in 1988, and Andrew Adkins, located north of Wythe Street and west of Fayette Street, built in 1968.

Parker-Gray and Designations:

Parker-Gray has been recognized as a local historic district since 1984, and architectural changes within the neighborhood are overseen by the Parker-Gray Board of Architecture Review (BAR). The boundaries for the locally designated district include all of James Bland Homes. The district boundary lines for Parker-Gray have not changed since adopted by City Council in 1984.

In October of 2006, the City began the process of nominating Parker-Gray to the National Register of Historic Places. The City, led by the Planning & Zoning Department, contracted with a cultural resources firm, John Milner & Associates, to commence the necessary research, survey, and documentation required to nominate the neighborhood to the National Register. During the process, the James Bland Homes project was surveyed and determined to be contributing structures to the district, due to age (at least 50-years old), architecture, and association with the social and cultural history of the Parker-Gray neighborhood. The National Register has strict guidance as to what determines the contributing nature of buildings and structures for nomination. The City and Consultants met and discussed the nomination with representatives of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR), who review the nomination prior to submission to the National Park Service. Guidance from VDHR led to the determination that the resources of James Bland Homes were contributing resources to the nominated Parker-Gray Historic District.

In June of 2008, the Parker-Gray nomination was considered by the VDHR Historic Resources Boards who voted to support the nomination and directed the State staff to forward the nomination to the National Park Service. It is anticipated that the nomination will be finalized and forwarded to the National Register department of the National Park Service by the end of 2008.

III. ANALYSIS:

From the initial review of this project, Historic Preservation Planning Staff has expressed concerns about the proposed wholesale demolition of the buildings associated with the James Bland Homes project. These buildings have been identified, evaluated and recommended as contributing resources to the nomination of Parker-Gray to the National Register of Historic Places, due to their age, architecture/landscape design, and association with the social history of the neighborhood. The resources listed as contributing in the district are all approximately fifty or more years of age, as determined in large part by comparing current data to the 1958 Sanborn Insurance Map for Alexandria.

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, Sec. 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 finds that the existing buildings meet Criteria 4 and 6. Staff finds that the existing James Bland Homes retain their architectural and historic integrity and reflect the evolution of the Parker-Gray Historic District. Specifically, the Colonial Revival garden style apartment buildings reflect the rise in construction that occurred during and after World War II in this region and the local history of public housing. However, Staff finds that the James Bland Homes are not the only example of this building type and this history in the area. While the existing scale and character of the James Bland Homes are generally reflective of much of the architecture of Parker-Gray, Staff notes that 19th-century frame buildings were razed to construct the existing buildings. When constructed, the James Bland Homes represented a departure from the traditional architecture and pattern of development in Parker-Gray.

Staff is always reluctant to recommend demolition of a building that has historic or architectural significance, however, several factors mitigate against adaptive use of these buildings. From a larger planning perspective, the redevelopment of the James Bland Homes meets many of the City's planning and housing goals.

According to the *Design Guidelines*, buildings or structures that have been determined to be significant and which are to be demolished, must be documented with a written history and documentation in accordance with the *Guidelines*. Because of the importance of the James Bland Homes, Staff recommends that the buildings and site be recorded to the standards of HABS (Historic American Building Survey) Guidelines. The written history, photographs and measured drawings be completed to the satisfaction of Staff, so that a record of this project is maintained for the historical record.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish with the following conditions:

1. That the applicant provide a written history of the James Bland Homes project, which at a minimum contains information of the date of construction, any major alterations, information about persons or events associated with James Bland Homes, general architectural characteristics, and background on the architect. The history should be prepared by an historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications and approved by Historic Preservation Section Planning Staff.
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6. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Basement/Foundation plans, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, Sheeting and Shoring, etc.) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
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- 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.
- c. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
7. The final site plan shall not be released until the City archaeologist confirms that all archaeological field work has been completed or that an approved Resource Management Plan is in place.
 8. Certificates of Occupancy will not be issued for this property until the final archaeological report has been received and approved by the City Archaeologist.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The applicant shall comply with Code Administration comments associated with DSP2008-00013.
- 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 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-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 Additions and Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 Additions and 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-8 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-9 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-10 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:
Approved in concept.

