

Docket Item # 8  
BAR CASE # 2010-0070

BAR Meeting  
April 28, 2010

**ISSUE:** New Construction (Phase II, James Bland Redevelopment)

**APPLICANT:** Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) and EYA, LLC

**LOCATION:** 801 Madison Street

**ZONE:** Zoned CDD #16

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness, with the following conditions:

1. That the Board waive the screening requirements for rooftop HVAC units and instead require the applicant to work with Staff, in the field, to locate the units so that they are not visible or are placed in the most subtle location feasible;
2. That the location of the solar collectors on the individual townhouses be approved by BAR Staff prior to their installation to insure they are minimally visible;
3. That all of the loft levels be painted the same color, either a light grey or light taupe, instead of the variety of subtle colors proposed by the applicant;
4. That the garage doors be painted the same color as the rear elevation of the townhouse where they are located;
5. That the single window transom on the side elevations of Lots 14, 18 and 45 be deleted;
6. That the ganged mailbox behind Lot 41 be relocated further into the development so that it is not visible from the public right-of-way;
7. That all visible roof materials (including porch roofs) be standing seam metal, metal shingles, slate or synthetic slate. (Development-wide condition);
8. That the applicant continue to work with Staff to refine the door, window and trim treatments so that they are stylistically compatible and do not have a mix of styles on a single townhouse. (Development-wide condition); and,
9. That the applicant use appropriate building materials, such as wood, composite, or synthetic materials which are high-quality, paintable and solid throughout, for items such as door surrounds, front doors, railings and the like. Front doors shall be solid wood. (Development-wide condition)


\*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 for a certificate or permit for a project that requires a development special

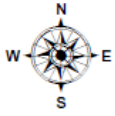
use permit or site plan under section 11-400 of the zoning ordinance, the period of validity shall be coincident with the validity of the development special use permit or site plan pursuant to section 11-418 of the ordinance.

**\*\*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, 703-746-4200 for further information.



**BAR CASE #2010-0070** **9/24/2008**

 Phase II



**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of 57 new housing units in Phase II of the James Bland Housing redevelopment project, located on the block bounded by North Columbus Street, Madison Street, North Alfred Street and Montgomery Street. Only those portions of the block owned by the Alexandria Housing and Redevelopment Authority (ARHA) are being redeveloped; the existing houses on the block facing North Columbus Street are individually owned and will remain.

Phase II is located on the block immediately to the north of Phase I, which was approved by the BAR in May 2009. The entire redevelopment project consists of five phases on five city blocks.

**Prior Reviews and Approvals for the James Bland Redevelopment:**

September 24, 2008: Approval of Permit to Demolish and Concept Approval (BAR Case #2008-0150/0151).

October 2008: Development Special Use Permit approved by Planning Commission and City Council (DSP #2008-0013).

May 27, 2009: Approval of Certificate of Appropriateness and Waiver of Rooftop HVAC Screening Requirement for Phase I (BAR Case #2009-0088/0089).

February 24, 2010: Phase II work session with the Parker-Gray BAR.

**Concept Review**

The applicant received concept approval for the five block redevelopment project from the BAR in 2008, prior to obtaining approval from the Planning Commission and City Council. The BAR concept review process was established as a way to give applicants an early indication as to whether the project they propose would ultimately gain approval from the BAR. At concept review, the Board evaluates the project's "scale, mass and general architectural character" and determines whether the overall plan is compatible with the surrounding historic district.

**Certificate of Appropriateness Review**

At this stage, the BAR is reviewing the details of Phase II, to determine whether the final design for Phase II complies with the Board's standards and the *Design Guidelines*; focusing on colors, materials, proportions, and relationships between architectural elements and not the height or mass of the project unless it was specifically reserved in the concept review approval.

**Phase II Project Description**

Phase II consists of 57 mixed-use dwelling units, although visually this phase will appear to be 39 townhouse-style units. There will be six ARHA triplexes; however, from the exterior, they read as two individual townhouses. The heights of the buildings range from two-story façades with a recessed third story to three-story façades with a recessed fourth story. The architectural styles of the proposed townhouses attempt to emulate and complement the existing architecture found within the Parker-Gray historic district. Adjacent to the historic townhouses on North Columbus Street, the townhouses are scaled down to two stories (three stories with the loft level) to better relate to the surrounding neighborhood. The site plan also strives to re-integrate the

block into the Parker-Gray fabric, something the current James Bland public housing project does not do, with street-facing houses and a new private street that reduces the uninterrupted bulk of the block.

Each block face is summarized below. See the attached drawings for additional detail.

**North Alfred Street** (ref. sheet A-001 & A-002, dated 3/3/10)

There are two main building sticks facing North Alfred Street, as well as the front façade of an ARHA triplex on the corner of North Alfred and Madison Street. The building on the southern half of the block will have five townhouses and the northernmost building will have nine townhouse units, two of which are ARHA units. Like all of the units throughout Phase II, the units on this block face have a combination of brick and frame facades in different architectural styles. Variety is also achieved through different window patterns, door styles and roof materials. The units are all three stories in height at the street, although the fee simple townhouses have an additional fourth floor setback or loft level.

**Montgomery Street** (ref. sheet A-003 & A-004)

Two buildings will front on Montgomery Street; one with seven three story townhouses (four of the seven are ARHA triplexes), and the other with six two and three story units. The fee simple units in both buildings will have upper loft levels; however, on the easternmost building the maximum height of the units will not exceed three stories in height, as opposed to four stories on the building to the west. Along this block face there will be seven different architectural variations and the same material variation seen throughout Phase II.

**North Columbus Street** (ref. sheet A-005)

There will be a single, five unit building facing North Columbus Street. The two units closest to the corner of Montgomery Street will be three stories in height, while the three units closest to the existing historic buildings will be two stories in height, with a third floor loft level setback. The cornice on these units will be lower than the cornice on the existing townhouses. Stylistically, the three southernmost units share many of the architectural details of the adjacent historic townhouses.

