

BAR Meeting
March 23, 2011

ISSUE: Alterations (Retaining Wall and Portico)

APPLICANT: Annette Wietecha

LOCATION: 415 North Payne Street

ZONE: RB / Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

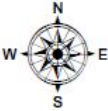
1. Approval of the stone retaining wall, concrete walk and stair;
2. Denial of the proposed front portico and railing and approval of a simple modernist awning and minimal handrail, to be reviewed and approved by Staff;
3. That the existing wood planter in the public right-of-way be removed by the applicant.

****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 final approval 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 siding or roofing over 100 square feet, windows and 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 #2011-0042



I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations at 415 North Payne Street. The alterations consist of the construction of a new stone retaining wall and concrete walk and stair, as well as landscaping within the front yard. In addition, a portico will be constructed over a new 3 foot by 4 foot brick stoop. The portico, as well as a stair railing and balusters, will be constructed of stained wood. The pedimented roof of the portico will have an industrial design motif with visible bolts. The applicant proposes to repair the existing pressure treated wood planter box located in the right-of-way.

II. HISTORY

The two-story, three-bay end unit townhouse at 415 North Payne Street was constructed in **1942** as one of seven units fronting North Payne Street. Nearly identical townhouses were constructed at the same time on the 1200 block of Oronoco Street and the 400 block of North Fayette Street. The subject townhouse is typical of those built in the mid-20th century to accommodate the population surges in this area during and after WWII. The brick townhouse has punched door and window openings. Decorative embellishments are limited to a simple brickwork pattern under the cornice.

Staff did not locate any previous BAR approvals for 415 North Payne Street.

The National Register Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District nomination identifies this property as a contributing resource.

III. ANALYSIS

The proposed alterations comply with the Zoning Ordinance, with the exception of the existing pressure treated planter located in the public right-of-way. Staff notified the applicant that an encroachment must be approved by Planning Commission and City Council if they wish to retain the existing planter. The applicant responded that they will remove the planter rather than pursue an encroachment ordinance.

Staff commends the applicant for making improvements to the front of the property and supports the construction of a stone retaining wall – these enhancements will improve the curb appeal of this severely simple row of intact vernacular brick townhouses.

In evaluating the appropriateness of the proposed portico, Staff looked to the other similar townhouses built at the same time on North Payne Street, Oronoco Street and North Fayette Street. The Board has approved two applications for simple door ornamentation on nearly identical townhouses at 1202 and 1204 Oronoco Street (BAR Case #2006-0164 and BAR Case #2005-0124 respectively), but never a request for a portico for any of these neighboring units. Instead, traditional aluminum awnings are historically much more common in this area. These were likely installed during the 1950s or 1960s prior to the establishment of the Parker-Gray Historic District.

March 23, 2011

The proposed front gable portico is a Post-Modern, Colonial Revival style which is well proportioned but the wrong style for this particular house. In addition to functionally keeping rain off of your waiting guest's heads, a portico provides an aesthetic and welcoming focus for the façade of a house. Unfortunately, on this severely simple row of townhouses, the proposed design visually dominates the elevation. Staff has no objection to rain protection at the front door but cannot support this particular proposal.

A fundamental objective of historic preservation is to ensure retention and protection of character-defining architectural features and materials, such as strongly articulated door or window surrounds which characterize many earlier periods and styles of architecture found in Alexandria's historic districts. Conversely, a parallel premise of the *Design Guidelines* is to state that *adding* such features to a building that originally had none is generally discouraged. The simple but strong massing and stark character of this house and its neighbors is characteristic of the modest residential units built about WWII and is a vernacular version of what has now come to be called mid-century modernism. A central design tenant during this period was to eschew ornamentation of any type.

As always, Staff continues to be concerned about the implications that approval of the proposed portico would have for future projects. There is potential for a sort of "embellishment creep" with this type of housing stock. There are many similar mid-20th houses in the historic district that could be made to look "prettier" and older by the addition of any number of add-on architectural features, such as door surrounds and window hoods, railings, awnings, shutters, cornices. Some of this has occurred in the past but staff does not recommend it on this relatively intact block of homes.

