

ISSUE: Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations (after-the-fact)

APPLICANT: Joseph Goyette

LOCATION: Parker-Gray District
502 North Alfred Street

ZONE: RM/Townhouse zone

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the request for an after-the fact Certificate of Appropriateness for the replacement of existing wood windows with vinyl windows with the following condition:

1. The vinyl windows that have been installed on the North Alfred Street facing elevation be replaced with windows that meet the requirements of the *Alexandria New and Replacement Window Performance Specifications in the Historic Districts*.

GENERAL NOTES TO THE APPLICANT

1. **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 for further information.
2. **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.
3. **COMPLIANCE WITH BAR POLICIES:** All materials must comply with the BAR's adopted policies unless otherwise specifically approved.
4. **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.
5. **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 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 #2021-00024
502 North Alfred Street



0 15 30 60 Feet

I. APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting an after-the-fact Certificate of Appropriateness for the replacement of the original wood windows with white vinyl windows.

Site context

The property is part of The Carriage Works development at the northeast corner of North Alfred Street and Oronoco Street in the Parker Gray Historic District. This is a mews development with the main entries for each of the townhomes located off of a central courtyard with access from the 900 block of Oronoco Street. The subject property is the second townhome from the corner along North Alfred Street. As such, the front elevation facing the interior courtyard is minimally visible from Oronoco Street and the rear elevation is fully visible from North Alfred Street (Figure 1).



Figure 1: View of property from North Alfred Street and Oronoco Streets

II. HISTORY

According to City property sales data this and other properties in this development were first sold in 1980-1981. This places the original construction of this property at approximately 1980. Given the modern construction materials and interior courtyard organization of the development this time frame appears to be correct. Per the Parker Gray Residential Reference Guide, this property is considered a Later building.

Staff has found no previous BAR approvals associated with this property.

III. ANALYSIS

Certificate of Appropriateness

On December 3, 2020 in response to a complaint, an inspector from the Department of Planning and Zoning visited the property at 502 North Alfred Street and observed that the original windows and storm windows had been removed from the house and the installation of new vinyl windows had begun (Figure 2). The inspector notified the contractor performing the window replacement of the requirements of the historic district. A letter of violation was sent to the owner on December 10, 2020. This after-the-fact submission is for an approval of the installed vinyl windows.



Figure 2: Photographs showing installation of vinyl windows

The *Design Guidelines* say that “Windows are a principal character defining feature of a building and serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. The type, size, location, and trim of windows are a defining element of a building’s style and changes to them can have a dramatic impact on the historic appearance of a structure.” In this case, the applicant has replaced the original 1 over 1 wood windows with vinyl windows of a similar lite configuration, maintaining the original configuration.

The use of vinyl windows is discouraged by the *Design Guidelines* in the historic district. The Adopted Parker Gray Design Guidelines for Windows specifically states that in Post-1931 buildings where windows are located less than 15 feet from the front property line, Staff may

administratively approve window replacement with one of the conditions being that vinyl windows may not be approved. In Post-1931 buildings, there is no Certificate of Appropriateness required for the replacement of windows on side and rear (non-street facing) elevations. The guidelines go on to state that “vinyl windows... except in certain locations on buildings or additions constructed post-1931” are discouraged. While this building is Post-1931 and is considered to be a Later building, the street facing elevation is not one of the “certain locations” where vinyl windows are typically approved.

In the years since the publication of the *Design Guidelines* there have been numerous advances in window technology and the Board has entertained a variety of window types for use in the historic district. Vinyl windows have consistently been determined to be inappropriate for a number of reasons. Because of their construction they are not able to effectively appear similar to the windows historically used on houses in the historic district. In addition, the material used in vinyl windows expands and contracts with temperature variations. This leads to cracks and gaps in joints along with discoloration that further indicate this as a modern material that is not compatible with historic fabric.

This application is for after-the-fact approval of the installation of white vinyl windows on the street facing and interior courtyard facing elevations. As noted above, the Adopted Parker Gray Design Guidelines for Windows specifically notes that no Certificate of Appropriateness is required for the west, interior courtyard facing elevation. However, the white vinyl windows on the street facing elevation are inappropriate and should be replaced (Figure 3).



Figure 3: East elevation of property before (left) and after (right) window replacement

In summary, staff recommends approval of the request for an after-the fact Certificate of Appropriateness for the application with the following observation:

1. The use of vinyl windows on an historic property is specifically discouraged by the *Parker Gray Design Guidelines for Windows*, the windows on the east, North Alfred Street-facing elevation should be replaced with appropriate windows that meet the requirements of the *Alexandria New and Replacement Window Performance Specifications in the Historic Districts*.

STAFF

Bill Conkey, AIA Historic Preservation Architect, 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

F-1 The proposed window replacement complies with zoning.

Code Administration

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

Transportation and Environmental Services

- R-1 The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition, if a separate demolition permit is required. (T&ES)
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-3 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)
- F-1 After review of the information provided, an approved grading plan is not required at this time. Please note that if any changes are made to the plan it is suggested that T&ES be included in the review. (T&ES)
- F-2 If the alley located at the rear of the parcel is to be used at any point of the construction process the following will be required:
For a Public Alley - The applicant shall contact T&ES, Construction Permitting & Inspections at (703) 746-4035 to discuss any permits and accommodation requirements that will be required.

For a Private Alley - The applicant must provide proof, in the form of an affidavit at a minimum, from owner of the alley granting permission of use. (T&ES)

- C-1 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-2 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-3 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.5-6-224) (T&ES)
- C-4 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (T&ES)
- C-5 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)
- C-6 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (Sec. 5-2-1) (T&ES)

Alexandria Archaeology

- F-1 No archaeological oversight will be necessary for this undertaking.

V. ATTACHMENTS

- 1 – Application Materials*
- 2 – Supplemental Materials*