**Madison Street** (ref. sheet A-008)

The Madison Street block face contains a single building with five townhouses fronting the street and the corner of the ARHA triplex which face North Alfred Street. Each of the five units has a different architectural style. All of the units will be three stories in height, with the center three fee-simple units having a fourth floor loft level.

**Snowden Hollowell Way** (ref. sheet A-006 & A-007)

Two separate buildings will front the interior private street on this block, one with seven townhouses and the other with five. Architecturally, these units are significantly different than the alley units in Phase I. Instead of the industrial design vocabulary, these units have an art deco expression. All but the two of the units - the ARHA triplexes - will have the additional loft level at the fourth story.

Some, but not all, of the fee simple townhouses will have garage doors accessed off of the internal alleys. In addition, some units may have an optional rear deck accessed off the second floor and solar collectors on the roof.

**Materials:**

The following building materials have been proposed for use by the applicant. The additional materials proposed in Phase II are identified by an asterisk.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Siding:                           | HardiePlank Smooth Lap Fiber Cement   |
| Loft Level:                       | HardiePanel Smooth Fiber Cement   |
| Brick:                            | * Additional salmon color brick proposed (470 Modular)  |
| Alley Unit 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor: | * Split-faced concrete block  |
| Alley Unit Bay:                   | * HardiePanel, Herringbone Pattern  |
| Windows:                          | MW Jefferson SDL, Painted, Wood Frame and Sash<br>CPVC Brickmould and Sill<br>Precast stone sills and headers |
| Entry Doors:                      | Solid Wood, Painted   |
| Trim:                             | CPVC, Molded Polyurethane (“Fypon”), Painted  |
| Roofing:                          | Pre-finished Aluminum, synthetic slate and *stamped metal shingles  |
| Fences and Gates:                 | Cedar with Opaque Stain   |
| Porch:                            | CPVC and Fypon, Painted   |
| Rear Decks, Rails:                | Azek, Painted White   |
| Garage Doors:                     | Steel Flush Panel, Painted (trim color)   |

With respect to colors, the applicant is showing a variety of color schemes on the units. The recessed top floors will have a complimentary soft neutral palette compatible with the body of the house. (A materials board and color/materials notebook will be available at the public hearing).

**II. HISTORY:**

Parker-Gray has been recognized as a local historic district since 1984, with review and approval of exterior alterations, demolition and new construction by the by the Parker-Gray Board of Architecture Review. The boundaries for the locally designated district include all five blocks of James Bland Homes.

In early 2007, the City began the process of nominating the Uptown/Parker-Gray neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries of the Uptown/Parker-Gray historic district encompass the local district as well as a number of additional blocks. On January 12, 2010, the National Park Service listed the Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to that, in June 2008, the State of Virginia listed the historic district on the Virginia Landmarks Register in June 2008.

In advance of the demolition of the existing buildings in Phase I, the applicant thoroughly documented James Bland Homes as required by the BAR when approving the Permit to Demolish. The documentary requirements were: a written history, HABS/HAER level measured

drawings and photo documentation. Copies of the materials are located in both the Kate Waller Barrett Library and the Alexandria Black History Resource Center.

### **III. ANALYSIS**

Staff commends the applicant for the continued refinement of the units in the James Bland redevelopment project and for responding to the comments made by the Board at the last work session. Phase II of the James Bland redevelopment is not unlike Phase I, with a nearly equal number of townhouses and ARHA units, as well as the existence of existing historic buildings fronting North Columbus Street. Stylistically, some new elevations are proposed and others from Phase I are not repeated in Phase II. Generally, the townhouses are built to the property line but variation is provided through setbacks and the addition of some front porches and bays. The streetscape itself will consist of six foot wide sidewalks along all frontages, with four foot wide landscape strips with street trees. The proposed fences, trash receptacles, benches and ganged mailboxes are generally appropriate and consistent with similar elements throughout the historic districts.

#### **Architectural Styles in Phase II**

The exterior design expression, style, and detailing of the units in Phase II has continued to evolve in response to the Board's and Staff's request for continued architectural refinement. In the opinion of Staff, the use of vernacular forms and elements of representative architectural styles are appropriate and contribute to a sense of variety, not unlike the variety found within the existing historic buildings of the Parker-Gray district, yet the proposed townhouses are clearly new construction. The *Design Guidelines* advise that "while new residential buildings in the historic districts should not create an appearance with no historical basis, direct copying of buildings is discouraged." Staff finds that the proposed architectural styles generally satisfy this guideline through the use of appropriate application of neo-traditional styles.

In addition to the proposed new elevations and the refinements to the townhouse units approved in Phase I, the applicant has introduced the following new features and revisions: a new door style (4 panel wood); a new roofing material (stamped metal shingle); additional colors; and, revised elevations for the alley dwellings.

#### **Materials**

As a large project within the Parker-Gray Historic District, the Board and Staff has consistently emphasized that high quality materials, details, and finishes would be expected for this project. Although new materials, such as Hardieplank siding and trim, are sometimes approved by the Board on new construction, the use of some historically authentic materials contributes to the compatibility of new construction with the existing historic fabric. The applicant has chosen a materials palette that includes both historic materials, such as brick and standing seam metal, as well as new materials, such as Hardieplank siding, synthetic slate, and Fypon. For example, regarding roof materials for new construction, the *Design Guidelines* note that "roofing materials should reflect the traditional use of wood, metal and slate in the historic districts." Staff finds that the proposed materials are appropriate for new construction, are visually compatible, and have been approved by the Board on other cases of new construction, including Phase I.