Although Staff does not support the construction of the proposed portico, Staff could support the installation of something more subtle and easily reversible, such as a fabric or glass and metal awning or of a thin cantilevered hood in a modernist style. The less expensive awning would address the applicant's immediate desire for protection from the weather, while providing only minimal and an easily reversible architectural embellishment to the front façade. Any awning proposed by the applicant should be reviewed and approved by Staff.

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

C1 A building permit will be required to be issued prior to the start of this work..

C2 Five sets of plans are required to be submitted for review prior to the issuance of the permit.

C3 At a minimum the plans shall show the framing and attachment of the new portico, footing/foundation/ and height of new retaining wall, rise and run of new stairs, handrail details.

C4 All work shall conform to the 2009 VA Residential Code

Transportation and Environmental Services

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. Also note that any work from the public right of way or to the public right shall require permits form T&ES. (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)

R6. 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)

FINDINGS

F1. An approved grading plan may be required at the time of building permit application. Information provided provide at this time do not indicate the need for a grading plan submission. Questions regarding the processing of grading plans should be directed to the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at (703) 746-4064. 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>

CITY CODE REQUIREMENTS

C-1 An Encroachment is required for improvements in the right of way not permitted under the City Code (Sec. 5-2-29)

C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99).

C-3 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line.

C-4 Roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (Sec.8-1-22)

C-5 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3)

C-6 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)

V. IMAGES

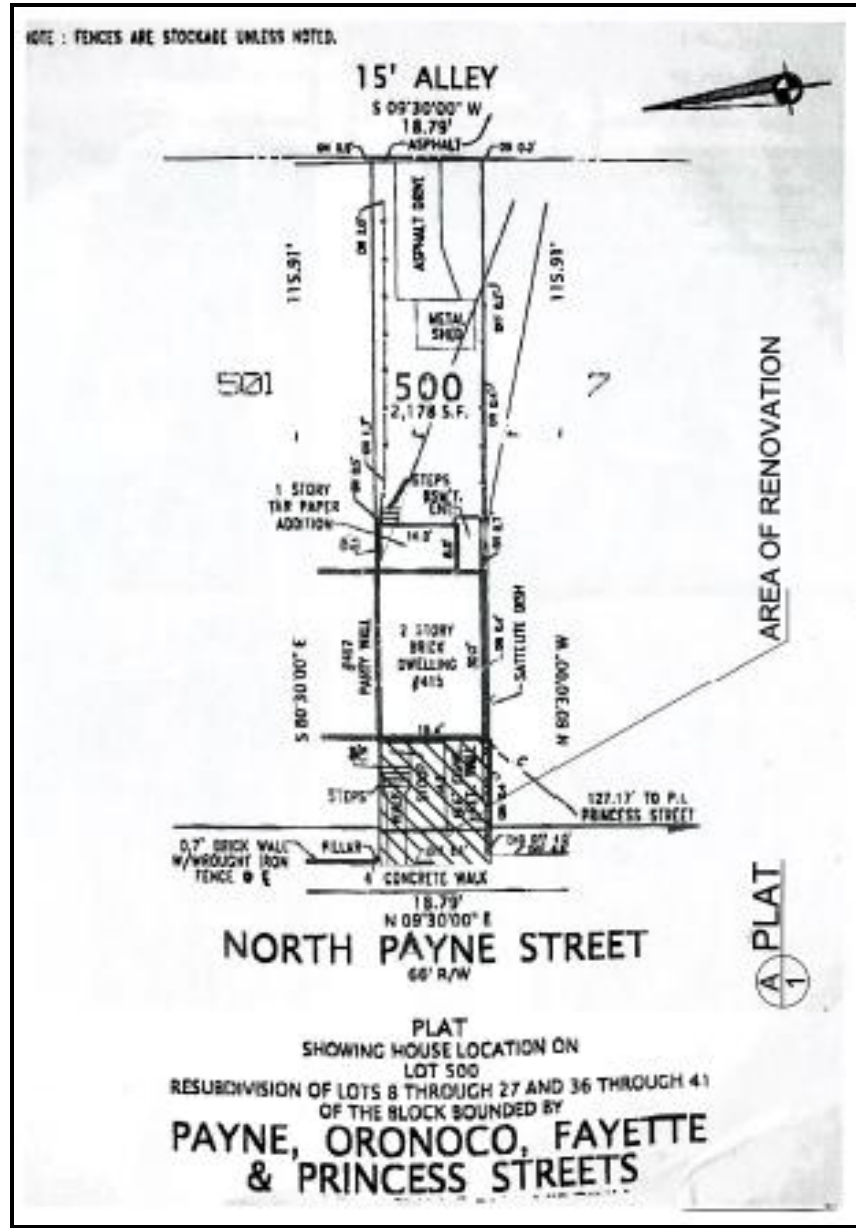


Figure 1: Existing plat.

