

BAR Meeting
February 25, 2009

ISSUE: Addition and Alterations
APPLICANT: Mo Movahed by Andrew Schiefer
LOCATION: 426 North Alfred Street
ZONE: RB/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends deferral of the application for further study with the following considerations:

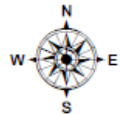
1. That the applicant reduce the height, scale and mass of the addition to make it more compatible with the historic building and the character of the historic district.
2. That the applicant consider a more simplified architectural style with complementary architectural detailing.
3. That the applicant continues to work with Staff in selecting an appropriate and compatible materials palette.

****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 Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.



BAR CASE #2009-0012, 0013 2/25/2009



Note: While the standard practice of the Board is to approve a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate prior to considering the Certificate of Appropriateness, because of the concerns of Staff related to this project, Staff encourages the Board to couple for discussion both the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate (BAR Case #2009-0012) and the Certificate of Appropriateness (BAR Case #2009-0013) in this instance.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a three-story rear addition and alterations at 426 North Alfred Street. The existing 15.3' by 15' one- and two-story rear addition is proposed to be demolished in order to construct a new three-story addition. In addition, a portion of the front roof is proposed for demolition to accommodate two new dormers on the front façade. The applicant also proposes several alterations and repairs to the historic main block of the building.

Addition

The applicant proposes to construct a three-story rear addition measuring approximately 25' by 16'7" at its widest and 15' at its narrowest. The ridgeline of the roof will be approximately 28'10½" and will be a gable roof perpendicular to the gable roof on the historic building. A portion of the addition will cover the footprint of the existing rear portion proposed for demolition. The addition is proposed to extend 1'7" beyond the existing building plane on the south elevation to the south property line. On the north elevation the addition will be immediately flush with the historic building main block and rearward for approximately 10', where it will then step back 1'7". Adjacent to the west elevation will be a portico on the first story, with decking extending along a portion of the north elevation. The materials proposed for the addition include cementitious siding, a standing seam metal roof, wood columns and windows, and PVC trim.

The north elevation will be partially visible from Oronoco Street. This elevation has a three-bay configuration with a shed roof on the stepped-in portion and has no openings along the 10' section immediately adjacent to the historic house. At the first story, there will be a single-light door and two wood windows. The second and third stories each have three two-over-two, double-hung wood windows. A wood column on the rear portico will be visible from this elevation, as will profiles of the second- and third-story rear balconies.

The west (rear) elevation will also be partially visible from Oronoco Street. The first story will have wood French doors with one-over-one, double-hung wood windows on each side. The first story has a columned portico supporting a balcony above. The second story will have a center single-light door flanked by wood windows leading to the balcony. The third story will have a single door leading out to a balcony with projecting arched rail. The uppermost portion of the new false brick chimney will be visible from this elevation.

The south elevation, located on the south property line, will have no windows and will have face brick at concealed locations where the neighbor's house is located next to the adjoining property lines. This elevation will also have a projecting third floor shed roof portion to match the north elevation.

A false brick chimney will be visible on the east (front) elevation where the building extends beyond the existing south elevation to the property line.

Alterations

The applicant proposes a number of alterations to the historic portion of the townhouse, including:

- install a new six-panel wood door and replacement wood transom;
- repair, and, as necessary, replace the historic wood siding;
- replace non-historic windows with one-over-one, double-hung wood windows and replace brick mould trim;
- install two single dormers on the east (front) elevation;
- repair and restore brick foundation; and
- install a new standing seam metal roof

II. HISTORY:

The G.M. Hopkins *City Atlas of Alexandria* from 1877 depicts a building on this property. The building is one of a pair located on the lot immediately to the south. The existing main block with gable roof possibly dates from this time. On the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, this block and this building appear by 1891, though with a different rear form from the 1877 Hopkins map. In 1891, the rear portion was a traditional two-story rear ell. By 1921, the two-story rear ell had been replaced by a one-story rear ell, according to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. The 1958 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map depicts a two-story rear ell with a one-story porch.

