

Docket Item # 5  
BAR CASE # 2010-0260

BAR Meeting  
September 22, 2010

**ISSUE:** Installation of a screen wall

**APPLICANT:** Brendan M. Owens

**LOCATION:** 227 North West Street

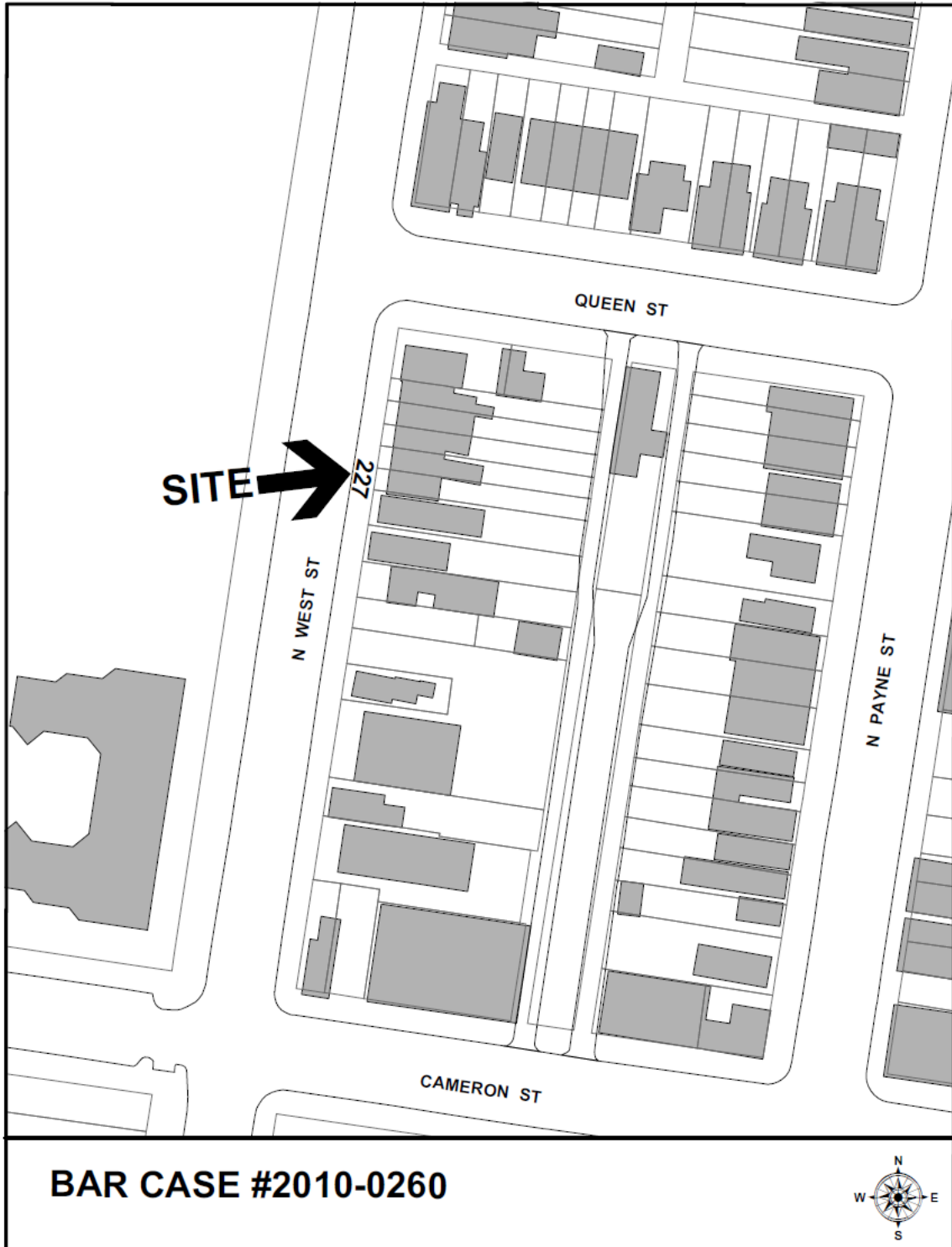
**ZONE:** RB/Residential

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

**\*\*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.



**UPDATE:** The applicant is returning to the BAR one year after the Board approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for after-the-fact alterations at 227 North West Street (BAR Case #2009-0199), with the following conditions:

1. That the fiber cement panels installed by the applicant without approval on the south elevation of the historic block be removed and that the applicant contact Staff to evaluate the condition of any historic wood siding underneath the panels.
2. If the historic wood siding underneath the fiber cement panels on the south elevation is salvageable, as determined by Staff, the applicant shall relocate the siding to the front (west) elevation to replace the new wood siding which was installed after the historic siding was removed without approval.
3. That the applicant may install smooth, fiber cement siding, without the nails showing in the installation, on the south elevation.
4. That the wrought-iron railing originally approved by the BAR be installed in place of the pressure-treated wood railing currently installed.