PROPERTY
UNDER REVIEW



(A) 415 N PAYNE STREET



(B) VIEW ACROSS THE STREET

Figure 2: Existing site photos.

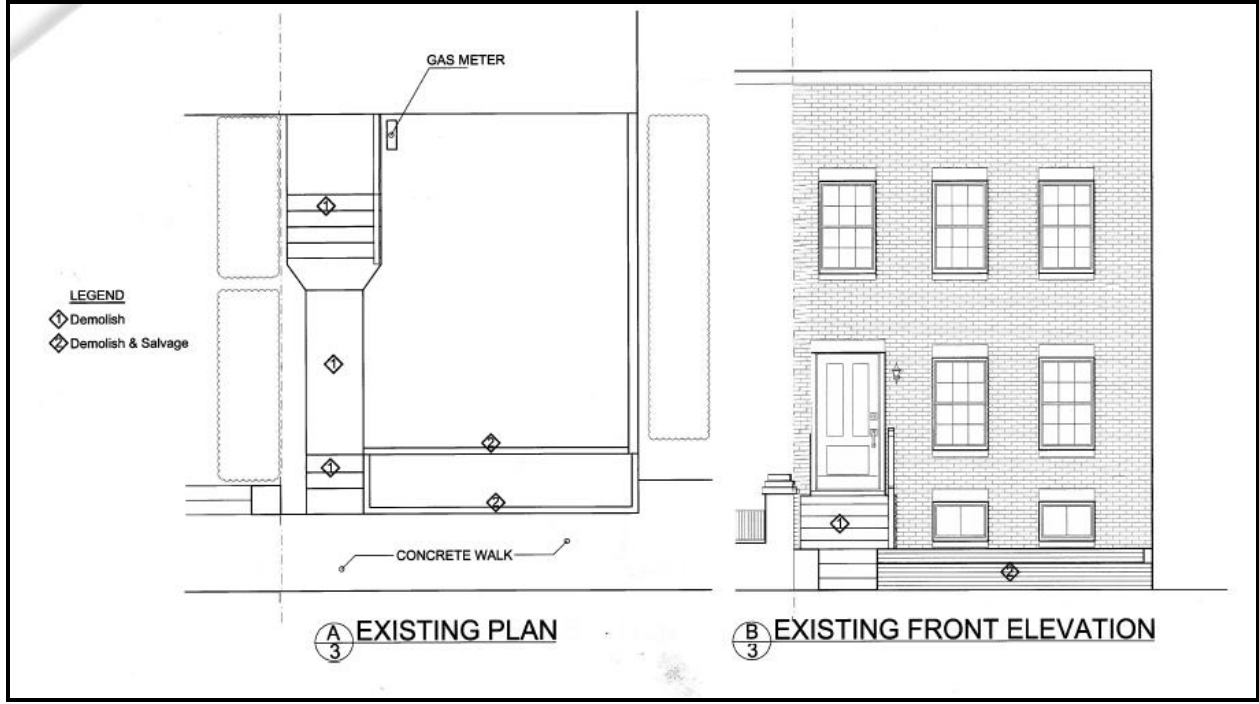


Figure 3: Existing plan and front elevation.