In 1997, the Board approved an application for a replacement roof of fiberglass shingles, citing economic hardship (BAR Case # 1997- 0172, 8/27/97).

The applicant has made several community outreach efforts in preparation for the BAR submission. On Monday, February 9, 2009, the applicant hosted an open house for surrounding neighbors at the project architect's firm. On Thursday, February 12, 2009, the applicant presented the project to Inner City Civic Association.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations and addition comply with the RB requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Staff does not support the proposed addition and alterations as submitted and recommends deferral for further study. Outlined below are the primary concerns of this project:

1. Height, scale and mass
2. Architectural style and detailing
3. Materials

Staff has met with the applicant since the application was submitted and advised them of Staff's recommendation for deferral. The applicant expressed interest in proceeding forward to the Board hearing in order to get feedback from the Board as early as possible in the review process.

The *Design Guidelines* state that: "New and untried approaches to common design problems are encouraged and should not be rejected out of hand simply because they appear to be outside the common practices outlined in the guidelines." Staff continues to encourage the exploration of a new or uncommon design for the addition but finds that the current proposal must be more compatible and appropriate with the historic main block in terms of height, scale, mass, architectural style and detailing and materials.

Height, scale and mass

Staff has concerns regarding the height, scale and mass of the proposed addition. The *Design Guidelines* note that additions are sought which "are respectful of the existing structure and which seek to be background statements or which echo the design elements of the existing

structure.” Furthermore, as a general principle, “Boards favor contextual background buildings which allow historic structures to maintain the primary visual importance.” This guidance applies to additions as well as new buildings.

As currently designed, the proposed addition overwhelms the historic building in terms of height, scale and mass. Generally, the most successful additions to historic buildings are ones that are both differentiated from and subordinate to the historic building. The height of an addition should be lower, whether actually or perceived, than the historic building. The scale should reflect the scale found throughout the historic district as well as relate to the historic building it will join. Massing for an addition should create a bulk and form that does not overwhelm the historic building. In the proposed plans, the addition should not extend beyond the existing building plane on the south elevation, and instead, at a minimum, should be flush with or inset from the existing plane, thus reflecting the traditional rear ell development patterns.

Architectural style and detailing

While the *Design Guidelines* do not dictate a specific architectural style for additions, the *Guidelines* urge compatibility with the historic buildings found throughout the district. Generally, the architectural style of an addition distills elements from the historic building and strikes a balance between differentiation from and compatibility with the historic building. The addition should not be more complex or high style than the architectural expression of the historic building. The variety of forms—gable roof, central arch, and shed element on the sides—should be simplified so as not to compete with the style and details of the vernacular frame townhouse.

The *Design Guidelines* note that “architectural detailing such as cornices, lintels, arches and chimneys should express the traditional quality and quantity of architectural detailing found on historic structures throughout the district.” In addition, “side and rear walls which face open areas should be designed with as much attention as the primary façade.” As the architectural style is more clearly defined through further study, the architectural details should coordinate and be compatible with the style. For example, while balconies may be appropriate on the rear, the currently proposed details for railings and pilasters should be revised as the architectural style develops. Staff notes that the proposed addition will be highly visible from Oronoco Street.

Materials

Generally, the proposed materials on the addition are acceptable for new construction in a historic district. As the project is refined, the applicant should continue to work with Staff to determine an appropriate and compatible materials palette for both the historic portion and the new construction.

The majority of the alterations to the historic house are compatible with the simple vernacular design of this 19th-century townhouse. The proposal to repair the historic wood siding will ensure that historic fabric is retained. The proposed windows are appropriate replacements for the non-historic existing windows. However, Staff is concerned about the proposed addition of dormers on this elevation as it will significantly alter the principal elevation of this historic building. The front elevation retains a strong sense of integrity lacking in other elevations of the building, which have been altered and added on to over the years, and so should be sensitively retained and restored.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the application for further study with the following considerations:

1. That the applicant reduce the height, scale and mass of the addition to make it more compatible with the historic building and the character of the historic district.
2. That the applicant consider a more simplified architectural style with complementary architectural detailing.
3. That the applicant continues to work with Staff in selecting an appropriate and compatible materials palette.

