

Docket Item # 2 & 3  
BAR CASE # 2011-0191 & 0194

BAR Meeting  
July 27, 2011

**ISSUES:** Permit to Demolish and Certificate of Appropriateness: fencing  
shutters, stoop alterations, and portico roof replacement

Waiver of Section 7-202 (Fence Height Requirement)

**APPLICANT:** Anita Hall

**LOCATION:** 315 Buchanan Street

**ZONE:** RB/ Residential Townhouse Zone

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish with the condition that only the portion of chain-link fence along the east portion of the property be removed.

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

1. That a chain-link fence be reinstalled along the west and south portions of the property and that the fence be placed entirely on the subject property and not in the public right-of-way;
2. That no paver bricks are applied to the brick piers of the stoop;
3. That the wood shutters fit within the rowlock sills and concrete lintels so they do not obscure these character-defining features; That the shutters are hinged and operable (with final approval by Staff of hardware); and that the shutters are capable of covering the entire window opening when closed;
4. That the composition shingles be architectural grade per the Roof Materials Policy.

Staff recommends approval of the Waiver of Height Requirement with the condition that the 7 foot high fence run along the east property line until it reaches the south façade of the side addition.

**\*\*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.



**\*Note:** Staff coupled the two reports for 315 Buchanan Street, BAR #2011-0191 (Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate) and BAR #2011-0194 (Certificate of Appropriateness) for clarity and brevity. This item requires a roll call vote.

### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a:

Permit to Demolish:

1. An after-the-fact Permit to Demolish for the chain-line fence surrounding the west, south, and east portions of the property.

Certificate of Appropriateness:

1. After-the-fact construction of a new, 36" inch high, black, aluminum two-rail fence to enclose the west and south portions of the property.
2. Installation of paneled wood shutters on the front façade.
3. Stoop alterations: the applicant wishes to cover the concrete portion of the stoop with red brick pavers and reuse the existing metal railings.
4. Installation of composition roof shingles on the front gabled portico.

Waiver of Height Requirement:

5. A Waiver of Height Requirement for a wood fence along the east property line in excess of 6 foot high (per Section 7-200(C) of the Zoning Ordinance). The applicant proposes to construct a 7 foot high fence: 6 foot high boards and 1 foot high lattice.

### **II. HISTORY:**

The two-story, two-bay Colonial Revival style row houses attached to 315 Buchanan Street were constructed in **1948** and mimic a collection of row houses seen in other parts of Old Town, including those on North West Street. The subject unit is constructed with red brick, laid in American bond, with a side entry door surrounded by a gabled portico. Character-defining features include brick quoins, rowlock sills, concrete lintels, brick belt course, ornamental brickwork in the cornice, terra cotta coping at the roof, stepped parapet, and a chain-link fence in the front yard.

The Board approved an ADA compliance ramp in 2001 (Case BAR2011-00284, 11/28/2001). The addition on the house was constructed in 1985 and stoop alterations were done in 1965.

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

Staff discovered the removal of the chain-link fence and the installation of the aluminum fence without BAR approval when the applicant's nephew came into the Zoning office to inquire about Code requirements to replace a wood fence in the rear of the property. The applicant has since worked with Staff to promptly resolve these outstanding violations.

#### **Permit to Demolish**

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving,

removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?

(2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?

(3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?

(4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?

(5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

(6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

In the opinion of Staff, demolishing the chain-link fence along the west and south portions of the property violates section 1, 5, and 6 of §10-105(B) in the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance. Based on the results of the survey that the Board requested on the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century vernacular row houses, Staff believes the removal of the fence eradicates a character-defining feature from not only the individual row house, but the streetscape as well. This block of Buchanan has a cohesive streetscape with all but one of the row houses having chain-link fences, many of which are believed to be original to the period of construction.

While many feel that chain-line fences have negative connotations, this material has played an important role in the development of mid-century vernacular housing and their cultural landscape. Wire fencing originated in Europe in the mid-1800s as an innovative and affordable fence solution and become popular in America in the early 1900s. Their popularity in America grew abundantly by the 1950s and 1960s, at which time many of the chain-link fences in the Parker-Gray district were installed. These fences help tell the story of the housing development in this portion of the district and represent a character-defining feature of these extremely simple vernacular designs.