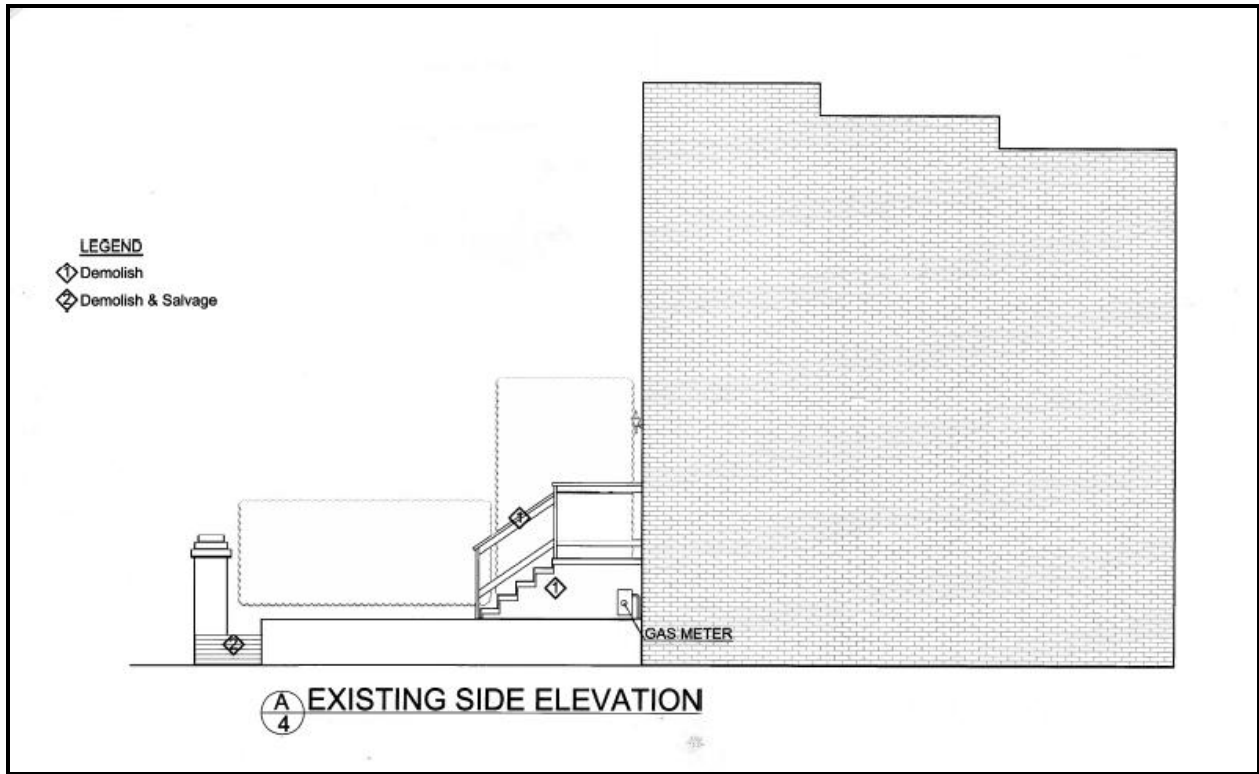


Figure 4: Existing side elevation.