### **Work Session Response**

Unlike in Phase I, where there were multiple work sessions, Phase II required just one work session with the Board prior to the current submission. The concerns and comments of the Board and the community were much more limited than in Phase I, with a focus on the need to revise the alley dwelling elevations and provide perspectives to show how the new development relates to the surrounding historic district. Staff has also met with the applicant on a number of occasions to further refine the Phase II submission. Only a few outstanding issues exist, as discussed below.

### **Alley Dwellings**

With respect to the alley dwellings, the “skin” of these units has been revised to provide architectural variety. Both Staff and the BAR strongly encouraged the applicant to utilize a different design vocabulary for the buildings in Phase II, given that the same alley style dwelling will be located in Phase I, Phase II and Phase III. The applicant was encouraged to look at the existing Art Deco buildings in the historic district as a guide. The changes include: the addition of split face concrete block at the first floor; canopies over the doors of some units; full light wood doors; balcony railings at the loft level; the use of a herringbone pattern on the projecting bays; and, a change in the color scheme. While nothing has changed on the interior of these units, they have an entirely different expression than the more industrial style units in Phase I. Staff commends the applicant for making this change and looks forward to seeing the design of the alley units in Phase III. Staff’s only recommendation is that the lintels below the proposed new canopies be deleted or restudied, as they seem to visually compete with the canopy immediately above.

### **Perspectives**

The applicant has provided two perspectives of Phase II. One shows the view from the corner of North Alfred and Montgomery Streets looking southeast toward the project. The other is taken from North Columbus Street and shows an oblique view of some of the historic townhouses on this block, as well as the alley dwellings in the center of the block. Staff believes that these images demonstrate that the new construction will integrate quite well into the surrounding community. The units near the existing historic properties on North Columbus Street step down in order to avoid a stark contrast between the two. Furthermore, in all but one instance (where the loft level is at the third floor, not the fourth floor) the loft levels are concentrated on the units in the center of the block face.





### **Additional Recommendations**

Staff has retained some of the more general development-wide conditions approved by the BAR for Phase I, and in one case, modified a Phase I condition related to the Waiver of the Rooftop Screening. Staff also recommends some new phase-specific conditions.

#### *Rooftop HVAC Screening*

Staff proposes to modify the following condition approved by the BAR with Phase I:

“In the event that any of the rooftop HVAC units are found to be visible from any public right-of-way after installations, that they shall be appropriately screened subject to final approval by Staff.”

Staff believes that the most appropriate way to address the visibility of rooftop HVAC condensers is to require the applicant to work with Staff, in the field, to place the units in a location that is either not visible or only minimally so. Staff generally discourages the use of rooftop screening around condensers since the larger structure can draw more attention to the screening than the HVAC unit would have by itself. This is very relevant in this project because there will be a significant number of rooftop units.

#### *Solar Collectors*

Staff proposes to treat the approval of the solar collectors similar to the proposed condition for rooftop HVAC condensers. The applicant proposes to install the necessary hardware for six solar panels to be located on the roofs of most unit types. Installation of the units themselves will be the responsibility of the future property owner. The solar panels specified by the applicant would measure roughly 6 feet by 5 ¼ feet. They would be placed at an angle, with the highest point 14 inches above the flat roof in order to maximize exposure to the sun. Instead of returning to the BAR for approval of the solar collectors on each unit, Staff recommends that the developer work with BAR Staff to determine the appropriate location of the future solar collectors to insure minimal visibility based on mock-ups in the field.

#### *Loft Level Color Palette*

Staff conducted a site visit to EYA’s Capitol Quarter development – a development in Washington, DC which has some of the same unit types proposed here – to look at some of the specific unit details that would be employed in the James Bland redevelopment project, including the loft level. The loft levels of each of the townhouses at Capitol Quarter, as proposed here, are painted a subtle color (cornices included) complimenting the overall body color. Staff was surprised to find that the color variety between units actually drew additional attention to this feature (see the attached photo from Capitol Quarter). As a result, Staff now recommends that the loft levels in Phase II be painted a single color, either a light grey or light taupe color, so that they better blend into the background and the sky.



### *Garage Doors Color Palette*

Staff was equally struck by the starkness of the proposed white garage doors, especially where there are a number of garage doors in a row. Two-car, overhead garage doors are not a feature found on historic townhouses in the district and their appearance should be minimized to the maximum extent possible. Staff has discussed this concern with the applicant and they are open to revising the color of the garage doors. Staff recommends that they be painted the same color as the siding on the rear of the house.

### *Window Transoms*

Only one of the twelve proposed windows on the side of Lots 14, 18 and 45 has a transom (sht. A-003 & A-008), which Staff finds to be very awkward and unusual. This transom should be deleted to provide consistency on this elevation.

### *Mailboxes*

The Board initially recommended that the applicant inquire about whether the USPS would be willing to deliver mail to the individual units within the development. Unfortunately, that is not feasible and ganged mailboxes must be installed. Planning & Zoning Staff has worked with the applicant to assure that the mailboxes are located in the most subtle locations possible. In Phase II, the ganged mailbox located behind Lot 41 on sheet L3 will be visible from the public right-of-way. At Staff's request, the applicant has agreed to move this mailbox deeper into the block.

Staff recommends approval of Phase II of the James Bland Redevelopment with the conditions discussed above.

### **STAFF:**

Stephanie Sample, Urban Planner, Historic Preservation Section  
Al Cox, City Architect, Historic Preservation Section

#### **IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

##### Planning & Zoning (Development):

The applicant must comply with DSUP condition #17 related to architecture/site planning. (The applicant has complied with many of these conditions already).