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- 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 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 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:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

Archaeology Finding

1. Tax records indicate that there was a residence on John Thompson's property, occupied by Robert Wilkes, near the corner of Oronoco and Alfred streets in 1850. During the Civil War, the block bounded by Oronoco, Alfred, Patrick and Princess probably served as a large wood yard; a Union Army Quartermaster's map shows the office for the woodyard and a mess house in the center of the northwestern quadrant of the block. The 1877 Hopkins insurance atlas indicates the presence of a portion of a frame structure in the rear of the lot at 426 N. Alfred; this building is gone later in the 19th century. The proposed development property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic and military activities in 19th-century Alexandria.

Archaeology Recommendations

*1. 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.

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

3. The statements in archaeology conditions above marked with an asterisk "*" 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, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

FINDINGS

F1. An approved grading plan may be required at the time of building permit application. Insufficient information has been provided to make that determination at this time.

In summary, City Code Section 8-1-22(d) requires that a grading plan be submitted to and approved by T&ES prior to the issuance of building permits for improvements involving:

- the construction of a new home;
- construction of an addition to an existing home where either
 - the addition exceeds the area of the existing building footprint by 100% or more;
 - or
 - the construction of the addition results in less than 50% of the existing first floor exterior walls, in their entirety, remaining;
- changes to existing grade elevation of 1-foot or greater;
- changes to existing drainage patterns;
- land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or greater.

Questions regarding the processing of grading plans should be directed to the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at (703) 838-4318. Memorandum to Industry No. 02-08 was issued on April 28, 2008 and can be viewed online via the following link.

<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/tes/info/gradingPlanRequirements.pdf>

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.]. (T&ES)
- R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R3. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- 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. (T&ES)
- 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. (T&ES)
- R5. 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. (T&ES)

VI. IMAGES

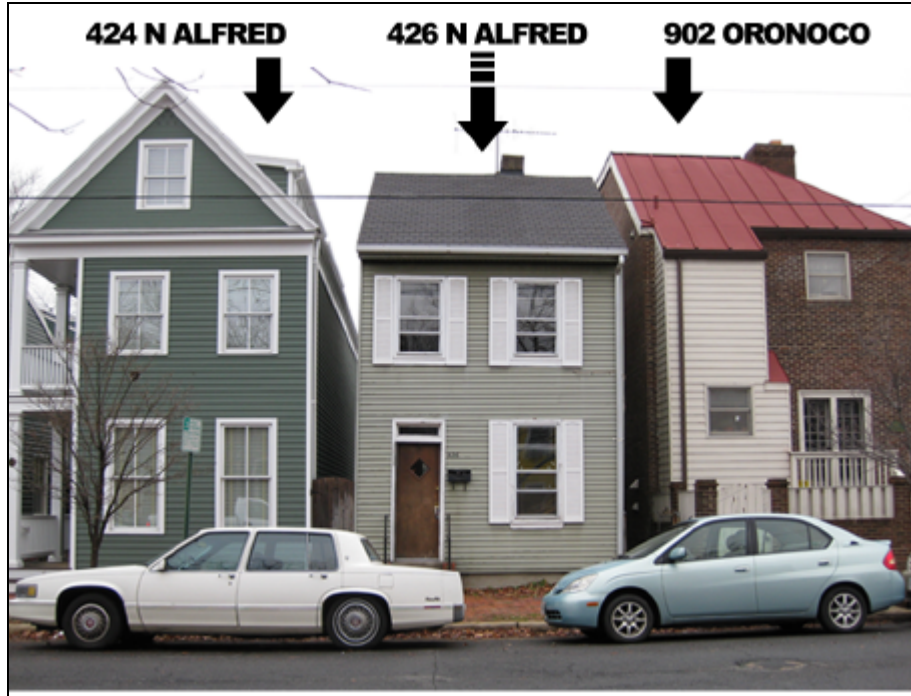


Figure 1. East elevation, 426 North Alfred Street.