Archaeology Conditions

1. To insure that significant information is not lost as a result of the current development project, the applicant shall hire an archaeological consultant to complete a Documentary Study. The Documentary Study shall be completed prior to the first submission of the final site plan or January 1, 2009 (whichever is earlier). If the Documentary Study indicates that the property has the potential to yield significant buried resources, the applicant shall hire an archaeological consultant to complete an Archaeological Evaluation. The Archaeological Evaluation will need to be completed in concert with demolition activities. If significant resources are discovered, the consultant shall complete a Resource Management Plan, as outlined in the *City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards*. Preservation measures presented in the Resource Management Plan, as approved by the City Archaeologist, will be implemented.

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

3. The final site plan shall not be released until the City archaeologist confirms that all archaeological field work has been completed or that an approved Resource Management Plan is in place.

4. Certificates of Occupancy will not be issued for this property until the final archaeological report has been received and approved by the City Archaeologist.

Open Space

1. The developer shall integrate aspects of the historic character of the property into the design of open space for this project and shall provide and erect interpretive signage that

highlights the history and archaeology of the site. The archaeological consultant (see Archaeology Conditions) shall provide information about the history of the site for use by the designers as early as possible during the review process--prior to the first submission of the final site plan. The themes and potential locations for placement of interpretive markers shall be part of the first submission of the final plan. The consultant shall provide text and graphics for the signage subject to approval by the Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, and the Planning Department.

Code

C-1 All required archaeological preservation measures shall be completed in compliance with Section 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Archaeology Findings

F-1 Archaeological resources in the development area have the potential to provide insight into Alexandria's past, but additional documentary study is needed. The limited historical research that has been completed about the development blocks and the vicinity to date indicates that the Henry Daingerfield estate extended onto the recreation center property, with the house situated in the middle of Wythe Street. During the Civil War, the area was the site of the Barracks, Kitchens &c. for Washington Street Corral. A small 18 by 13 foot structure was located near the northeast corner of Columbus and Wythe. Mess rooms, kitchen and bunk rooms extended across Wythe on the west side of Columbus, and a kitchen and privy were located in the middle of Wythe Street. By 1877, there were several structures in the development area. There was a cluster west of the canal near the Alexandria and Washington Turnpike and the Washington and Alexandria Railroad line (Columbus, First and Alfred Streets), and there were structures on Columbus near Madison. In the late 19th century, this was the location of an African American community, "the Hump". Structures are shown on Sanborn maps on most of the blocks by the 1920s and '30s.

F-2 The applicant shall comply with federal preservation laws, in particular Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The applicant will coordinate with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the federal agency involved in the project, as well as with Alexandria Archaeology.



Figure 4. Existing building on North Patrick Street.

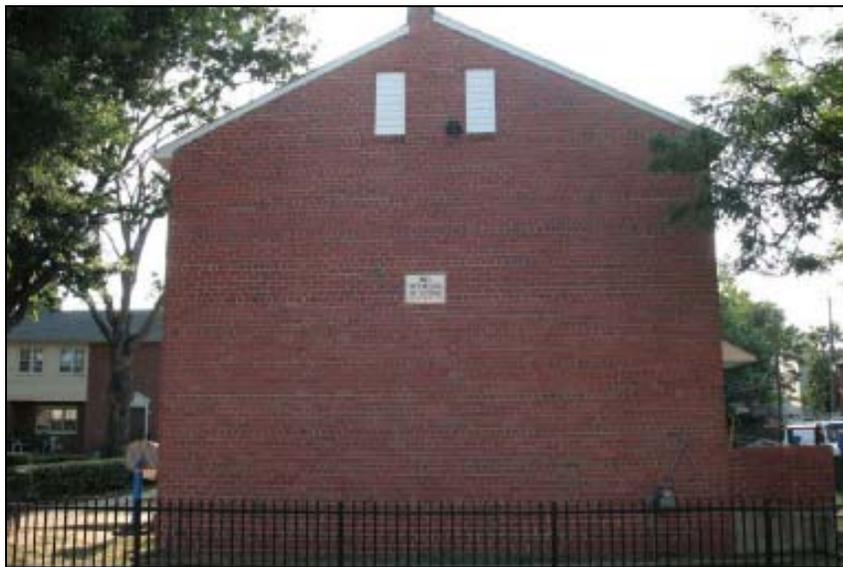


Figure 5. Typical side elevation.



Figure 6. Existing building on Madison Street illustrating typical front elevation.



Figure 7. Existing building on North Alfred Street, illustrating typical rear elevation.