The applicant shall provide the following building refinements to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z:

##### *General*

- a. All HVAC units shall be located on the roof and not visible from public or private streets.
- b. All at-grade utilities shall be screened with landscaping or a fence/wall.
- c. The primary exterior materials for each unit shall be limited to masonry, precast, stucco, wood or cementitious siding. Secondary trim and accent elements may include composite materials if approved by the BAR. Samples of all materials shall be provided.
- d. Porches shall be wood and stoops shall be brick or metal and porch railings shall be a single material, either wood, or metal. Composite materials may be used in lieu of wood where specifically approved by the BAR.
- e. Chimney enclosures shall be brick, and watertables, exposed foundations shall be brick.
- f. Fireplace vents, flues, vent stacks and other similar protrusions shall not be permitted on any public street or private street frontage including corner units. Furnace vents shall discharge through the roof or the rear facade. HVAC vents or associated elements shall not be visible from a public street. Roof penetrations shall be confined to the rear of the building.
- g. Pitched roofs shall be standing seam metal (painted, galvanized or terne coated) and shingles shall be slate or metal, or a comparable high quality material approved by the Board of Architectural Review. (City Council)
- h. Fences located within the front and/or side yards shall be made of painted wood or metal with a maximum of 30" to 42" height with a minimum of 50% openness.
- i. All retaining walls shall be brick or stone.
- j. Fixed plantation shutters shall be installed for all windows within the townhouse tandem garages facing the public or private street.

##### *Townhouse*

- k. Continue to work with Staff to enhance the side and rear elevations of the townhouse units and ARHA flats.
- l. Continue to work with Staff to reduce the actual or perceived height of the south facing facades of the market rate and ARHA units on Wythe Street.
- m. Useable front porches shall be added to 10-12 of the townhouses and/or ARHA triplex flats with the locations to be determined in consultation with Staff. All porches shall be 6 - 8 feet deep.

*Alley Houses*

- n. Continue to work with Staff to address the perceived mass and scale and refine details of these buildings.

*Multifamily Buildings*

- o. Continue to work with Staff to enhance elevations of the multi-family buildings.
- p. North multifamily building: This building shall be refined by breaking its expression into subunits so that each of the architectural expressions has a consistent relationship to the geometry of the curved street, without modifying the footprint of the building.
- q. Architectural expression, multifamily buildings: the three proposed multifamily buildings shall be redesigned to the satisfaction of the Director, P&Z, such that each building expresses a clear and identifiable architectural style; further, the two south buildings shall be redesigned not to appear as twin buildings, and the north multifamily building shall be redesigned to express a smaller scale through subdivision of its mass into three visually distinct units.
- r. Entries at multifamily buildings: Building entries shall be designed to create a prominent and welcoming presence for all three buildings.
- s. The design of the multi family buildings shall be subject to the requirements herein to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z and the issues shall be addressed prior to public hearing before the Parker-Gray BAR. (P&Z) (PC)

Code Administration:

F-1 The applicant must comply with the Code Administration conditions and comments set forth under DSP2007-00013.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

**Archaeology Conditions**

1. Archaeological work shall be completed in compliance with the Programmatic Agreement between the City of Alexandria, GPB Associates LLC, the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office Regarding the Redevelopment of the James Bland Public Housing, City of Alexandria.
2. 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 Demolition; Basement/Foundation plans; Erosion and Sediment Control; Grading; Utilities, 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.

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. Continue to work with City staff to incorporate historic character into the design and to investigate the potential for historical interpretation on the site, including the creation and placement of interpretive markers. The consultant shall provide text and graphics for 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.

### **Findings:**

F-1 Documentary research conducted by Thunderbird Archaeology found no definite evidence of structures on this block prior to and during the Civil War; however, it is possible that refugee slaves may have settled in the vicinity during the war. Residential development in this area was occurring by the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. City directories and other archival sources show that most residents of the project area were African American laborers, although Euro-American laborers and a few skilled workers, tradesmen and professionals were also present. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the project area developed primarily as an African American neighborhood. The area therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight primarily into 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century domestic activities.

### **Transportation and Environmental Services:**

#### **Recommendations:**

Comply with all requirements of DSP2008-00013 and Site Plan DSP2010-00001. (T&ES)