The preservation movement in the United States is continually expanding into a more culturally encompassing movement. Most recently, the movement has embraced preservation of the recent past, a focus that revolves around mid-twentieth century and post-World War II structures. By eradicating this “simple fencing solution,” the applicant would be removing an important contextual clue to the original occupants of this neighborhood. The portions of the district that still contain cohesive block fronts of early or original chain-link fences need to be preserved so that they can continue to “promote the general welfare by...encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage” for historians, architects, preservationists, community members, and visitors.

Staff supports the demolition of the portion of the chain-link along the east of the property, as it runs perpendicular to a non-cohesive block face. While the zoning ordinance considers this portion of the yard a side yard, Staff feels it can be evaluated in terms of fence material as a rear

yard. Staff does not support the demolition of the portion of the chain-link along the west and south portion of the property.

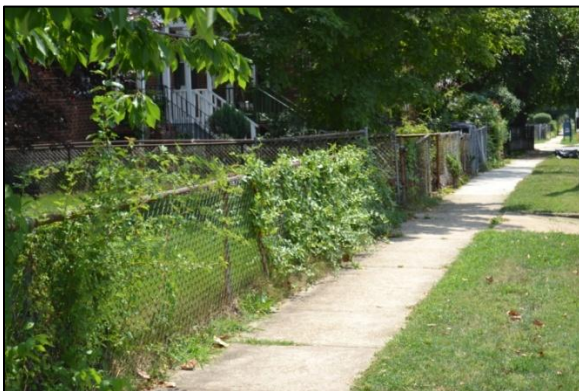
### ***Chain-Link Fence***

Had the applicant requested a Permit to Demolish the chain-link fence in these two front yards prior its removal, it would not have been supported by Staff. In this particular block, the majority of the homes still appear to have their original fences. Staff, therefore, recommends that the original chain-link fence be reinstalled or a new one be put in its place in the front yards. It is important to note that, once removed, any new fence is required to be on or within the property line and that it cannot go back to its original location, as it was located on public right-of-way. If the applicant wishes to reinstall the fence at the original location, the applicant will need to request an Encroachment, and defer the BAR decision until that is granted.

### **Certificate of Appropriateness**

#### ***Aluminum Fence***

Staff does not support the after-the-fact installation of the 36" tall aluminum fence along the west and south property lines, as a chain-link fence is more historically appropriate for the subject property. The entire portion of Buchanan Street has a cohesive block face of chain-link and allowing the more high-style, late Victorian period aluminum fence would not be in keeping with the uniform character of the block or the Modernist/Colonial Revival style of the buildings. The aluminum fence that was installed is one that snaps together and is therefore, very delicate. While the aluminum fence is open and preserves the public view of the open front yard like chain-link does, the lack of weight and durability of the aluminum fence is not representative of this important characteristic of historic chain-link fences.



***Figure 1: Cohesive block face of 315 Buchanan Street  
(from left, 323, 321, 319, 317 and 319)***



***Figure 2: Cohesive block face of chain-link on the  
block south of 315 Buchanan Street  
(from left: 313, 311, 309, 307, 305 and 303)***

However, if the Board approves the after-the-fact Permit to Demolish for all portions of the chain-link fence and if the Board opts to approve a replacement material other than chain-link, Staff feels that a simple metal fence that is visually open and vernacular in style is an appropriate substitute. A crimped wire fence or double loop fence would also be appropriate.



*Figure 3: Crimped wire fence.*



*Figure 4: Double loop metal fence.*

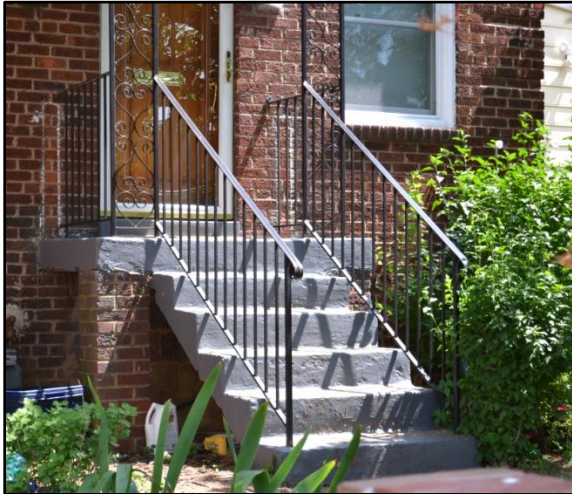
### ***Shutters***

The applicant is proposing to install paneled wood shutters on the front (west) façade of the row house. When evaluating the installation of shutters on a building that historically did not have shutters, the style and original level of architectural detail must be considered. The *Design Guidelines* state that: “shutters can detract from the design integrity of a building and create a false impression of the architectural character of a structure.” The *Design Guidelines* also state that “window shutters should be hinged and operable” and “should be the appropriate size and shape for the opening.” For instance, small shutters are not appropriate when nailed to the brick on either side of a modern picture window or pairs of windows.