The applicant has met with Staff on a number of occasions over the past year and is now seeking Board approval of an alternative scenario related to conditions #1-3. The applicant has complied with condition #4.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a new screen wall to be installed between the subject property and the adjacent property to the south, 225 North West Street. The two story wall will screen the narrow 14 inch gap between the two houses. Setback approximately 11 inches from the front façade of 227 North West Street (approximately 7 feet from the front property line of 225 North West Street), the wall will have German lap wood siding painted to match the front façade of the applicant's house. The wall will tie into the neighbor's wall where the aluminum siding terminates in a J-mold. The wall will have a simple trim piece at the foundation and cornice.

**II. HISTORY:**

The two-bay, two-story frame house at 227 North West Street was constructed between 1891 and 1896 as the 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, all of the townhouses in this row 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 applicant has been before the Board on a number of occasions, as summarized below:

July 27, 2005 (BAR Case #2005-077 & 078)

Approval of a Permit to Demolish and a Certificate of Appropriateness for a two story rear addition and alterations to the front facade. The project was never undertaken.

June 27, 2007 (BAR Case #'s 2007-0040 & 0041)

Reapproval of the Permit to Demolish and the addition approved in 2005, with some minor modifications.

May 28, 2008 (BAR Case #2008-0081)

The Board approved relatively minor revisions to the 2007 addition and alteration plans.

Minor Amendments

BAR Staff also approved two minor amendments during the permitting and construction process, including the following revisions:

- One-over-one windows on the front (west) elevation instead of the approved two-over-two windows (February 18, 2009)
- Change window configuration to match other window configurations in this row of townhouses (paired window on first floor front elevation) (February 18, 2009)
- Relocate AC condenser unit from roof to rear yard (February 18, 2009)
- Minor change in location of rear basement stair (June 3, 2009)
- Add transom over front door (June 3, 2009)

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The screen wall complies with Zoning Ordinance requirements based on the submitted agreement executed between abutting property owners.

At the direction of the BAR, the applicant removed a portion of the fiber cement panels for inspection on the south elevation of 227 North West Street, revealing the historic wood siding underneath. Unfortunately, the foam insulation used during the renovation of the house is now permanently affixed to the back of the wood siding and in some cases on the exterior of the siding where the insulation seeped through the cracks in the siding. In the opinion of Staff, salvaging the historic siding and reinstalling it on the front façade is infeasible.

Since the last Board meeting the applicant has also provided a photo which he argues demonstrates that the wood siding previously on the front of the house was not original. The photograph (Figure 12) - taken at the start of the renovation/addition project - shows the presence of wood siding over Insulbrick (sometimes called Bricktex). Staff does concur that it appears that the white wood siding was not original; however, because Staff was never given the opportunity to see the material under the Insulbrick it is not possible to confirm if historic siding existed on the house prior to the installation of the new wood German lap siding.

Staff visited the site with the applicant on July 21, 2010, at which time Staff concurred with the applicant's assertion that the 14 inch wide space between the two houses makes the maintenance of the south façade extremely difficult. At the meeting, Staff suggested another solution: retain the existing low maintenance and fire resistive fiber cement panels behind a new 14 inch wide wood framed screen wall. This screen wall will act as a neutral hyphen to connect the two houses and eliminate visibility of the fiber cement panels (as well as the Insulbrick on the neighbor's house) from a public way. The screen

wall will be set back 11 inches from the front façade of 227 N. West Street and approximately 7 feet from the neighbor's front façade. This setback will allow for a small section of the historic siding to be visible for access for future historic research, and leaves the remainder of the historic siding protected below the existing fiber cement panels. The condition of the existing walls of these two frame buildings may be periodically monitored and accessed from the rear of the buildings or the roof, should future maintenance be required.

While there is no direct historic precedent that Staff is aware of for a screen wall to hide a gap between houses, there are some historic design features which are used to accomplish the same goal. One common feature seen throughout the historic districts are horse alleys, (see Figure 13 for a photo of horse alleys). Staff is also aware of a historic hyphen addition on South Royal Street which has some similarities to the proposed screen wall.

While Staff would have much preferred the applicant to comply with the BAR previous recommendations or consulted with BAR Staff when questions arose, Staff believes that the proposed screen wall is the best solution at the present time.

The applicant has developed a written agreement with the adjacent property owner giving the applicant the authority to construct the proposed wall, which will tie into the neighbor's property.