V. IMAGES

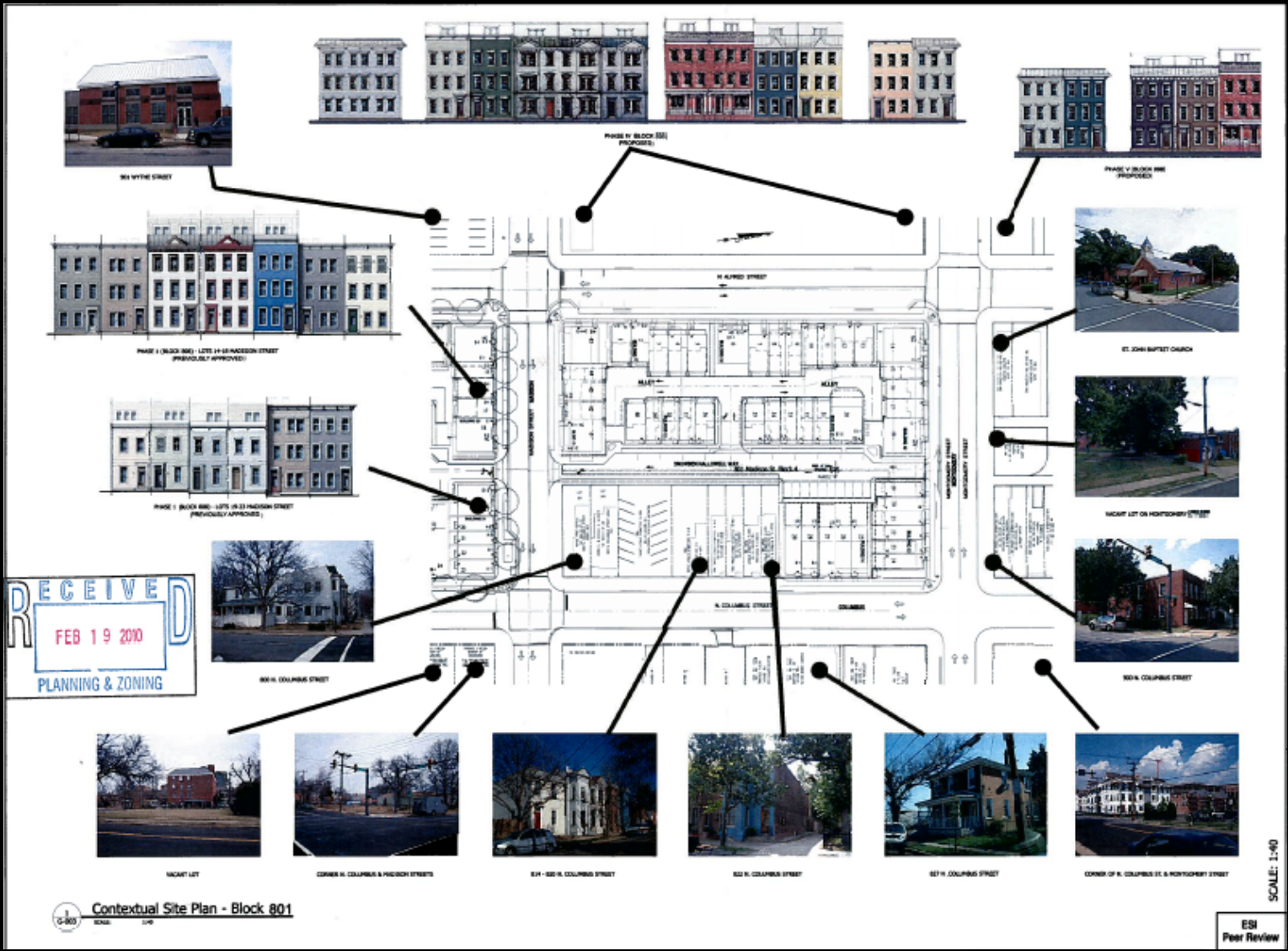


Figure 1. Contextual Site Plan.

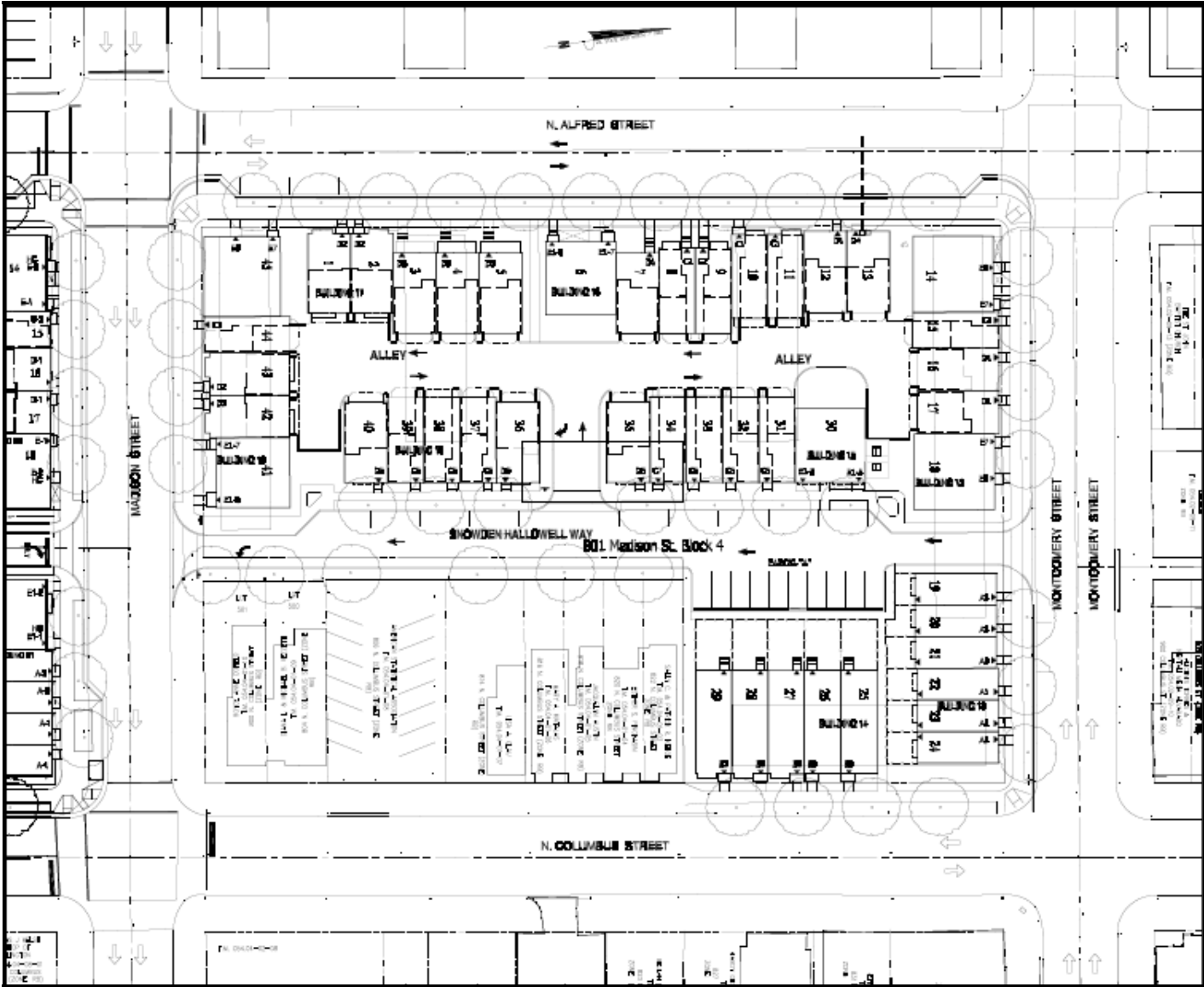


Figure 2. Site Plan.