The subject row house is of the Colonial Revival style, on which shutters are common, and has single width window openings. While the addition of shutters will dress up the otherwise vernacular style structure and slightly obscure a portion of the brick quoin detailing, shutters are easily removable and therefore supported by Staff if they meet the following conditions: that they fit within the rowlock sills and concrete lintels so they do not obscure these character-defining features; that they are hinged and operable (with final approval of Staff of hardware); and that the shutters are capable of covering the entire window opening when closed.

### ***Stoop Alterations***

Staff believes that the only remaining original feature of the subject portico and stoop is the gable roof structure and the brick piers. Based on a survey of these row houses and other row houses of the same design within Old Town, Staff has determined the original design of the entries included a shed or a gable roof structure which alternated at each unit, wood support columns, wood landing, railings and steps, and brick piers. Other evidence of this design includes the paint ghost marks of earlier railings located on the building wall and a 1965 building permit which allowed replacement steps on the front of the house (at which time the wood railings and support columns were likely changed to metal). Staff is supportive of the applicants request to cover the concrete portion of the stoop with brick pavers so long as no pavers are applied to the brick piers, as these are an original feature of the row house. The applicant is intending to reuse the current metal railings and support columns.



*Figure 5: Close-up of stoop at 315 Buchanan. Note the ghost marks on either side of the door.*



*Figure 6: Example of the brick paver the applicant intends to use to cover the concrete portion of the stoop.*

### ***Portico Roof Shingles***

Based on the previously mentioned survey, Staff believes that the roofs of the porticos on these row houses were originally clad in composition shingles. The *Roof Materials Policy* states that “original composition roofing may be replaced with architectural grade composition roofing.” Staff recommends the use of architectural grade composition shingles for the roof cladding in a weathered wood or slate blend color.