**STAFF:**

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

**V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Administration:

No comments received.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

**VI. IMAGES**



**Figure 1. Google maps image of 227 North West Street and neighboring properties.**

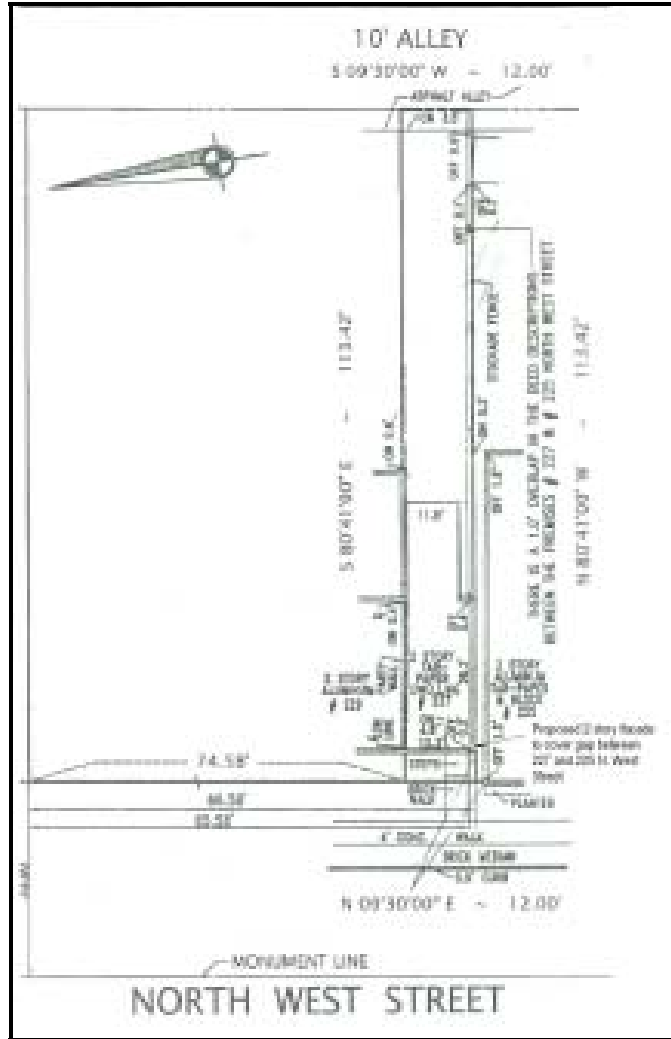


Figure 2. Plat showing location of screen wall.

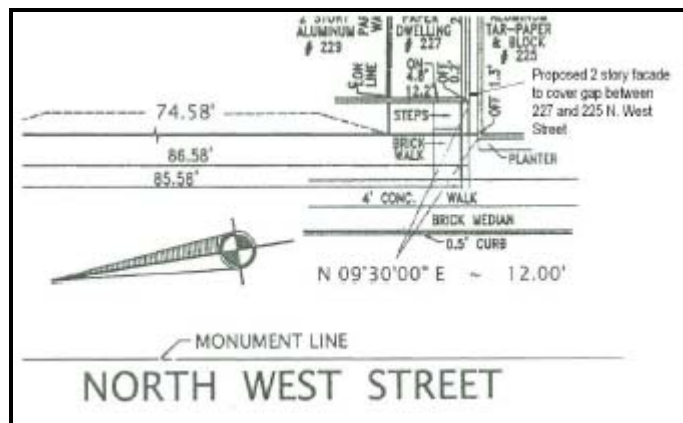


Figure 3. Detailed of plat showing location of screen wall.





Figure 4: Photo of front façade showing gap between houses.



Figure 5: Photo showing 14” width of opening between houses.



Figure 6: Front façade photos.



Figure 7: Rear of 225 and 227 North West Street.



Figure 8: Photo of rear of 225 and 227 North West Street.