Figure 2. West elevation.



Figure 3. View from alley.



Figure 4. View from Oronoco Street.

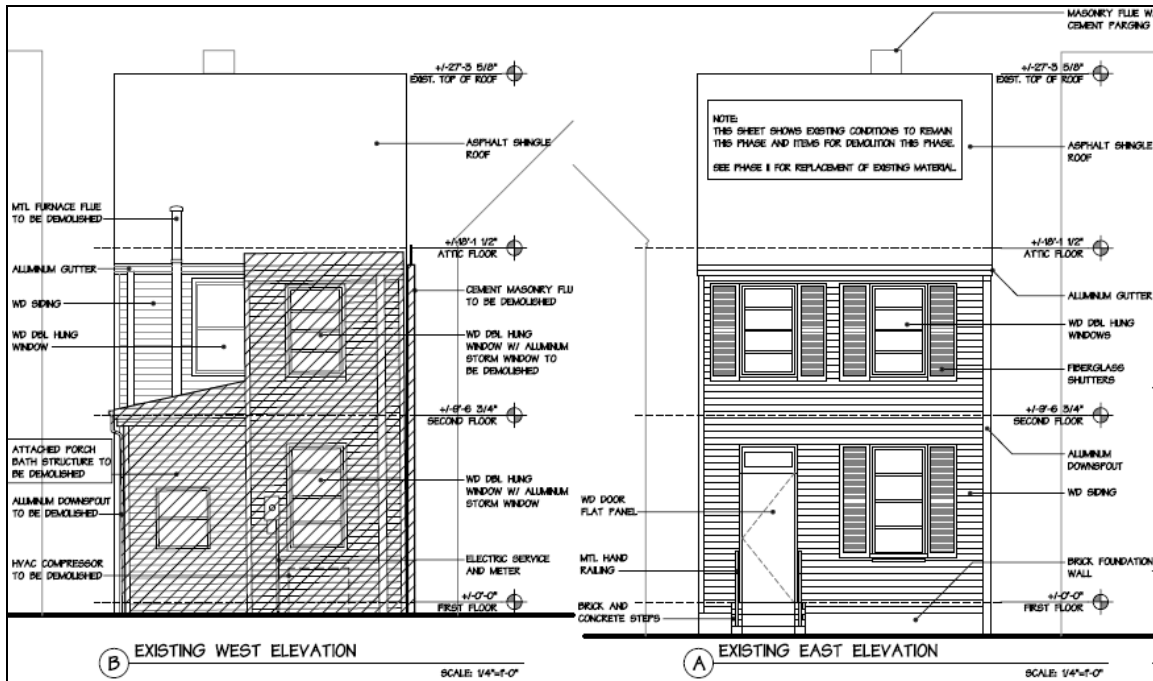


Figure 5. Existing conditions of east and west elevations.

