

Docket Item # 2
BAR CASE # 2011-0094

BAR Meeting
May 25, 2011

ISSUES: After-the-fact removal of planter box, awning and chain-link gate;
Installation of new, planter box and removal of fence

APPLICANT: Larry Arthur

LOCATION: 1603 Princess Street

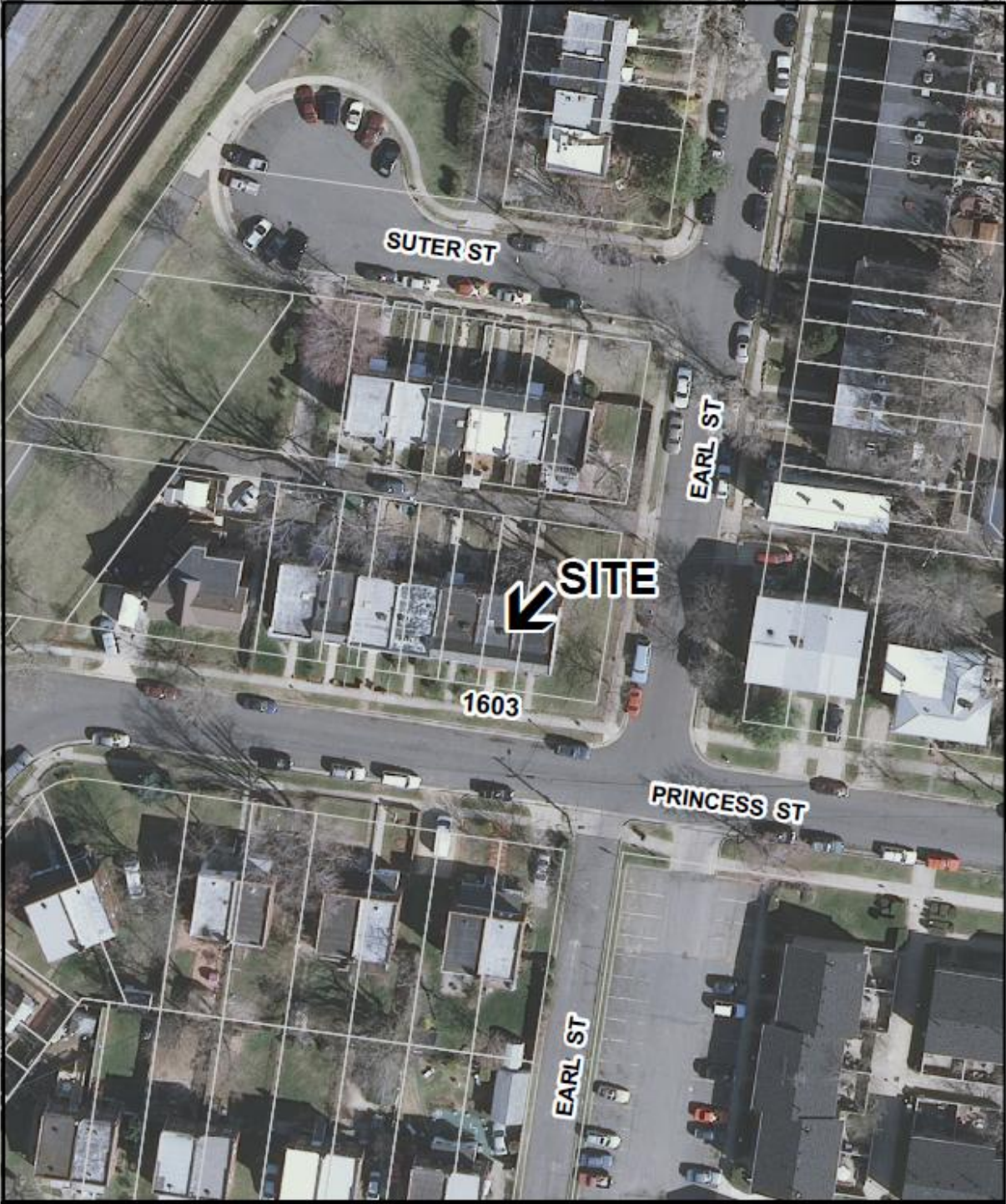
ZONE: RB/ Residential Townhouse Zone

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

1. That the metal hardware is carefully removed from the cast concrete lintel and all damage from the removal of the metal awnings be repaired.
2. That a textured, sand-like finish be applied to the paint of the replacement planter box to simulate a concrete-like finish.
3. That the new planter box is mounted through the mortar joints or remains of cast concrete and not the brick.
4. That the chain-link fence in front of the property be repaired and retained.
5. That the chain-link gate and gate crest be replaced, with Staff having final approval of replacement.