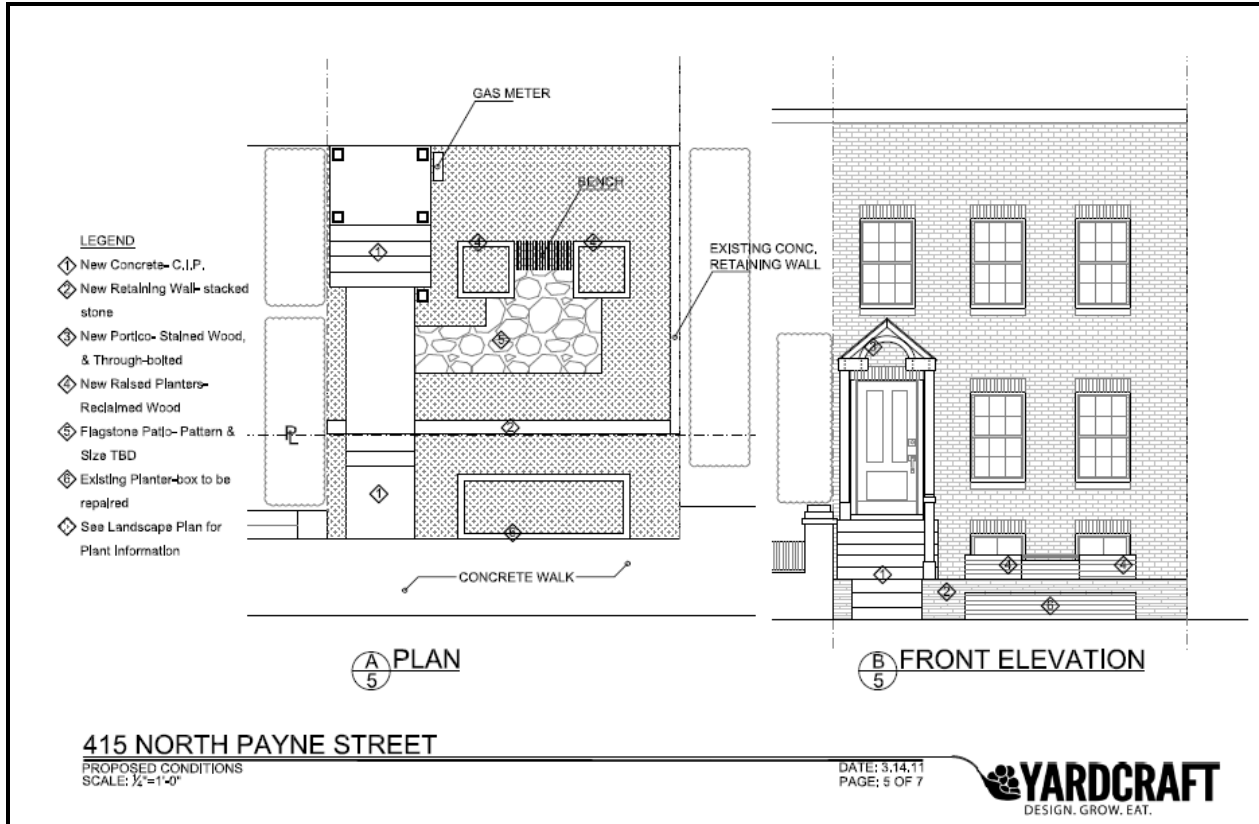


Figure 5: Proposed plan/elevation.