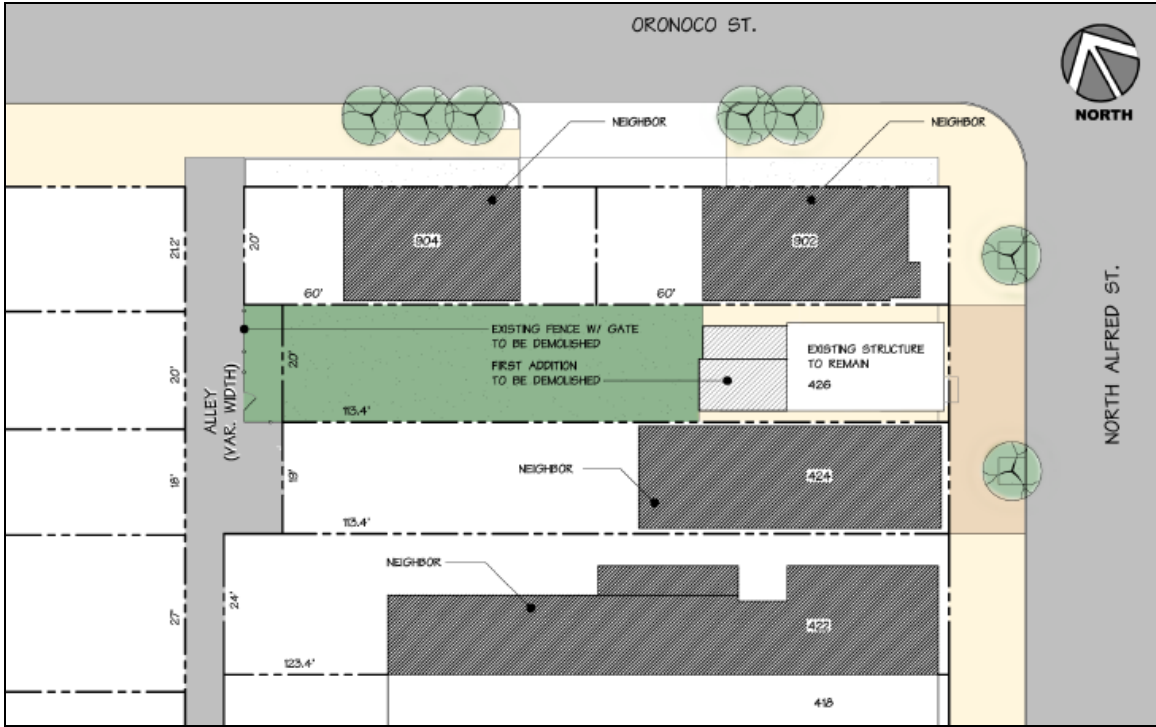


Figure 6. Site plan of existing conditions.

