

Docket Item # 3
BAR CASE # 2009-0199

BAR Meeting
September 23, 2009

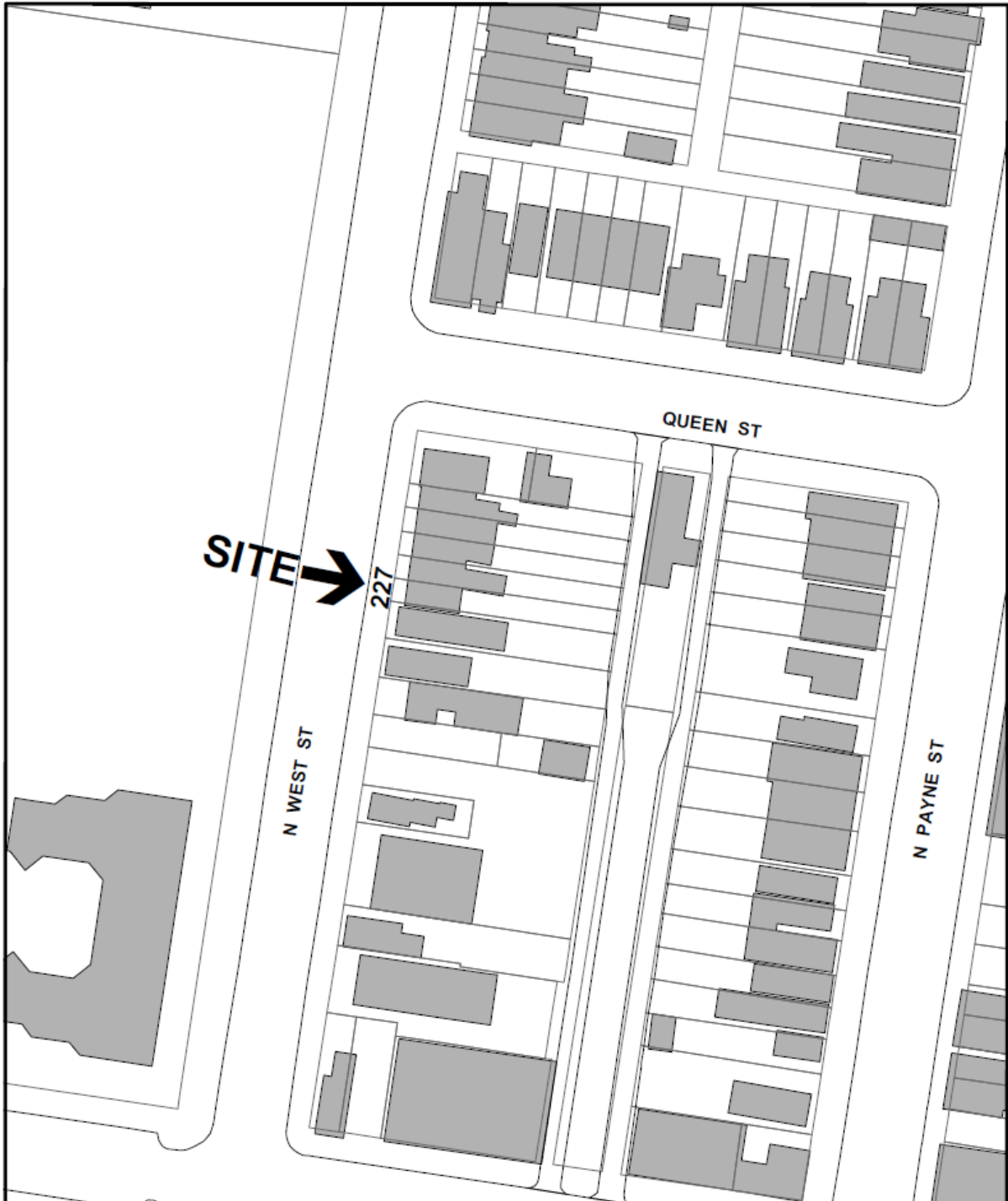
ISSUE: After-the-fact approval of alterations to previously approved plans
APPLICANT: Brendan M. Owens
LOCATION: 227 North West Street
ZONE: RB/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application for after-the-fact alterations to previously approved plans with the following conditions:

1. That the fiber cement panels on the south elevation of the historic block be removed and any historic wood siding restored or new wood siding installed; that a vertical trim board be installed separating the historic block from the new addition; and that the panels on the south elevation of the addition be replaced with fiber cement siding as previously approved by the BAR, with the final configuration of all of the above approved by Staff prior to the beginning of work.
2. That the pressure-treated wood railing on the rear elevation be painted the same color as the trimwork.

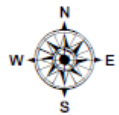
****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 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 #2009-0199

9/23/2009



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval for alterations to previously approved plans related to a two-story rear addition and alterations at 227 North West Street. In May 2008, the Board approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to previously approved plans (BAR Case # 2008-0081). In June 2007, the Board approved a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and a Certificate of Appropriateness for a two-story rear addition and other alterations (BAR Case # 2007-0040 and BAR Case # 2007-0041).