****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 #2011-0094



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting alterations and changes to 1603 Princess Street to include:

1. The after-the-fact approval for the removal of the original concrete planter below the second floor window, the metal awnings on the first and second floor of the front elevation and the chain-link gate.
2. The installation of a new, 78" L x 10" H fiberglass flowerbox painted the color of concrete.
3. The removal of the existing 36 inch high chain link fence which encloses the front yard.

II. HISTORY:

The two-story brick house was constructed after 1941, and is part of a collection of rowhouses located along Princess, Earl and Suter Streets constructed in the **1940s** (Sanborn 1941/1958) and representative of the affordable housing and rental units which were constructed during Alexandria's mid-20th century housing boom. The buildings were fabricated from concrete block with a brick veneer and were each built with four to six dwelling units detailed with cast concrete door surrounds and architraves, jack arches and recessed panels, built-in cast concrete flower boxes, false-mansard slate roofs and flat roofs with parapets, and brick belt courses.

The subject two-story unit is a three-bay concrete block building with red brick exterior with central entry door detailed with a cast concrete architrave. The second-story double window is centered above the entry door and capped with a cast concrete jack arch and ornamented with a built-in, full-width concrete planter. The original 6/6 wood or metal casement windows and simple, front entry door has been replaced.

According to Sanborn research and the Uptown/Parker-Gray National Register Nomination, only three of the five buildings in this development remain, as two buildings were razed around 1980 when the grade was raised for construction of Metro tracks.

Previous Approvals:

Staff was not able to locate any previous approvals for the subject property.

III. ANALYSIS:

Staff discovered the removal of features without BAR approval, as well as interior construction without the issuance of permits, while doing a walking tour of the neighborhood. The applicant has since worked with Staff to promptly resolve these outstanding violations. It is also important to note that his original request included painting the exterior façade of the rowhouse. After working with Staff and reviewing the character defining features of this mid-20th century vernacular rowhouse, the applicant withdrew the request. As highlighted in the survey previously presented, painting one or all portions of this continuous block of rowhouses would alter the integrity of the entire building.

Metal Awnings

Staff does not believe that these awnings are original to the building and therefore, supports their removal from the façade. Metal awnings are not a consistent feature on any of the remaining three

buildings in this development. Ghost marks, like the ones seen on 1603 Princess, are not evident on any of the houses without awnings, providing more evidence that they are not original to the buildings. Also, the metal awnings distract from the cast concrete lintels and cover important character-defining features such as the cast concrete door surrounds and architraves. Had metal awnings been an original feature on these buildings, Staff believes that the cast concrete details would likely not have existed. While Staff supports the removal of the metal awnings, Staff request that careful repairs be made to the portions of the façade where the awnings were removed.



Figure 1: Cast concrete door architrave and the ghost marks from the metal awnings at 1603 Princess Street.

Planter Box

Staff would not support the removal of the cast concrete planter box had the case been heard before its removal. The removal of the cast concrete planter box removes a significant character-defining architectural feature from this otherwise very simple rowhouse. Of the three remaining buildings, the planter box that was removed was the only remaining one. Staff does not have any information regarding the removal of the other planter boxes.

Staff supports the replacement of the cast concrete planter box with one made of fiberglass and painted a color to resemble concrete. Replacing it allows for the visual representation of an important character defining feature and provides a more finished appearance to the façade.

Staff also feels that the paint should have a textured finish to simulate a concrete like finish. The planter box should match the same size and scale of the original planter box as closely as possible. It should also be mounted through the mortar joints or remains of cast concrete and not the brick.



Figure 2: View of planter box before removal.



Figure 3: View of planter box after removal.