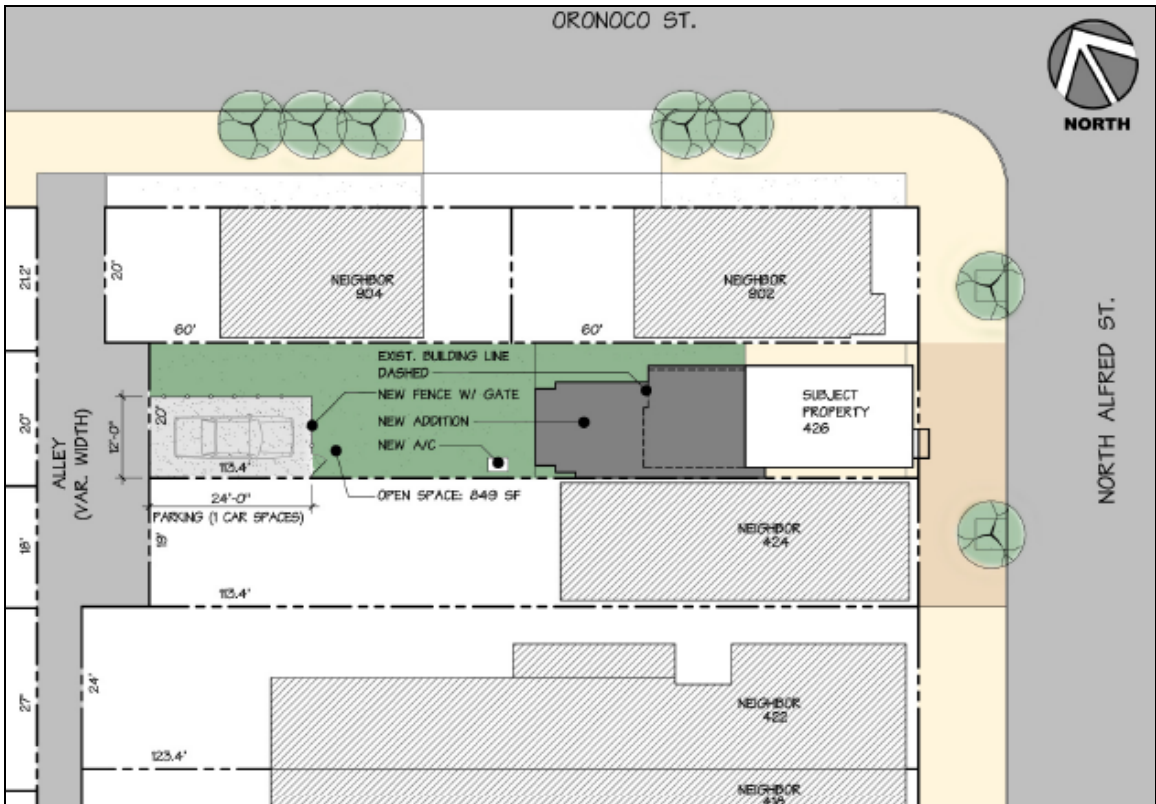


Figure 7. Site plan with proposed addition.

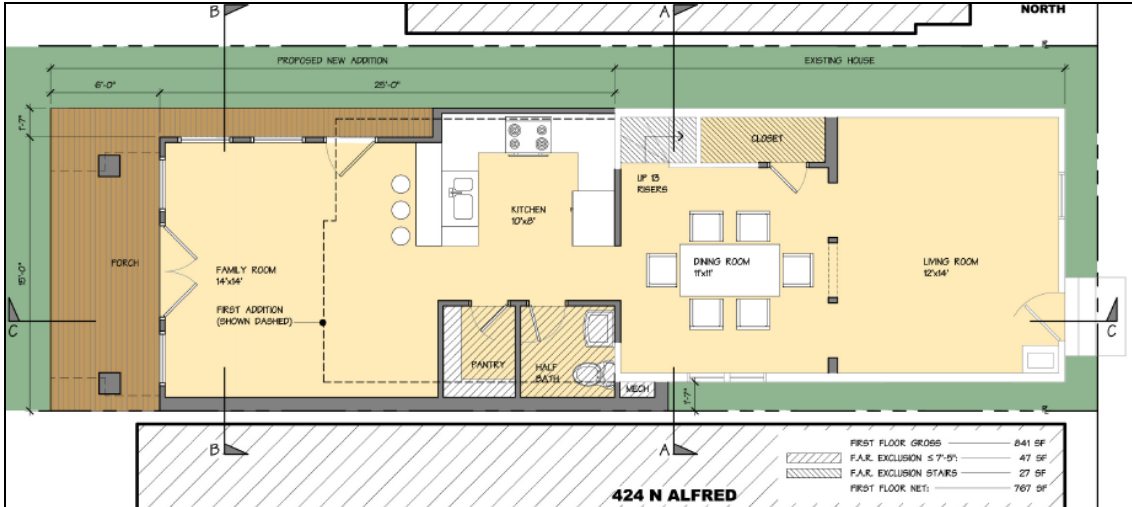


Figure 8. Proposed floor plan.



Figure 9. Color renderings of proposed alterations and addition.