### **Waiver of Height Requirement - Section 7-202(C)**

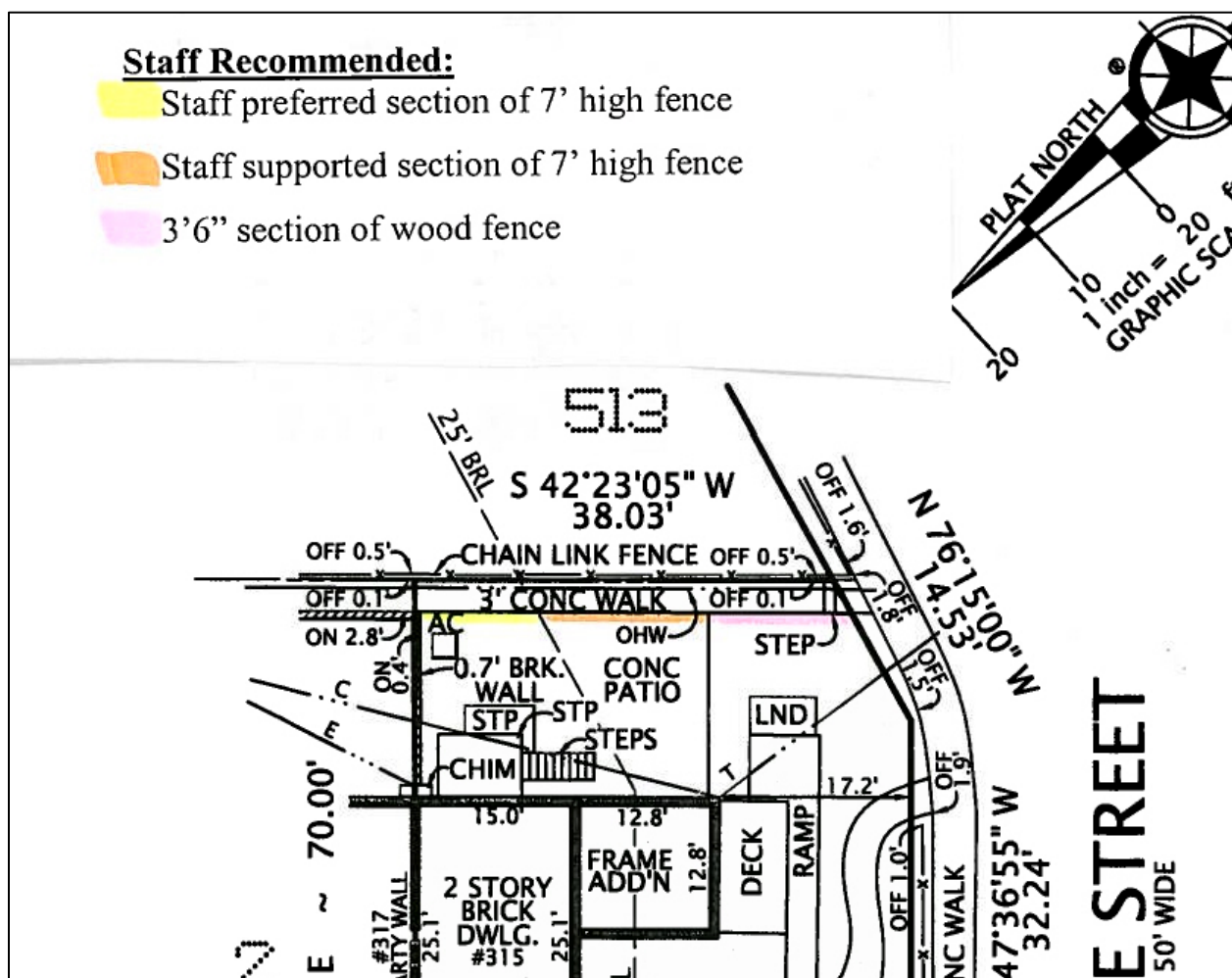
*Per Section 7-202 (C): In the Old and Historic Alexandria and the Parker-Gray Districts, the requirement of sections 7-202(A)(1) and 7-202(B)(3) may be waived or modified by the board of architectural review where the board finds that a proposed fence would be architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the district.*

The subject property is a corner lot, which is considered to have two front and two side yards in the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance. The applicant is requesting a new, seven foot high wood fence that will run parallel to the concrete walkway along the entire length of the east property line. The fence will consist of six foot high wood boards topped by a one foot band of wood lattice. The east portion of the property previously contained both a wood and a chain-link fence. The wood fence was located within the chain-link so the historic fence was still visible, but the public view was obscured due to the solid wood fence. While Staff is supportive of the retention of all historic chain-link fences, Staff can support the replacement of both of these fences with the proposed new wood fence, as it runs perpendicular to a non-cohesive block face.

However, Staff cannot support a seven foot high wood fence along the entire east property line, as it is not in keeping with the open front yard development pattern of these blocks. If the seven foot fence abuts the sidewalk, it will be adjacent to the neighbor’s front yard on Boyle Street, disrupting the visual flow of the open front yard of the adjacent houses, a character-defining feature of these properties (see figure #19). While Staff’s preference would be to have

the seven foot high portion line up with the front of the adjacent duplexes lining Boyle Street at the 25' building restriction line (BRL) shown on the plat (figure 7), Staff recognizes the applicants request for additional privacy in the side yard. Therefore, Staff supports the seven foot high fence along the east property line from the northeast corner southward until it aligns with the south façade of the side addition. Staff supports a solid wood fence along the remainder of the east property line, so long as it is stepped down to 3'-6" above grade.

Staff recommends that the Board find the proposed fence architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the district and supports the waiver of Section 7-202(C), to permit the 7 foot high fence along the east property line, running from the beginning of the north façade of the original building up to the south façade of the side addition.



**STAFF:**

Courtney Lankford, 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 All replacement fences must be located on the subject property or receive an encroachment. The City will not support an encroachment into the public right of way.
- C-2 Applicant must indicate height of aluminum fence.
- C-3 Proposed 7' fence must receive a waiver of height and the applicant must show the proposed location of the fence to ensure zoning compliance on this corner lot.
- C-4 Proposed shutters, windows, stoop alterations, roof replacement on the portico comply with zoning.
- C-5 Proposed stoop and walkway alterations comply with zoning. Walkway/step encroachment complies with City Code section 5-2-29(a).

