

**ISSUE:** Permit to Demolish/Capsulate (partial) and Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations

**APPLICANT:** Puscheck LLC

**LOCATION:** Old and Historic Alexandria District  
810 Prince Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential Townhouse Zone

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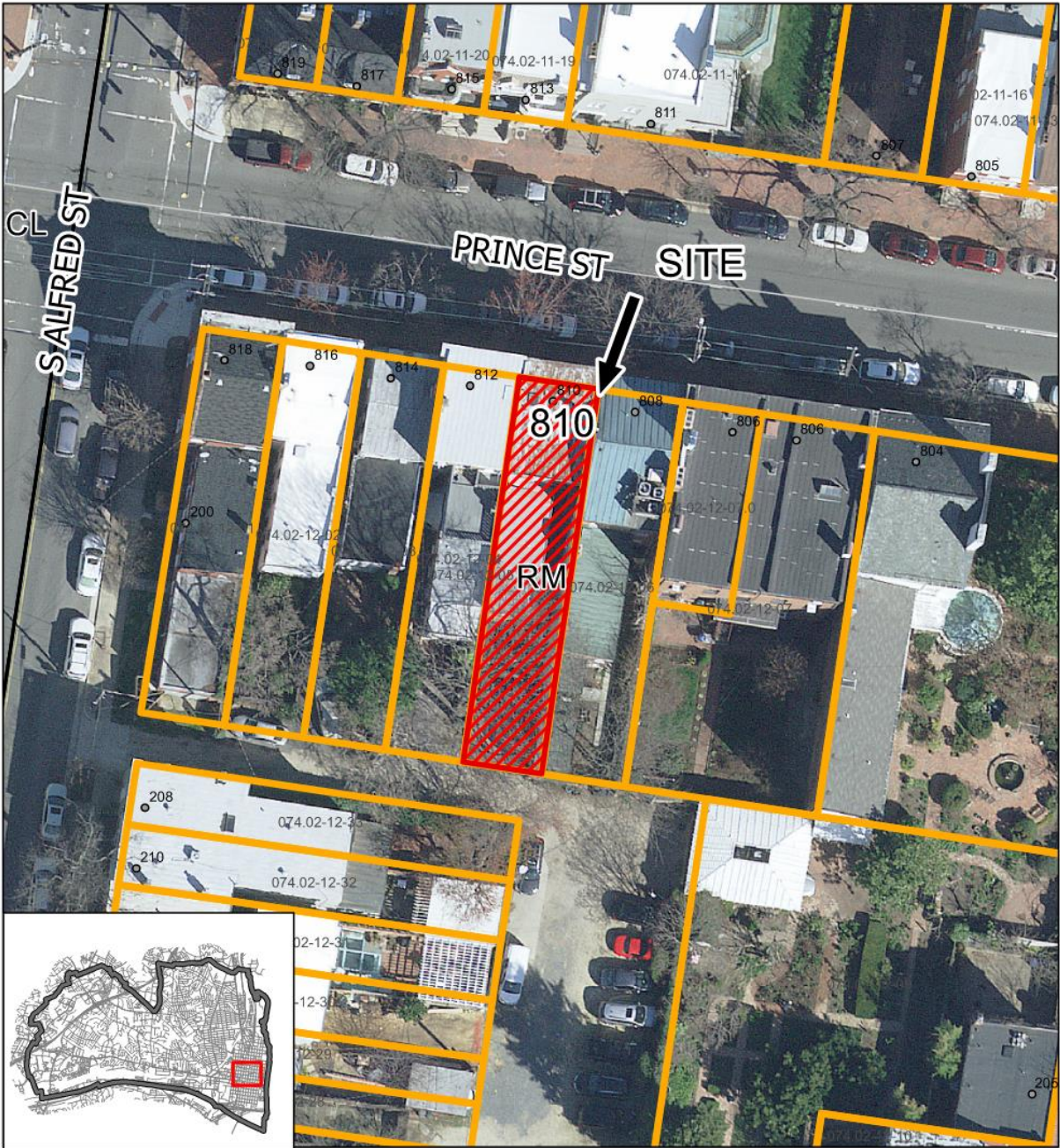
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Capsulate (partial) and Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations with the condition that the statements in archaeology conditions below appear on the grading plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:

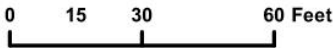
- a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703.746.4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
- b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
- c. All required archaeological preservation measures shall be completed in compliance with Section 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance.