Figure 3. North Alfred Street elevations (southern strip).





Figure 4. North Alfred Street elevations (northern strip).



Figure 5. Montgomery Street elevations (western strip).



Figure 6: Montgomery Street elevations (eastern strip).



Figure 7. North Columbus Street elevations.

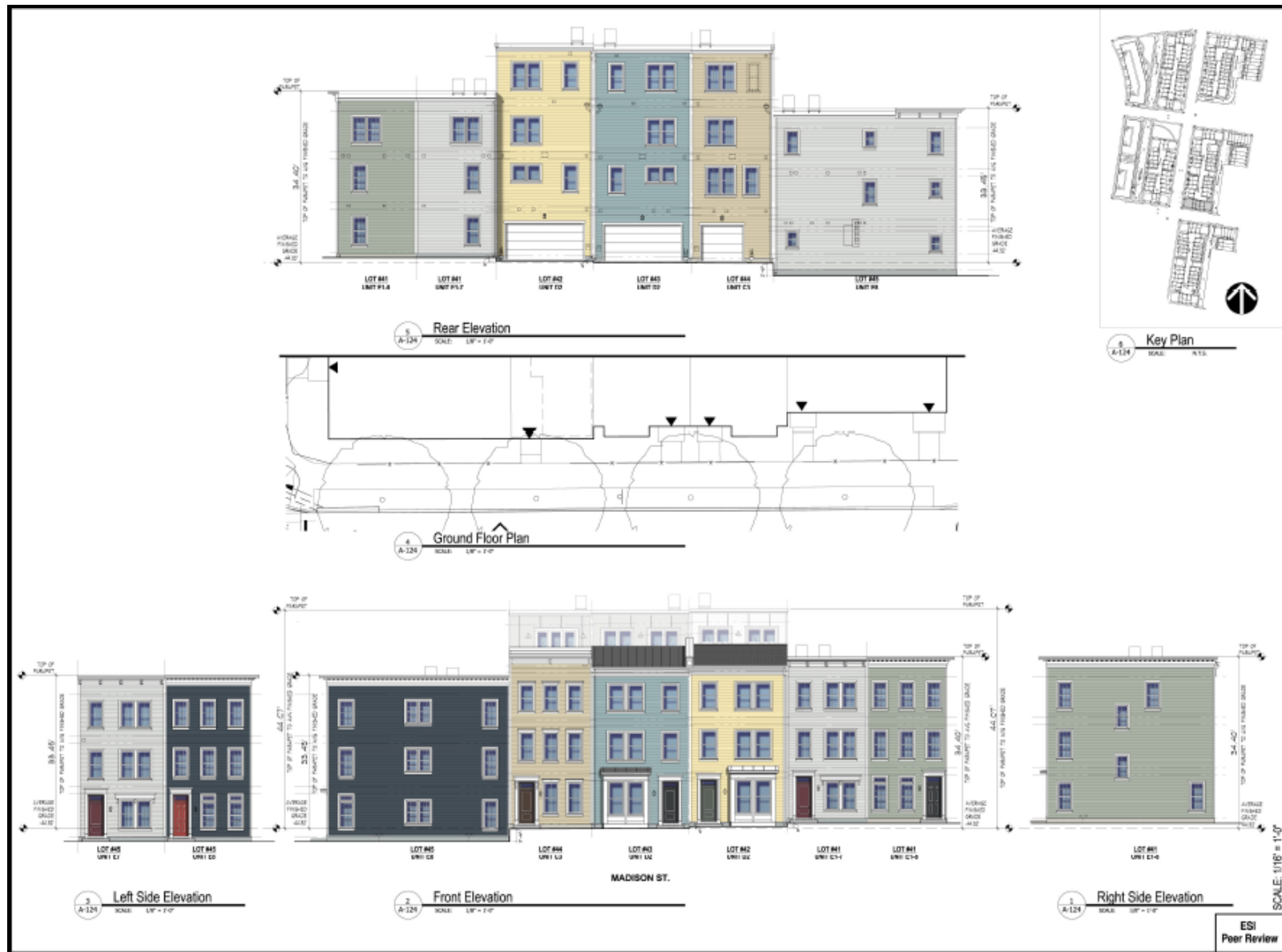


Figure 8. Madison Street elevations.



Figure 9. Alley dwelling elevations (northern strip).





Figure 10. Alley dwelling elevations (southern strip).



Figure 11: Perspective looking southeast at the corner of North Alfred and Montgomery Streets.





Figure 12: Perspective looking south from North Columbus Street, mid block.