**Code Administration:**

- C-1 No building permits are required for;
- The black aluminum fence. Less than 6' in height.
  - Apply shingle roof covering to the existing portico roof
- C-2 A building permit will be required to alter the stoop/step and for the erection of the wood fence at the rear of the property. In evaluating the permit application for the stoop alteration, the maximum riser height and minimum tread depth will be required to be met.

**Transportation & Environmental Services:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- R1. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 5-6-224 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 and must be included on the required Grading Plan. (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 all plans submitted for approvals. (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)
- R7. The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition. (T&ES)

#### FINDINGS

- F1. An approved grading plan may be required at the time of building permit application. In summary, City Code Section 5-6-224 requires that a grading plan be submitted to and approved by T&ES prior to the issuance of building permits for improvements involving: 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

- C1. An Encroachment will be required for the front and rear fence installation as it is within the public right-of-way. (Sec. 5-2-29) (T&ES)
- 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). (T&ES)
- 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. (T&ES)
- C-6 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)

**V. IMAGES:**

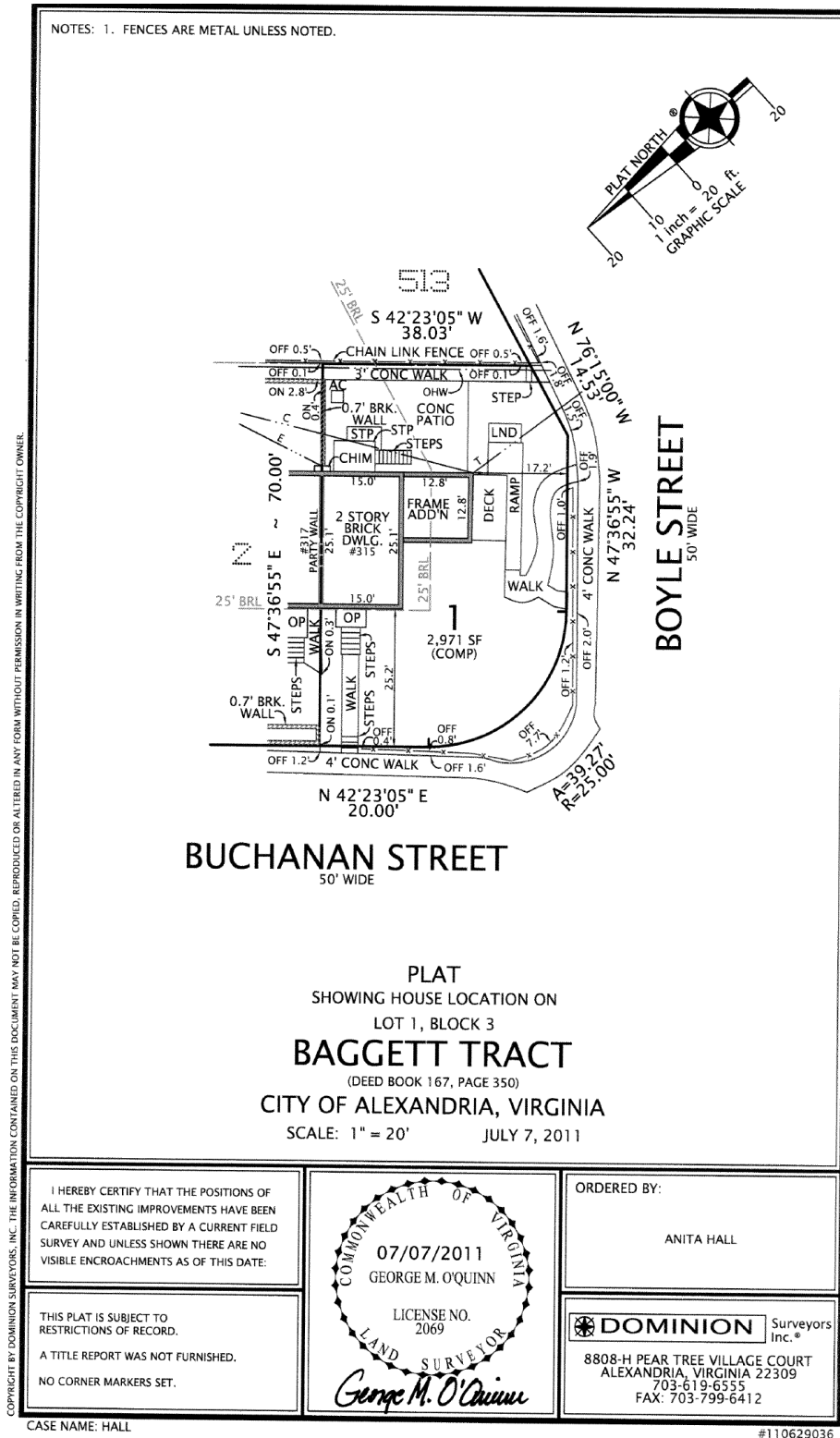
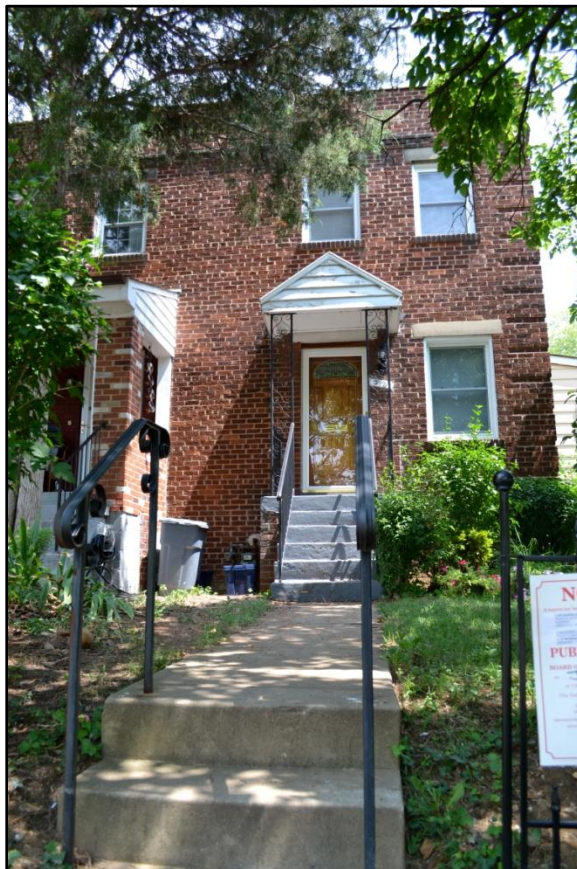
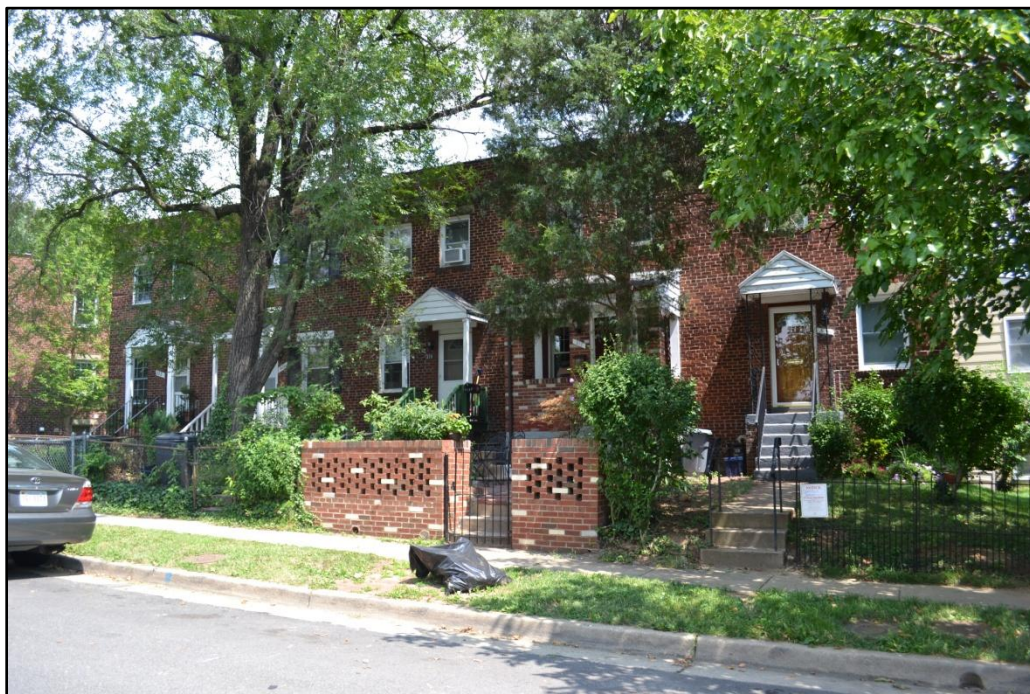