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval for the following items:

- Installation of single-light French doors on the second-story rear (east) elevation instead of BAR-approved multi-light simulated divided light doors
- Installation of single-light casement windows on the first-story rear (east) elevation instead of BAR-approved double-hung windows
- Installation of a pressure-treated (to be painted) wood railing on the second-story rear (east) elevation instead of the BAR-approved wrought iron railing
- Installation of 4 foot by 8 foot unpainted fiber cement panels on the south elevation instead of the BAR-approved condition to retain historic wood siding if it exists and is in good condition, or to install new wood siding to match the front

While the applicant has not specifically requested approval for the following item, Staff notes that historic siding was removed from the front (west) elevation and new Dutch-lap wood siding installed without the approval of Staff.

II. HISTORY:

The two-bay, two-story frame house at 227 North West Street was constructed between 1891 and 1896 as an end unit in a row of five modest townhouses (227-235 North West Street). When constructed, the houses each had a one story rear ell. Over the years, they have been subjected to a number of exterior alterations and several now have second story additions at the rear. At some point after 1985, the rear ell was removed from 227 North West Street. The house is clad in wood siding on the front and retains its original fenestration pattern and Italianate cornice at the front. The windows and front door are modern replacements.

In 2005, the Board approved a very similar two story rear addition for 227 North West Street entailing an almost identical area and extent of capsulation (BAR Case #s 2005-0077 & 0078, 7/27/2005). That project was never undertaken. The Board approved the current proposal for an addition and alterations, along with the demolition of the rear façade of the townhouse, on June 27, 2007 (BAR Case #'s 2007-0040 & 0041) with the following conditions:

1. That there be no parking space on the property;
2. That the fiber cement be used only on the addition and not on the existing house;
3. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding;
4. That smooth fiber cement siding be used;
5. That a mock up of the photo-voltaic panels be approved by staff;
6. That the French doors have performance divided lights or cut lights;

7. If the existing wood siding on the front of the house is deemed to be in poor condition and in need of replacement that staff be contacted to review the condition prior to removal of the siding; and,
8. 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.

The Board approved revisions to previously approved plans related to the addition and alterations on May 28, 2008 (BAR Case # 2008-0081) with the following conditions:

1. That there be no parking space on the property;
2. That the applicant work with Staff to determine if any historic wood siding exists beneath the brick tec on the south elevation;
3. That if historic siding exists and is in good condition, this should be repaired and retained. If the condition of the siding is poor, the applicant should install the same type of wood siding that was originally on the house;
4. That the fiber cement be used only on the addition;
5. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding;
6. That smooth fiber cement siding be used;
7. That a mock up of the photo-voltaic panels be approved by staff;
8. 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.

BAR Staff have approved two minor amendments to the above approvals for the following items:

- Use one-over-one windows on the front (west) elevation instead of the approved two-over-two windows (2/18/09)
- Change window configuration to match other window configurations in this row of townhouses (paired window on first floor front elevation) (2/18/09)
- Relocate AC condenser unit from roof to rear yard (2/18/09)
- Minor change in location of rear basement stair (6/3/09)
- Add transom over front door (6/3/09)

III. ANALYSIS:

The alterations in this application comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff supports the changes made to the rear (east) elevation regarding the single-light French doors and the casement windows on the first story, finding the changes appropriate and consistent with the *Design Guidelines*.

While the preferred railing on this rear elevation would be the originally proposed wrought-iron railing, wood railings have been approved in similar circumstances. However, the railing is currently an unpainted and unstained pressure-treated wood with a stock design. Staff recommends that, at a minimum, the railing must be painted to match the trim.

Staff cannot support the use of oversized fiber cement panels on the side (south) elevation. The Board has adopted the following policy with respect to the fiber cement siding, and Staff believes the same standards should apply to the proposed panels:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
5. That smooth siding be installed.
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Thus, Staff finds the current use of fiber cement panels on the historic block of the house to be in violation of the Board's policy. Furthermore, prior to the installation of the panels on the south elevation, Staff was able to see a small area of historic German lap siding, although not enough to determine if the historic siding on the entire south elevation was in good condition. The initial approval for the addition indicated that the south elevation of the rear addition would be clad in fiber cement siding, not panels. Staff believes that the historic siding was removed and the fiber cement panels were installed. If historic siding was not removed, the applicant must work with Staff to determine if historic wood siding exists on the south elevation under the fiber cement panels and require that, if Staff determines the wood siding to be in suitable condition, it be re-exposed by removal of the fiber cement panels, retained and repaired. In addition, Staff recommends that the fiber cement panels on the south elevation of the rear addition be replaced with fiber cement siding per the original approval. A vertical trim board should be added along this elevation to differentiate between the wood siding and the fiber cement siding. The applicant contends that the space between the side (south) elevation and the neighboring property at 225 North West Street is so narrow as to make the use of wood siding impracticable. However, it is common throughout the district to have narrow spaces between buildings with wood siding. From numerous site visits, Staff has confirmed that this elevation is visible from the public right-of-way, therefore Staff does not support an exception as requested by the applicant. Furthermore, Staff finds that if the applicant was able to install fiber cement panels within the narrow space, the installation of siding should be no more difficult.