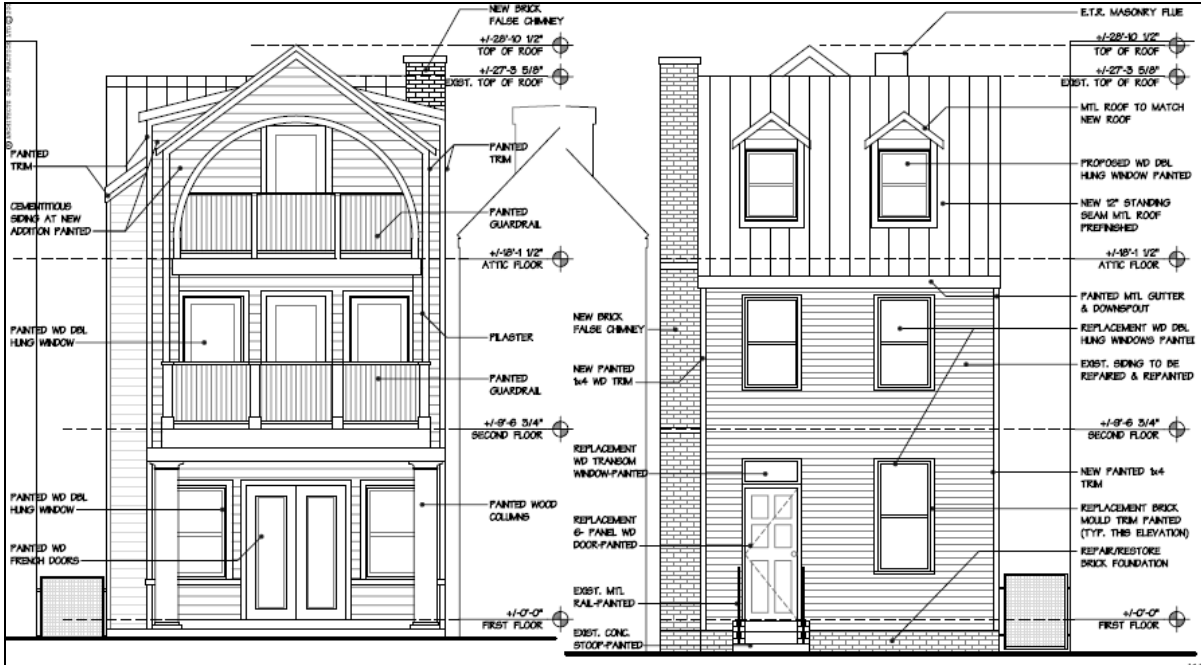


Figure 10. Proposed west and east elevations.



Figure 11. Proposed north (side) elevation.