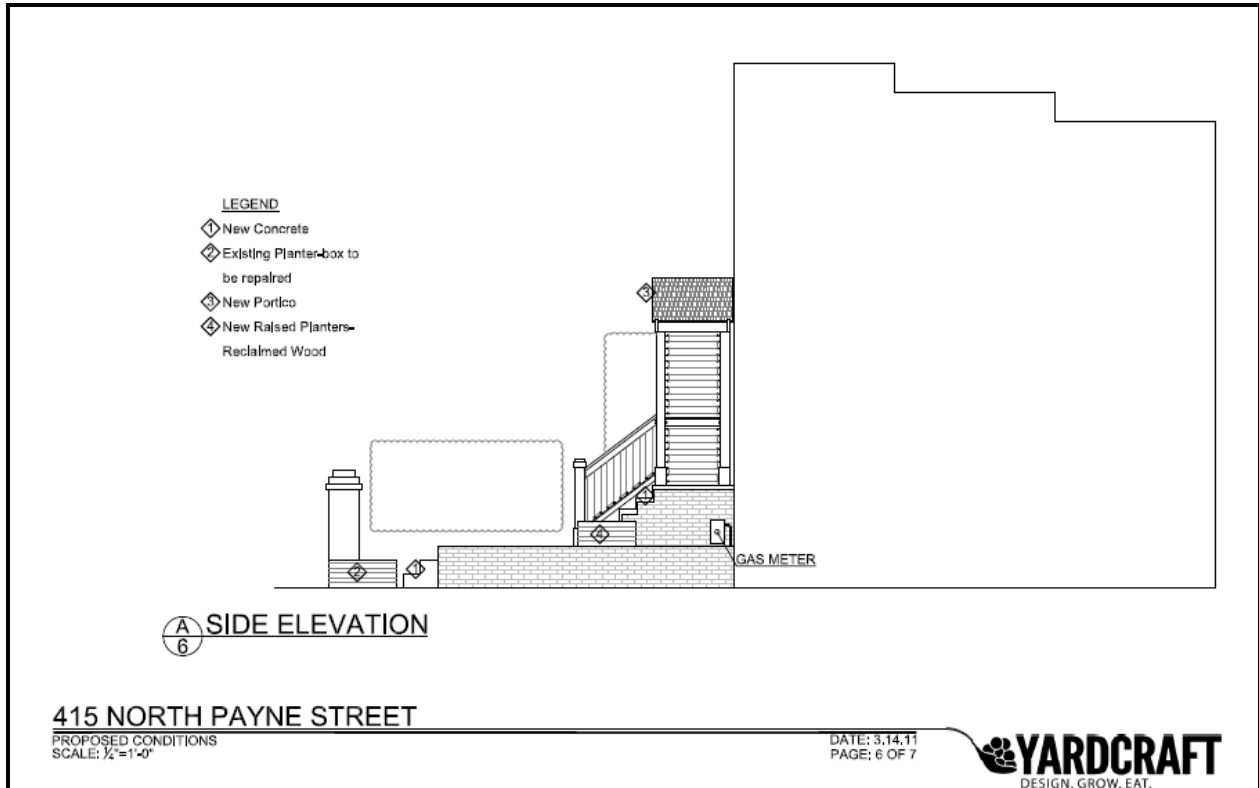


Figure 6: Proposed side elevation.

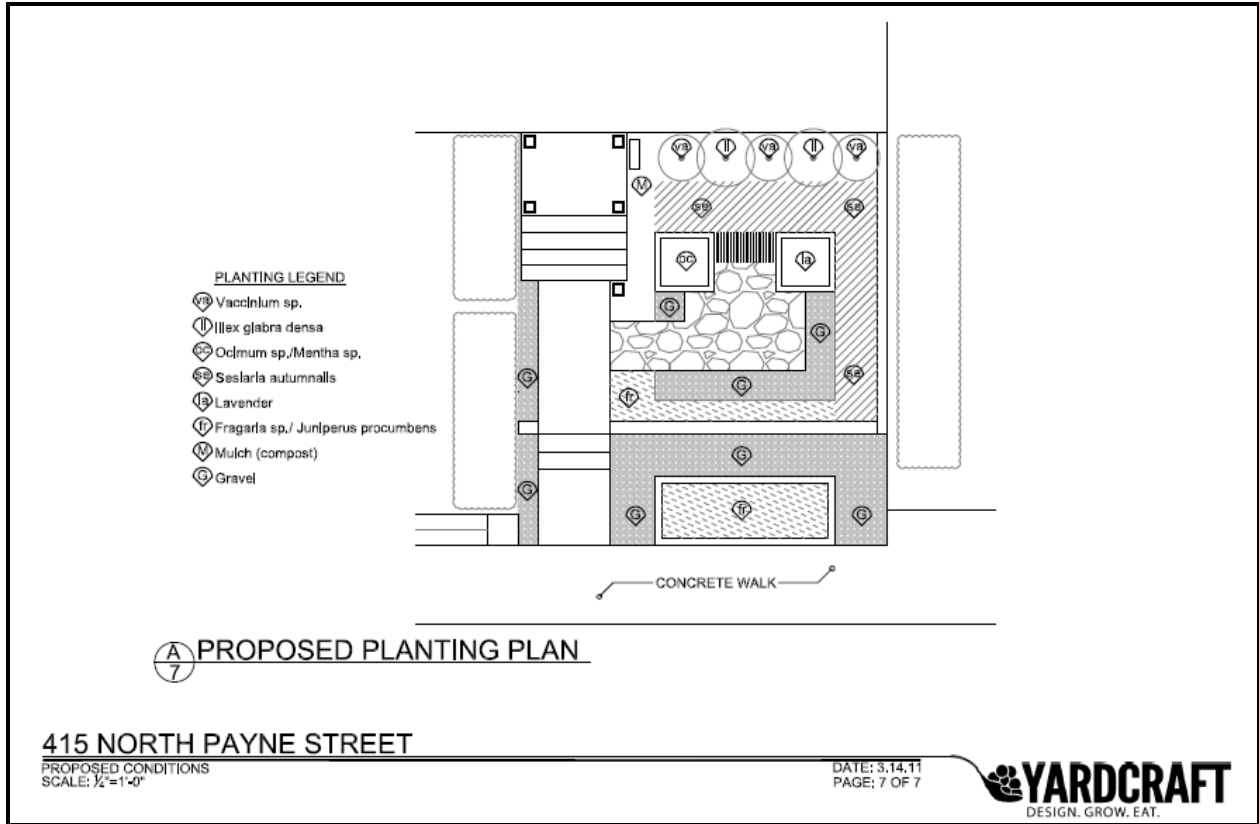


Figure 7: Proposed landscape plan.