Figure 8: Plat for 315 Buchanan Street



*Figure 9: 315 Buchanan Street.*



*Figure 10: Group of row houses attached to 315 Buchanan (315 Buchanan on far right).*



*Figure 11: Google Street View of 315 Buchanan Street with chain-link fence.*



*Figure 12: Current view of 315 Buchanan Street with aluminum fence.*



*Figure 13: Google Street View image showing fencing to the left of 315 Buchanan Street.*



*Figure 14: Example of proposed wood shutters.*

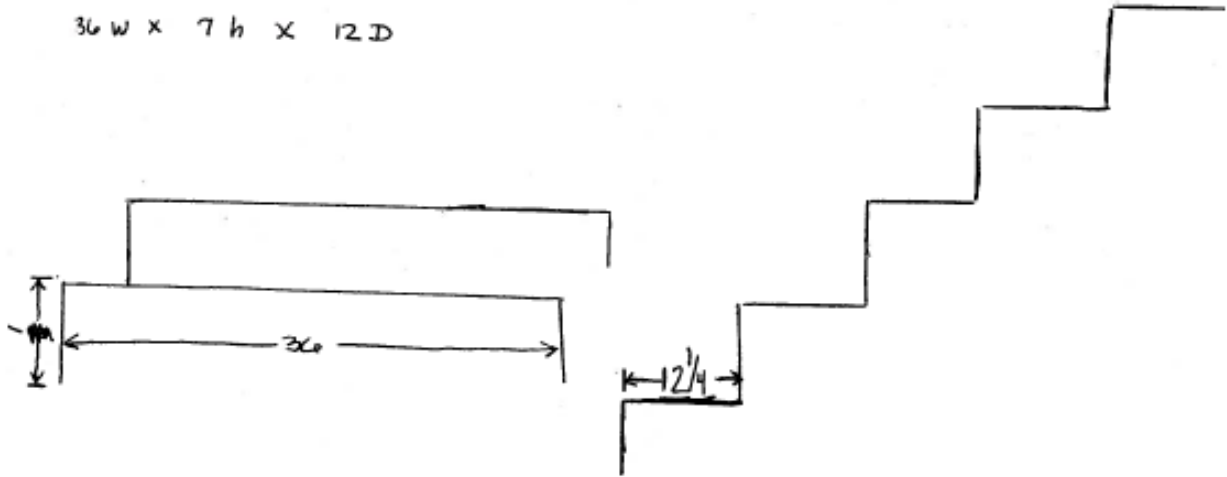


*Figure 15: Image showing three windows where proposed wood shutters will be installed.*

Brick Step & Stoop Diagram

(5) Steps

36 w x 7 h x 12 D



Stoop

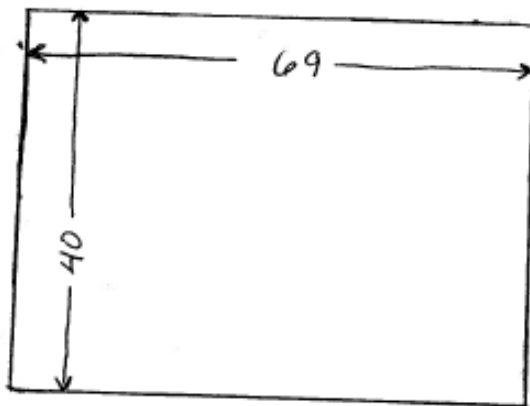


Figure 16: Drawing showing dimensions for stoop and steps.



*Figure 17: Side of gabled portico at 315 Buchanan.*



*Figure 18: Example of proposed 7ft. tall wood fence to be installed along the east property line.*



*Figure 19: Google Street View image showing the wood and chain-link fence that was previously located along the east property line.*



*Figure 20: Current view of the side yard.*