Chain-Link Fencing

Staff would not support the removal of the chain-link gate had the case been heard before its removal. Based on the findings of the survey that the Board requested on the mid-20th century vernacular rowhouses, Staff believes the removal of the gate and the gate crest eradicates a character-defining feature from not only the rowhouse, but the streetscape as well. This block of Princess has a mostly cohesive streetscape with the majority of the rowhouses having chain-link fencing, with gates and gate crests. Many portions of the chain-link fencing on this block are believed to be original to the period of construction. While it is unclear if the gate and gate crest of the chain-link fence at 1603 Princess is original since it is no longer present, imaging from *Google Street View* show that it is old enough to have gained historical significance.

Staff does not support the removal of the two portions of chain-link fencing near the south property line for the same reasons Staff opposes removal of the chain-link gate. While Staff recommends retention of the chain-link, Staff has no objection if the applicant wishes to use vegetation to soften the chain-link fence. However, it is important to consider how chain-link is less visually privatizing and therefore, preserves the historic public view of the open front yard. Staff believes that the two portions of remaining chain-link fencing should be repaired and retained and that the chain-link gate be replaced, with Staff having final approval of the replacement gate details.



Figure 4: View of cohesive streetscape of chain-link fencing along Princess Street.

STAFF:

Courtney Lankford, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Michele Oaks, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Legend: C – Code Requirement R – Recommendation S – Suggestion F- Finding

Zoning Section:

C-1 Removal of fence, awning and flower box complies with zoning.

C-2 New flower box complies with zoning.

C-2 Proposed hedge must be located on the subject property and not within public right of way. Proposed location was not provided and compliance cannot be determined.

Code Administration:

C-1 A building permit is required to remove the chain-link fence and to install a flower box on the 2nd level of the residence.

C-2 A detail of the material and method of attachment of the flower box will be required to be submitted for review prior to the issuance of the permit.

F-1 The gutter/downspout requires repair. No permit is required for this work.

V. IMAGES:



Figure 5: Google Street View showing 1603 Princess Street before removal of planter box, red metal awnings, and chain-link gate.



Figure 6: Current view of 1603 Princess Street after removal of planter box and metal awnings.



Figure 7 & 8: Removed flower boxes on other dwellings in the neighborhood.



Figure 9: 1611 Princess Street



Figure 10: 1607 Princess Street

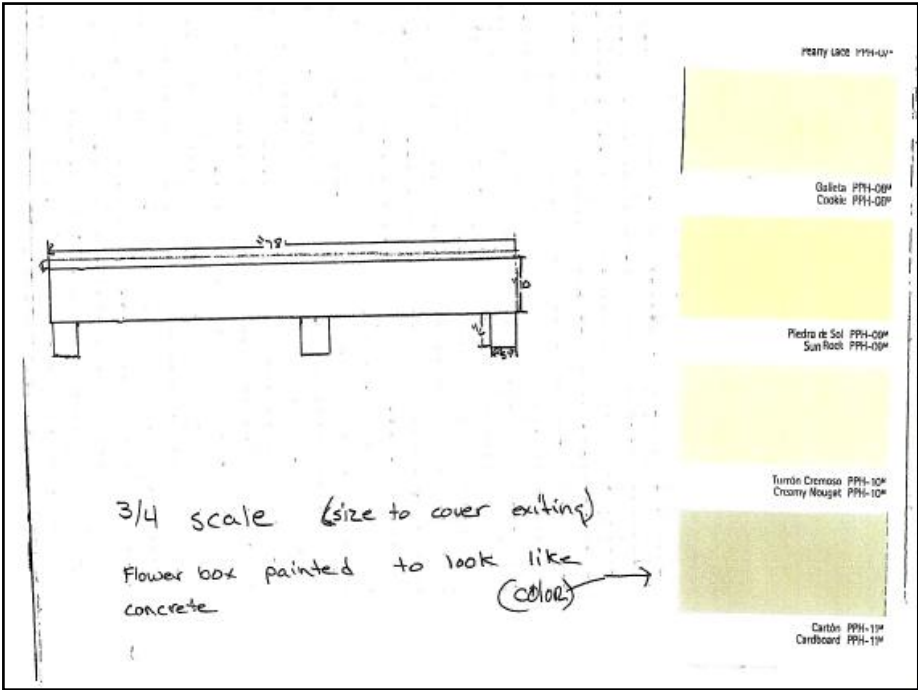


Figure 11: Proposed drawing and color selection of new planter box.



Figure 12: Proposed photograph representing what planter box will look like.