The alteration that most concerns Staff is the removal of historic wood siding on the front (west) elevation. As part of the initial approval process, the Board made the following condition:

- If the existing wood siding on the front of the house is deemed to be in poor condition and in need of replacement that Staff be contacted to review the condition prior to removal of the siding.

When the applicant returned to the Board for alterations to previously approved plans in May 2008, the Staff report noted that: “The drawings note that the front of the house will have wood siding. Staff assumes that the existing wood siding which appears generally in good condition will remain.” A photograph from another project (229 North West Street) illustrates the wood siding in sufficient condition to repair and retain.

The applicant did not contact Staff to evaluate the condition of the wood siding on the front elevation nor the side (south) elevation when the brick-tek was removed. While a small portion of the siding was likely in need of an in-kind replacement, the majority of the siding was in sufficient condition that it should have been repaired and retained, rather than replaced. Without Staff approval, the applicant proceeded to remove and replace all of the historic wood siding. Obviously, this is of grave concern to Staff as the removal of historic fabric compromises the historic integrity of the building and the district, as well as undermines the Board’s efforts and intentions in the review and approval process. Further, the zoning ordinance and *Design Guidelines* explicitly state that historic materials should be retained and repaired rather than replaced. In addition, the zoning ordinance levies fines for civil violations of the zoning ordinance related to historic districts. In this circumstance, according to Section 11-207(B)(2), the construction, alteration or repair of a building or structure for which no building permit is required is a class three civil violation. According to the zoning ordinance, the applicant will be required to pay the penalty outlined in the zoning ordinance.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application for after-the-fact alterations to previously approved plans with the following conditions:

1. That the fiber cement panels on the south elevation of the historic block be removed and any historic wood siding restored or new wood siding installed; that a vertical trim board be installed separating the historic block from the new addition; and that the panels on the south elevation of the addition be replaced with fiber cement siding as previously approved by the BAR, with the final configuration of all of the above approved by Staff prior to the beginning of work.
2. That the pressure-treated wood railing on the rear elevation be painted the same color as the trimwork.

STAFF:

Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Lee Webb, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

Stephen Milone, Division Chief, Zoning and Land Use Services, Planning and Zoning

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS *(From the June 27, 2007 BAR report)*

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

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The proposed project impacts on existing window openings for the adjacent property on the north interior lot line. The applicant shall meet with Code Enforcement Engineering section to resolve this conflict.
- F-2 Verification is required from the adjacent property owner affected in F-1 above that the existing windows are not Code requirements for ventilation or emergency egress.
- 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, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance.
- 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 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-8 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-9 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.

VI. IMAGES



Figure 1. Existing front (west) elevation.

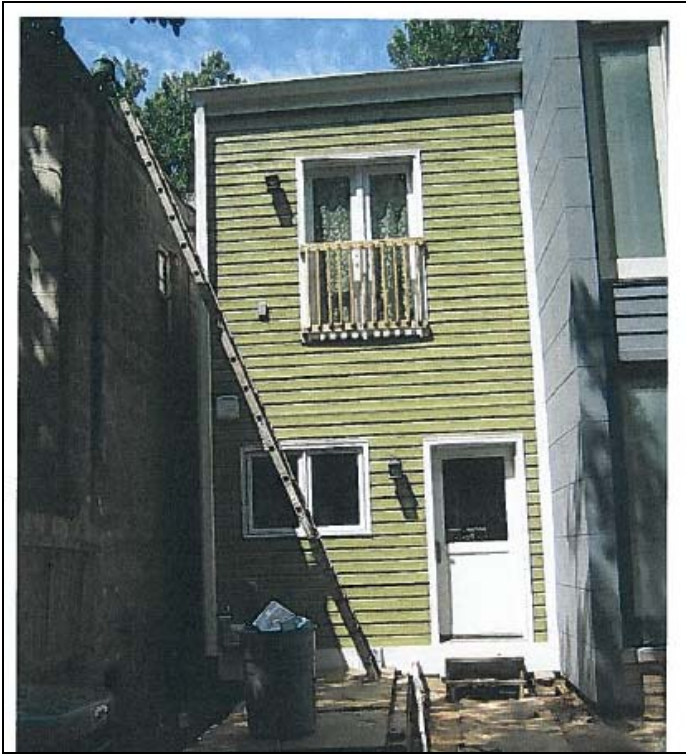


Figure 2. Existing rear (east) elevation.



Figure 3. Front (west) elevation showing historic wood siding in good condition.