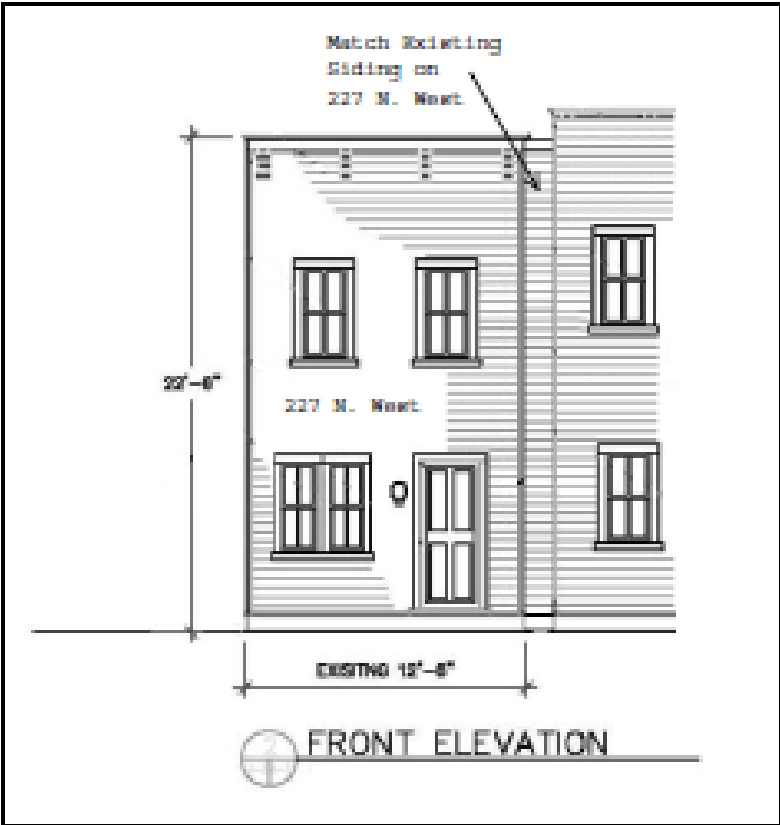


Figure 9: Front elevation of 225 and 227 North West Streets showing new hyphen/screen wall.

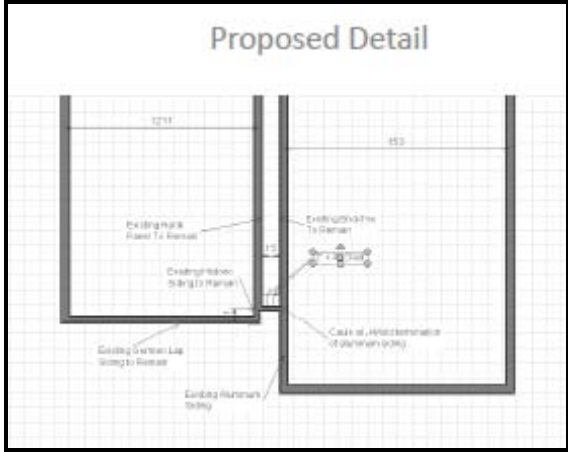


Figure 10: Detailed plan of screen wall.

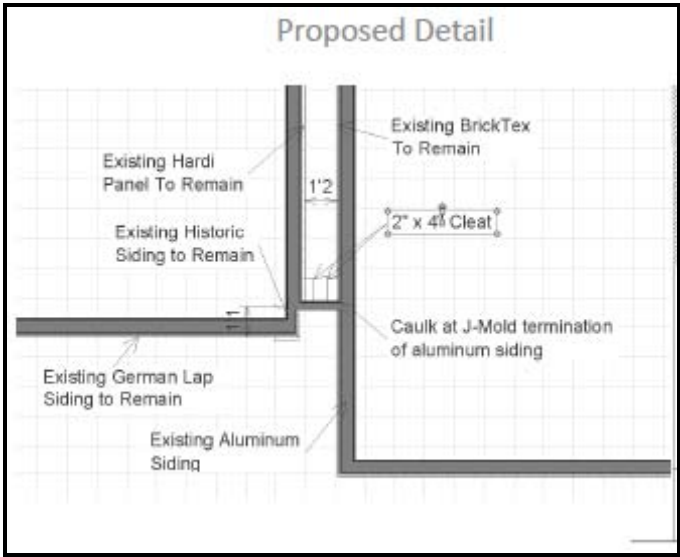


Figure 11: Close up of detailed plan of screen wall.



Figure 12: Applicant’s photo showing wood siding over Insulbrick.

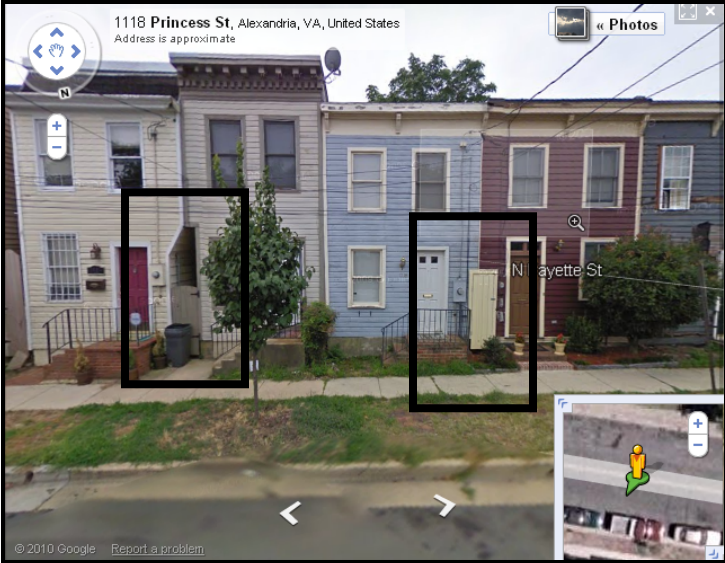


Figure 13: Google map images showing examples of two horse alleys on the 1200 block of Princess Street.



**Figure 14: Example of hopen addition on South Royal Street.**