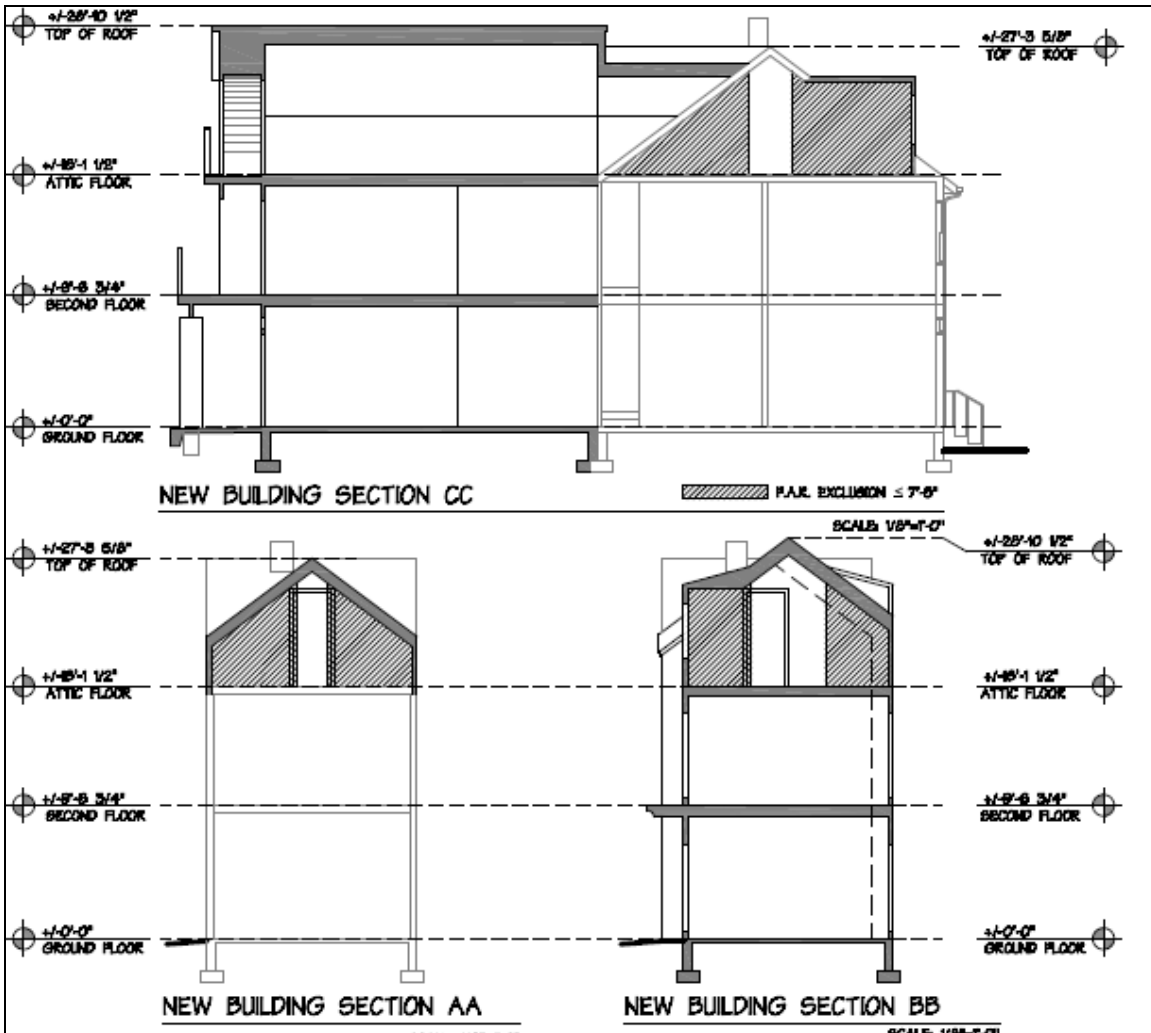


Figure 12. Section of proposed addition and alterations.

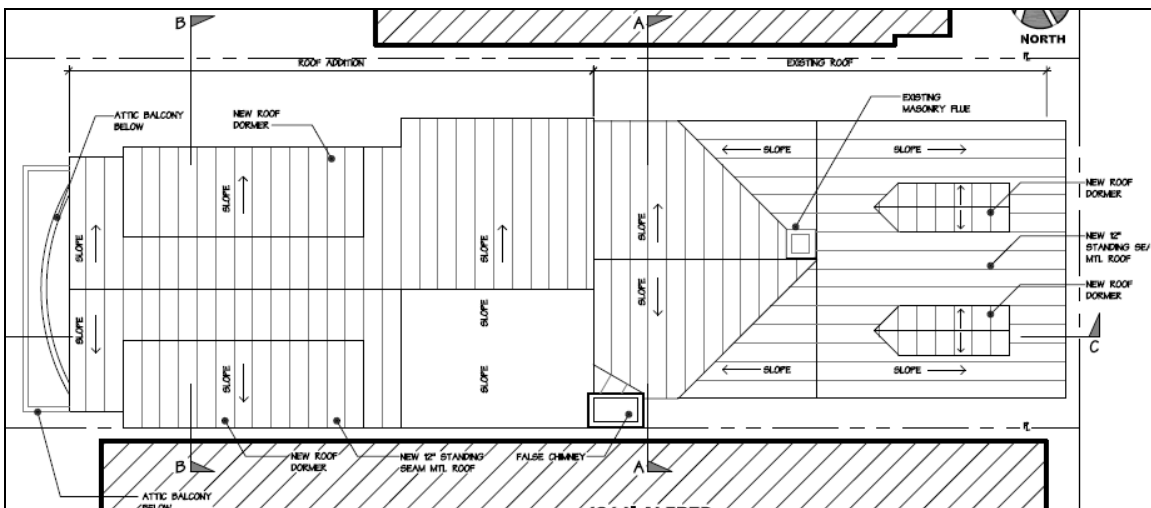


Figure 13. Proposed roof plan.