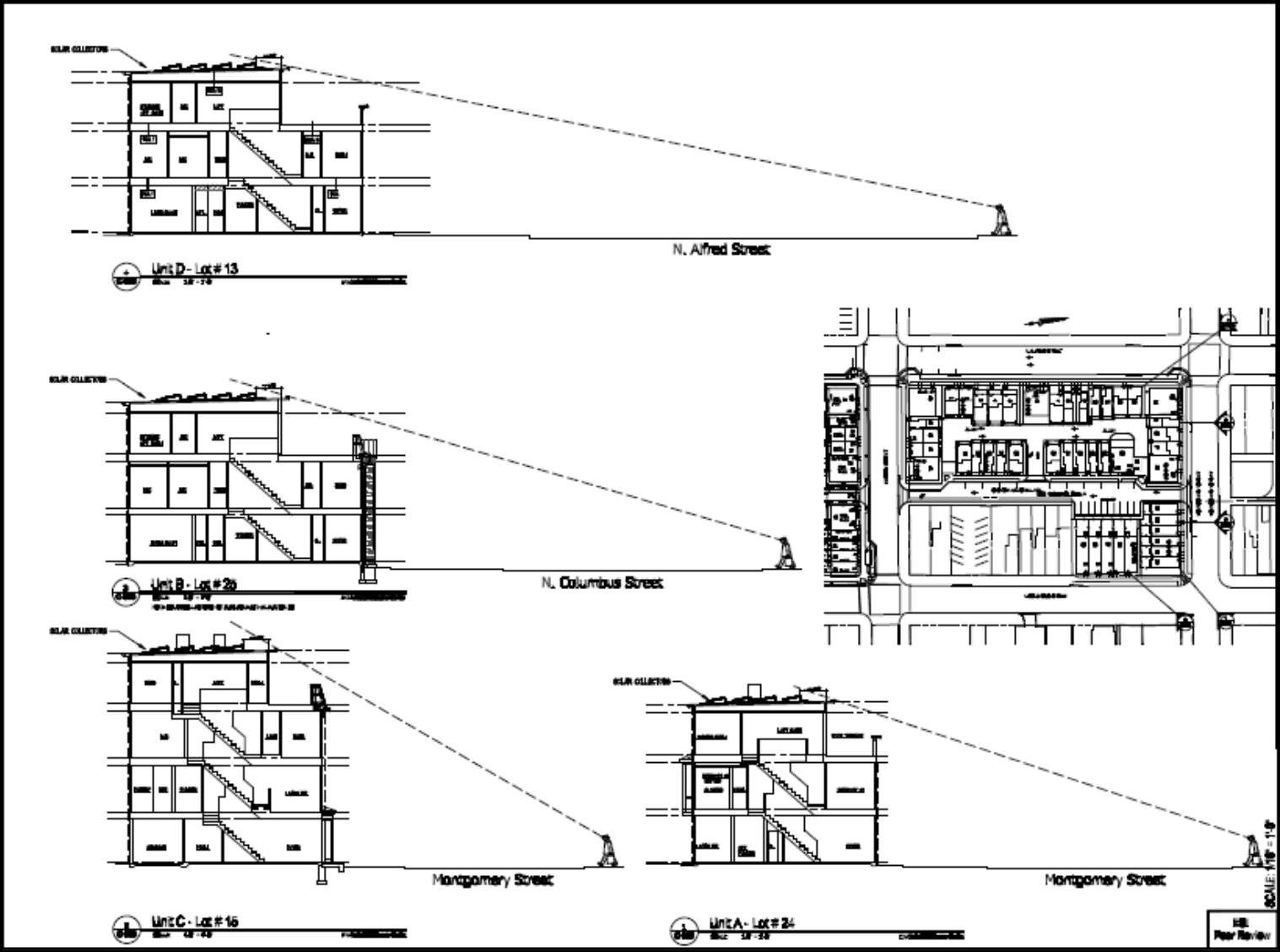


Figure 13. Site lines of various units depicting visibility of rooftop solar collectors.

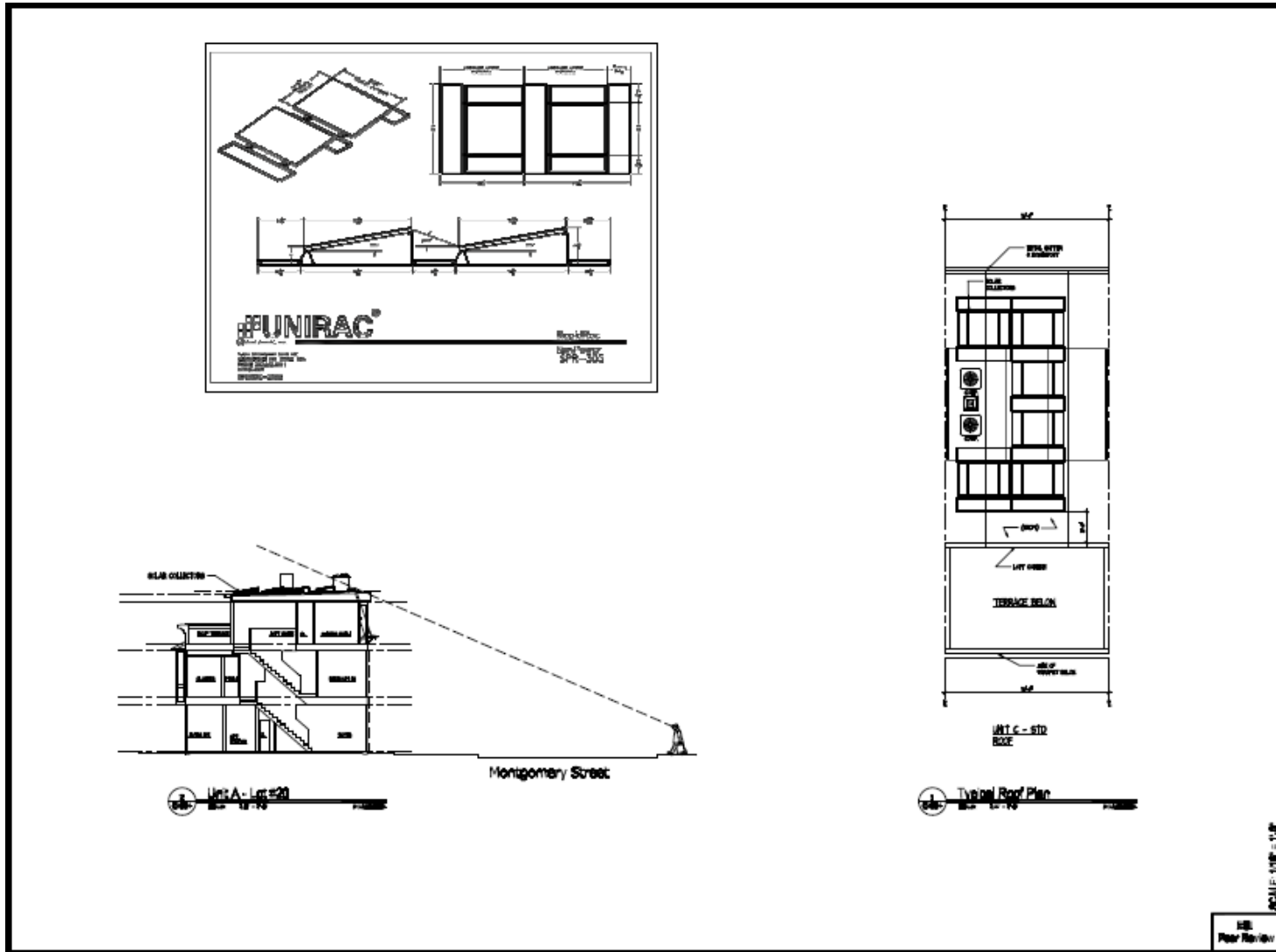


Figure 14: Solar collector details.

