

Docket Item #8  
BZA CASE #2005-00017

Board of Zoning Appeals  
April 14, 2005

**ADDRESS:** 2717 SYCAMORE STREET  
**ZONE:** R-8, RESIDENTIAL  
**APPLICANT:** JAMES AND MEGAN CROWE, OWNERS

**ISSUE:** Special exception to construct a second story addition in the required north side yard.

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CODE SECTION	SUBJECT	CODE REQMT	APPLICANT PROPOSES	REQUESTED EXCEPTION
3-306(A)(2)	Side Yard (North)	13.50 feet*	7.50 feet	6.00 feet

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\* Based on the building height at 27.00 feet from grade to the roof eave on the north facade.

(insert sketch here)

**STAFF CONCLUSION:**

The staff **recommends approval** of the requested special exception because the request meets the criteria for a special exception.

If the Board decides to grant a special exception, it should contain the conditions under the department comments. Special exceptions must also be recorded with the deed of the property in the City's Land Records Office.

**I. Issue**

The applicants propose to construct a second story rear addition over an existing one story rear addition to the dwelling at 2717 Sycamore Street.

**II. Background**

The existing single family masonry dwelling is a two and one-half story structure with an existing one story rear frame addition. The existing dwelling is located 25.80 feet from the west front property line, 7.20 feet from the north side property line, 37.20 feet from the east rear property line, and 5.10 feet from the south side property line. The dwelling has an existing rear addition which measures 16.00 feet wide by 10.90 feet long.



**III. Description**

The variance request is to construct a second story on an existing one story rear addition. The proposed addition will extend approximately 2.10 feet longer and approximately 2.40 feet wider than the existing first story addition. The addition would total 18.40 feet wide and 13.00 feet long. The addition would measure 27.00 feet in height from grade to the roof eave on the north facade. The addition would only extend the existing non-complying north facade wall which is 7.50 feet from the north property line and would not decrease the existing non-complying north side yard setback. Because the proposed addition would extend only one non-complying wall and does not comply with the height-to-setback ratio on the north facade, the applicant requests a special exception to providing the required north side yard setback based on one half the proposed building height.

There have been no previous variances or special exceptions granted for the subject property.

**IV. Master Plan/Zoning:** The subject property is zoned R-8 residential and has been so zoned since adoption of the Third Revised Zoning Map in 1951, and is identified in the Potomac West Small Area Plan for residential land use.

**V. Requested Special Exception:**

**Section 3-306(A)(2) Side Yard- North**

Zoning ordinance regulations for the R-8 zone state that each use must provide two side yards of the greater of 8.00 feet or one-half the building height. The height of the proposed building is 27.00 feet from grade to the roof eave on the north facade. Based on this building height, the addition would have to provide a setback of 14.00 feet. Because the proposed north side yard setback is only 7.50 feet, the applicants seek a special exception of 6.00 feet from the required north side yard setback.

**VI. Noncomplying structure**

The existing building at 2717 Sycamore Street is a noncomplying structure with respect to the following

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Required</u>	<u>Noncompliance</u>
Side Yard (North)	5.20 feet	8.00 feet	2.80 feet
Side Yard (South)	5.10 feet	8.00 feet	2.90 feet
Front Yard	25.80feet	30.00 feet	4.20 feet

**VII. Staff analysis under criteria of section 11-1302**

This case asks the Board of Zoning Appeals to find whether the proposed addition at 2717 Sycamore Street meets the standards adopted for a special exception for additions.

**Special Exception Standards**

The rules for additions built on noncomplying structures reflect Council's decision that property owners should be able to seek relief for modest improvements to their existing homes when the proposal involves the expansion of only one noncomplying wall projecting into a required yard. In such cases, an applicant no longer needs to file a variance and argue a legal hardship. Under the recently adopted rules, the Board must determine whether the improvement affects neighboring homes, whether the improvement is similar in character to other buildings within the immediate neighborhood and, finally, whether it represents the only reasonable location on the lot to build the proposed addition. The specific standards are:

1. Whether approval of the special exception will be detrimental to the public welfare, to the neighborhood or to the adjacent properties.
2. Whether approval of the special exception will impair an adequate supply of light and air to the adjacent property, or cause or substantially increase traffic congestion or increase the danger of fire or the spread of fire, or endanger the public safety.
3. Whether approval of the special exception will alter the essential character of the area or the zone.

4. Whether the proposal will be compatible with the development in the surrounding neighborhood.
5. Whether the proposed development represents the only reasonable means and location on the lot to accommodate the proposed structure given the natural constraints of the lot or the existing development of the lot.

**VIII. Neighborhood Impact**

Staff finds that the proposed addition will have minimal neighborhood impact. The roof line of the proposed addition will be lower than the roof of the existing dwelling. The addition would be significantly narrower than the existing dwelling and would only be somewhat visible from either side of the house. The increase in mass perceived from the public right-of-way would not have an adverse impact on the character of the neighborhood.

**IX. Light and Air**

The proposed improvements would not likely prevent an adequate supply of light and air to either adjacent property. The distances between the houses on the blockface afford ample light and air to adjacent properties. The addition would be similar in mass and scale to other dwellings on the blockface and would have the same impact on adjacent properties as other additions on the blockface.

**X. Location of Improvements**

The location of the proposed improvements presents the least impact to the neighborhood and to adjacent properties. It also is the only site that a second story addition could be located on this lot without demolishing the existing addition. Alternatively the applicant could expand existing first floor of the addition to create a larger footprint. This alternative would still only accommodate a modest expansion given the narrowness of the lot and required side yard setbacks.

**XI. Staff Conclusion**

Staff finds that the proposed addition would have only minimal impacts on adjacent property and would not be detrimental to neighborhood or to the public welfare. The proposed location presents the only reasonable site for the proposed improvements.

Staff recommends **approval** of the special exception request.

STAFF: Hal Phipps, Planning and Zoning  
Rasheda DuPree, Planning and Zoning

**DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS**

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

\* The applicant is advised that if the special exception is approved the following additional comments apply.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

- C-1 Change in point of attachment or removal of existing overhead utility service, will require undergrounding or variance.

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-3 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-7 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

Recreation (Arborist):

F-1 No trees are affected by this plan.

Historic Alexandria (Archaeology):

F-1 There is low potential for this project to disturb significant archaeological resources. No archaeological action is required.

Other Requirements Brought to the Applicant's Attention:

C-1 A wall check survey plat shall be submitted to Planning and Zoning when the building footprint is in place, pursuant to Alexandria City Code section 8-1-12.