

Lia Niebauer

From: The Hour <v.vergason@thehourshop.com>
Sent: Friday, August 6, 2021 2:11 PM
To: Lia Niebauer
Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR #2021-00337 &2021-00353 at 810 Prince Street
Attachments: View from Alfred Street of 810 Prince Street and adjoining properties.jpg

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear BAR Members and staff,

I am writing to you to express my continued and growing concerns over the proposed rooftop addition to 810 Prince Street as well as other such rooftop structures in the residential parts of Historic Old Town.

With respect to the architect's last submission to your Board on July 21, I want to state for the record that I found her photo of the rear side view of the property (that was discussed at length at the last BAR hearing) to be very misleading. I believe that photo was taken from the sidewalk on Alfred Street that was nearest the property. The holly tree shown obscured much of the 810 Prince Street roof and roof line and distorted how much of that property's roofline is actually seen from the public right of way. I've attached a photo for your reference that I took from the sidewalk on the west side of Alfred Street that clearly shows the pitched roofline of my property at 808 Prince Street and the location of the proposed rooftop structure at 810 Prince Street. As you can see, the proposed rooftop addition at 810 Prince Street will be almost completely visible from the west sidewalk of Alfred Street. I hope that your staff clearly recognizes this when they perform their yellow tape mock-up that was suggested before the next hearing on this proposed application. In addition, while the developer is proposing minor railings on this rooftop application, any furniture will clearly be seen from the public right of way as well as any people and patio umbrellas (which are likely as it will be extremely hot during the daytime on that roof). Ironically, I find it again misleading that the architect sketched in people on the adjacent existing second story deck at 812 Prince Street in her last submission to your Board but failed to show this viewpoint from her own proposed rooftop structure renderings. From the front of 810 Prince Street, people and any umbrellas or shade coverings will be seen since they will be well above the railing height as discussed.

With regards to the whole question of adding rooftop structures to 18th and 19th century residential structures, this issue is a slippery slope and akin to opening Pandora's Box in Old Town's historic district. After sitting through the BAR's last public meeting, I was struck by how many of the new applications to the BAR included a rooftop component (and not a second story deck, balcony, portico or other more appropriate structure for historic homes). Imagine how many more additional requests will be received by the BAR for rooftop structures from residences located in the middle of blocks throughout historic Old Town if the BAR passes this application. Their claim will also be that "you can't really see that much from the front." These structures will inevitably alter our city scape and character. I highly believe that the BAR should issue clearly defined policies on any new rooftop structures in residential areas before any more applications are voted on that will become irreversible (including this one). By agreeing to the proposed 810 Prince Street rooftop application and not having a clear policy on such rooftop structures, you are inviting subjective viewpoints from future BAR members that may not align with current BAR thoughts on appropriateness.

I would also like to add my concerns about safety and security regarding proposed rooftop structures in residential areas in Old Town (these concerns may be more appropriate for City Council to whom I am copying this letter as well). The current proposal for a rooftop structure at 810 Prince Street includes an outdoor kitchen built on the roof. I would argue that kitchens built on top of roof structures located on or near our historic 18th and 19th century residential structures, pose a higher threat of fire (and open fires) throughout our city (I would add that if someone is going to build a kitchen on their rooftop, they are likely to use it). Having personally experienced the 5-alarm fire at 810 Prince Street more than two years ago that destroyed the interior of that building rendering it uninhabitable and threatening my own 18th century home, fire is a major concern to me and to most of us who live in Old Town. In addition, with respect to security, if rooftop structures in residential areas are allowed, for those of us who have skylights, the ability to enter our homes from above by moving across rooftops is yet another concern.

Finally, I would like to discuss one of the actual reasons for pushing for these rooftop structures in our historic neighborhoods. Developers are now under the false impression that they will only get top dollar for residential dwellings in our historic areas if they include a rooftop deck. I was recently informed by the architect of 810 Prince Street that this developer is considering reverting his application back to apartment units as he feels this rooftop structure is critical for him financially in order to profit by selling this dwelling as a single unit home. I believe this viewpoint shows the limited understanding of why those of us who live in Old Town buy or rent our homes at a premium in this historic community. We buy for the location, we buy for our love of historic homes and we buy to feel part of a close knit community. We utilize our parks and alleys where we meet up to enjoy each other's company, in part, because of the limited amount of outdoor space many of us have with our dwellings. In fact, with respect to the 800 block of Old Town where I live (as well as the abutting streets on Columbus, Alfred and Duke), members of our community get together to socialize throughout the year at each other's homes and, during the summertime, one of our neighbors even hosts "Oldies in the Alley" where we

meet to watch old movies projected on the back of a garage. Not one of us paid "top dollar" for our homes or rent here because of a rooftop deck. This financial argument for rooftop structures on the part of developers should not have any influence over the BAR or City Council as to their appropriateness.

I kindly request your confirmation of this letter and request that it be addressed and discussed at your September 1 hearing where I think this application will be presented again.

Respectfully,

Victoria Vergason
Owner, 808 Prince Street

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From: [Tim Foley](#)
To: [Lia Niebauer](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR#2021-00337
Date: Thursday, August 12, 2021 6:12:25 PM

Ms. Niebauer,

Regarding BAR #2021-00337, 810 Prince street. My wife and I walk by this place routinely, both in front of the home and behind the home. I feel strongly that structures like this should not be seen from the street view obstructing the historic view of the home, however this proposed terrace does not seem to be doing that. It is only visible from the back. The notes in the application asking about moving the structure back 42 inches from the rear of the home seems unnecessary and only to take away space from the occupant.

Roof top decks have been approved throughout the historic district in many different shapes and styles. Perhaps some rules should be written about where and when they are appropriate and what they should look like but with out those rules it would seems that this is as appropriate as any other approved deck.

So therefore I'm writing in support of this application.

Thank you,
Tim Foley
310 Commerce St
Alexandria VA

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