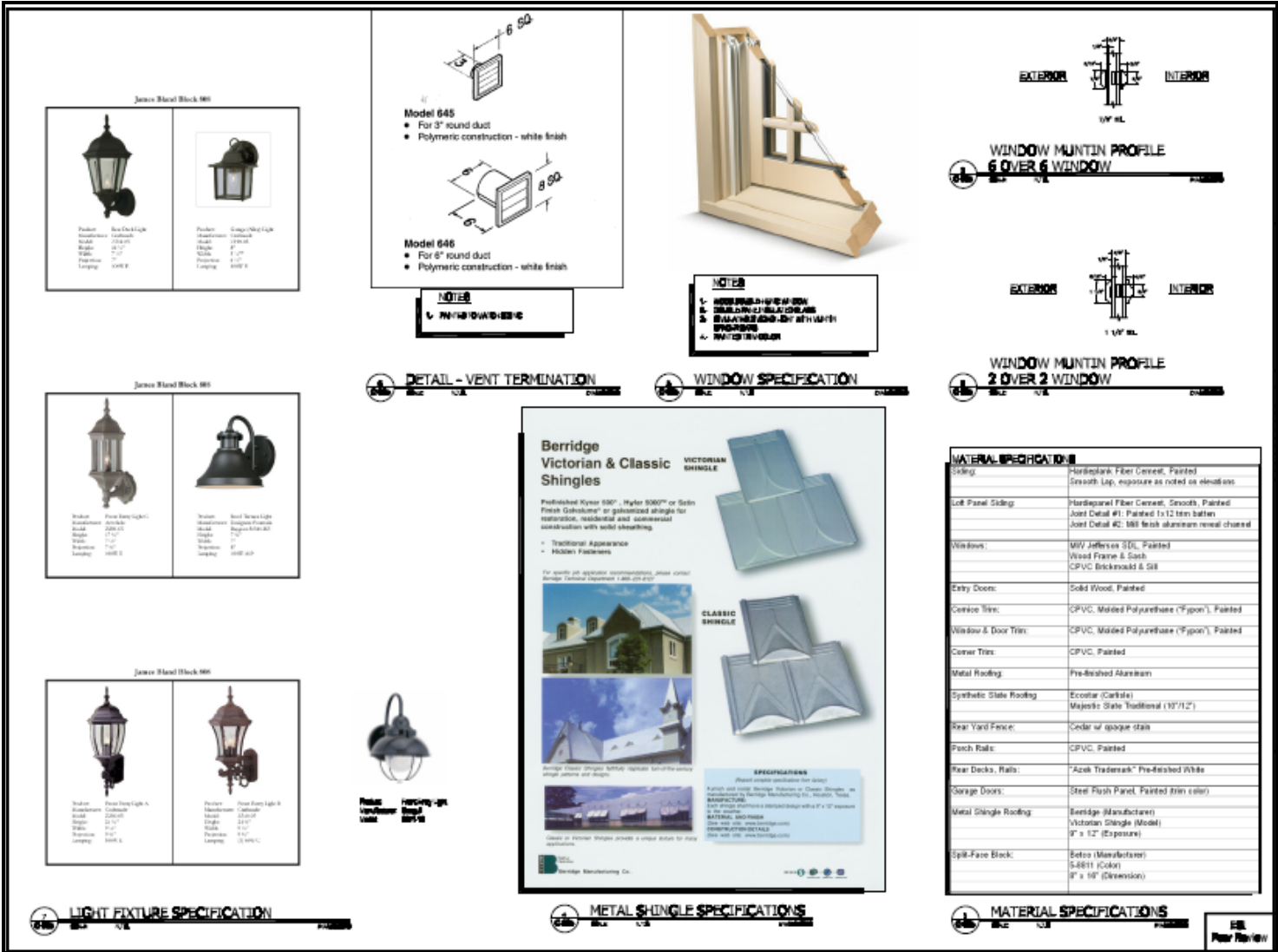


Figure 15: Material sample details.



Figure 16: Side elevation showing single window transom.

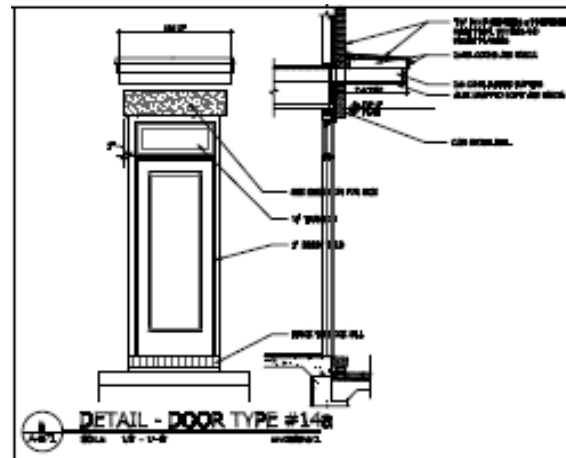


Figure 17: Detail of alley dwelling door with lintel and canopy.





**Figure 18. Photo of loft level at Capitol Quarters.**