**GENERAL NOTES TO THE APPLICANT**

1. **APPEAL OF DECISION:** In accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, if the Board of Architectural Review denies or approves an application in whole or in part, the applicant or opponent may appeal the Board's decision to City Council on or before 14 days after the decision of the Board.
2. **COMPLIANCE WITH BAR POLICIES:** All materials must comply with the BAR's adopted policies unless otherwise specifically approved.
3. **BUILDING PERMITS:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Department of 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, 703-746-4200 for further information.
4. **ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS AND PERMITS TO DEMOLISH:** Applicants must obtain a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness or Permit to Demolish PRIOR to applying for a building permit. Contact BAR Staff, Room 2100, City Hall, 703-746-3833, or [preservation@alexandriava.gov](mailto:preservation@alexandriava.gov) for further information.
5. **EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B), 10-206(B) and 10-307 of the Zoning Ordinance, any 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.
6. **HISTORIC PROPERTY TAX CREDITS:** Applicants performing extensive, certified rehabilitations of historic properties may separately be eligible for state and/or federal tax credits. Consult with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) prior to initiating any work to determine whether the proposed project may qualify for such credits.



**BAR #2020-00617 & BAR #2020-00619**  
**810 Prince Street**



**Note:** Staff coupled the applications for a Permit to Demolish (BAR #2020-00619) and Certificate of Appropriateness (BAR #2020-00617) for clarity and brevity. The Permit to Demolish requires a roll call vote.

## I. APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate (partial) and Certificate of Appropriateness to build two roof terraces and associated exterior stairs. The applicant also proposes to add two new windows at existing openings and an exterior stair and door leading to a new full basement at 810 Prince Street.

### Permit to Demolish/Capsulate

The applicant proposes enlarging a window opening on the third-floor south elevation of the main block of the house to convert it to a door, as well as removing a cellar crawl-space access hatch on the same elevation to replace it with a new stair and door to the cellar. See Figure 1.

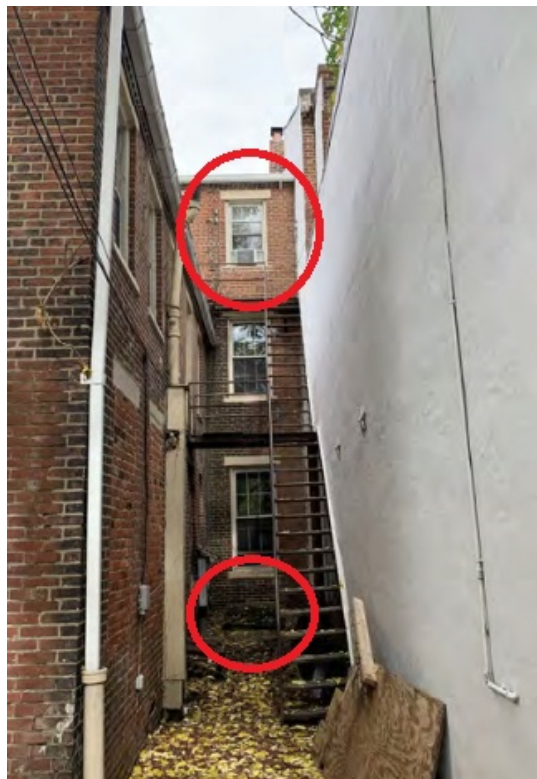


Figure 1: Top circle indicates window to be converted to door. Bottom circle indicates existing hatch.

### Certificate of Appropriateness *Alterations*

The applicant proposes to construct a roof terrace on each of the house's two roofs: the northernmost roof over the third floor of the main block and the southernmost roof over the second

floor of the rear ell. Each roof deck will be constructed of painted pressure-treated lumber with composite decking for the flooring and stair treads.

- Main block “high” roof: The existing roof measures 27’ 6 ¼” deep by 19’ 7 7/8” wide. The proposed roof deck will span the width of the house and be placed 12’ 4” away from the front/north elevation, ensuring minimal visibility from Prince Street. An existing chimney will remain in place and a skylight/roof hatch will be eliminated. A window on the third floor of the southernmost elevation of the main block will be converted to a door to provide egress to the proposed painted wood stair leading to the upper roof terrace as well as to the existing fire escape. A 3’6” painted metal cable rail will surround the terrace.
- Ell “low” roof: This roof measures 31’5 7/8” deep by 13’ 1 7/8” wide. The proposed roof deck will be constructed adjacent to the rear wall of the house, spanning the entire width and measuring 22’6” deep. This will leave 9’ of roof at the rear/southernmost portion of the ell. A new painted wood stair will lead up to the roof deck from the existing fire escape and door on the east elevation of the ell. A 3’6” painted metal cable rail will surround the deck.

Additionally, the applicant proposes adding a basement entry on the south elevation of the main block of the house. The entry will measure 6’9” and will be accessed by a proposed 9’9” long concrete stair leading down from grade. The applicant would also like to add window inserts to existing window openings at the basement level of the primary/north elevation.

### Site context

The building sits in the center of the south side of the 800 block of Prince Street. Buildings to either side block any view of the rear of the property from North Alfred and North Columbus streets. A large alley behind the building to the south is privately owned. The front/north elevation is therefore the only part of the building visible from any public right of way.

## **HISTORY**

According to Ethelyn Cox in her book *Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street*, George D. Fowle purchased the lots at 810 and 812 Prince in 1851 for \$247. In 1868 Fowle sold both lots for \$1175 to William F. Vincent. Ms. Cox believes that Fowle built the house at 810 Prince between **1851 and 1868**.

The three-bay, three-story Italianate house consists of a masonry main block and a two-story brick ell. The form of the house has remained basically unchanged since the publication of the 1885 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. This map shows the same materials and configuration, with the exception of a one-story frame addition which no longer exists at the rear of the ell.

### *Previous BAR Approvals*

In early January 2021 staff administratively approved the replacement of three exterior doors and two windows due to fire damage (BAR2020-00623).

### III. ANALYSIS

#### Permit to Demolish/Capsulate

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B), which relate only to the subject property and not to neighboring properties. The Board has purview of the proposed demolition/capsulation regardless of visibility.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Description of Standard</b>	<b>Standard Met?</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?	No
(2)	Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic shrine?	No
(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?	No
(4)	Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?	N/A
(5)	Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?	No
(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?	No

In the opinion of staff, none of the criteria for demolition and capsulation are met in this case and the Permit to Demolish/Capsulate should be granted. The area to be demolished is minimal, does not exhibit a high level of design or architectural detail, and its removal will improve the safety of the dwelling. The Board routinely approves alterations to historic properties as homeowners seek to create safe and modern living spaces.

Certificate of Appropriateness

Cellar windows on north elevation: As seen in Figure 2, the front/north elevation has openings for cellar windows, but those openings are covered with plywood. The proposed Marvin windows comply with *Alexandria New and Replacement Window Performance Specifications in the Historic Districts* and represent a great improvement over the existing plywood.



**Figure 2: Front elevation with cellar window circled. Other cellar window obscured by car.**

New entry to cellar on rear/south elevation: Currently, the cellar space is little more than a crawl space under the house. By deepening the cellar and adding a new entry, the area will become usable space. The proposed Marvin French door and sidelight for the new rear cellar entrance also comply with *Alexandria New and Replacement Window Performance Specifications in the Historic Districts*. They will not be visible from any public right of way.

Roof decks: The *Design Guidelines* state that “Roof decks should be constructed so that they do not interfere with the historic roofline of a building” and “Material should not be used on a roof deck that detracts from the historic architecture of a structure.” Additionally, the Design Guidelines indicate that the Board “has approved the construction of decks in a number of instances...where there is minimal visibility of the deck from a public way.”

In the case of 810 Prince Street, both roof decks will be minimally visible from a public right of way. The “low” deck will not be visible at all, and will be similar to, but far less obtrusive than, an existing roof deck at adjacent 812 Prince Street (Figure 3). [Note: Staff could find no BAR approval or permit for the roof deck at 812 Prince Street.]



Figure 3: Roof deck at adjacent property

The proposed painted metal cable rail will minimize the visibility of the low roof deck while ensuring that it never be confused with an original historic element of the house. Like the painted pressure-treated lumber and composite decking, the rail in no way detracts from the historic architecture of the structure. The same applies to the front high roof deck. In addition to appropriate materials, the upper deck will be placed far enough back to the roof to greatly reduce its visibility from Prince Street. See Figures 4 and 5.

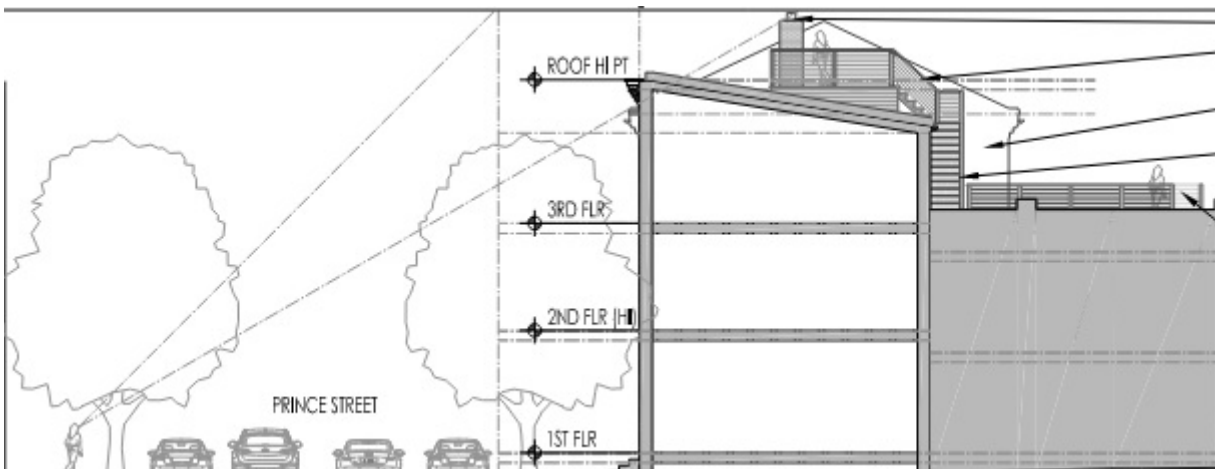


Figure 4: Section looking east showing sightlines from Prince Street





Figure 5: The rendering on the right indicates that the metal railing will extend approximately halfway up the existing chimney. The photo on the left indicates that the chimney is barely visible from the street.

Staff recommends approval of the project, noting the recommendations of Alexandria Archaeology.

#### **STAFF**

Susan Hellman, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Tony LaColla, AICP, Land Use Services Division Chief, Planning & Zoning

#### **IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

#### **Zoning**

- C-1 The property currently has 560 square feet of open space (including one of the two parking spaces on the property). The property is 2,042 square feet and the required open space is 715 square feet of open space. The property is deficient in open space by 155 square feet.
- C-2 The proposed roof decks and new stairs will not decrease the open space on the property and the property will continue to have 560 square feet of open space.

- C-3 Per §6-403(B)(2), the Board of Architectural Review may waive or modify the screening requirement of the proposed roof deck, if the board finds such requirement to be architecturally inappropriate.
- C-4 Per §6-403(B), the roof deck and railing guards may be erected as part of the main building to their required heights, regardless of any other height provision or restriction.
- C-5 Per §6-403(B)(4), the roof decks and railing guards may be up to six feet in height or meet the minimum height required by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, whichever is higher. The roof decks and guards must comply with required setbacks. The existing structure is a townhouse and has no side yard setbacks. The proposed roof decks meet the rear yard setback.
- C-5 The proposed roof decks do not count towards FAR.
- F-1 The proposed roof decks, railing guards, and stairs comply with zoning.

#### **Code Administration**

- C-1 A building permit and plan review are required prior to the start of construction.

#### **Transportation and Environmental Services**

No comments received.

#### **Alexandria Archaeology**

- F-1 According to *Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street* by Ethelyn Cox, George D. Fowle purchased the vacant lots at 810 and 812 Prince St. in 1851 for \$247. Soon thereafter Fowle built the house at 810 Prince St., later selling both lots to William F. Vincent in 1868. The property has the potential to contain significant archaeological remains that relate to the mid-nineteenth century development of Alexandria.
- R-1 The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear on the grading plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
- a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703.746.4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
  - b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
  - c. All required archaeological preservation measures shall be completed in compliance with Section 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance.

V. ATTACHMENTS

*1 – Application Materials*

*2 – Supplemental Materials*