

Staff Report- September 9, 2008
612-14 South Wolfe Street
Baltimore City Landmark/Fells Point Historic District

Plan: To rehabilitate and construct rear addition to main historic structure,
Concept Review.

Staff Presenter : W. Edward Leon

Applicant : Preservation Society for Federal Hill and Fells Point
Architects:



Background

This project is coming for conceptual review. The properties at 612 and 614 South Wolfe Street also known as the Wolfe Street houses were placed on the Baltimore City Landmark List in 1987.

612 and 614 South Wolfe Street are best known as "the wooden houses" in the Fell's Point area as they are two of the smallest wooden homes remaining. Ann Bond Fell Giles, widowed wife of Edward Fell, inherited both properties following the death of her first husband. After she remarried and had several more children, she passed away and the Wolfe Street properties ended up in the hands of her youngest daughter Susannah Giles Moore and her husband Phillip Moore until Phillip died bankrupt and in debt in 1833 or 1834. The houses were built somewhere between February of 1798 and February of 1801. The houses are also sometimes also referred to as the "Flounder Houses."

The houses are each two bays and one and a half stories, totaling 192 square feet of living space. Originally part of a larger block of seven small houses, the Wolfe street houses represent the smallest type of wooden dwelling built in the eighteenth century. They were likely built as speculative housing with the intention of building something larger at a

later point, thus their continued existence is even more phenomenal. Each house has several sets of windows, including dormers on the loft level, in the front and rear to allow for light and air circulation. The exterior of each house is milled weatherboard with wooden shingles covering the roofs, the original cornice (*figure 37*), and a single door for entry. The current wooden shingles on the roof are not original, though the earliest shingles on the house would have been wooden. Unlike some of the other old wooden houses, these two have shutters on the windows, which also appear in historic photographs. The interiors had hand-split lath and plaster covering the walls, with fireplaces for heating and cooking, angled cupboards, corner winding stairs, chair rails, and wainscoting, some of which may have been added in a later period. Exposed timbers revealed that much of the bark remained on the beams when they were used in the construction.

Later, additions were built on the back side of each house, nearly doubling the total square footage of the houses. The houses, like many of the others were covered by brick or formstone for some time, but the original wood siding has been restored since that time. <http://www.baltimoreheritage.org/wooden%20house/>

The properties are now owned by the Preservation Society of Federal Hills and Fells Point and are planned for an adaptive museum and educational program re-use.

Plan

The plan is to rehab, stabilize and build a new addition to the these pair of landmark structures.

The structure at 612 will become a recreated interpretative museum space and it will provide access to the new rear addition.

A new addition is to be located in the Northwest side of the building and site of 612 and will be used as a Materials lab.

The structure at 614 will be a fully stabilized space that will have all original structural material exposed for educational purposes. The space will allow for the study of construction methods throughout the several building periods.

The elevations of the addition will not be seen from the street side and are only visible from the rear of the immediately surrounding properties. The addition will be visually separated by a “magic wall” structure that will allow for the placement of audio visual equipment in both directions of the interpretive space and Materials lab.

A truss cantilevering roof system is to be built over the existing roof in the rear of 612 and 614 with a flashing edge that will conceal the new truss system designed to protect the historic roof material. The new roof over the original roof will be shed like and shed shape over the new addition.

The addition will contain large classroom space, ADA accessible bathrooms, a ramp and accessible floor panels. The new addition will be built to minimize the disturbance of the rear of 612 and allow for possible future archaeological investigations.

Colors and exact materials have not been presented at this time, but must be upon return to the Commission for Final Review.

Minimal Landscaping within the rear yard is to be done in order to preserve the area for archeological study. A fence with as few post-holes will be erected to secure the site around the perimeter of the back yard.

ADA considerations may be necessary for access through 612. A chair lift built into the sidewalk in front of 612 is being studied as is the necessity to widen the doorway.

Analysis

The rehabilitation and addition plans are consistent with CHAP Guidelines item #5 Frame Buildings, #9 New construction, 10. Building Site and Environment and #11 Archeological features.

The design is compatible with the Size, Scale, Material and Character of the property.

The addition has little impact upon the main historic structure which fronts Wolfe Street and preserves the historically significant main structures while its proposed modern material will clearly make it identifiable as products of their own age.

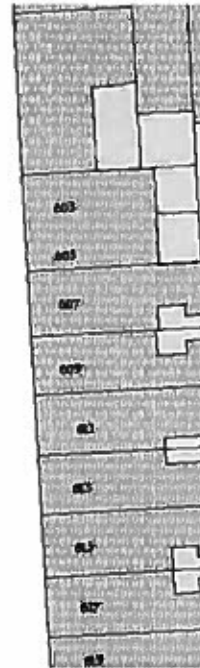
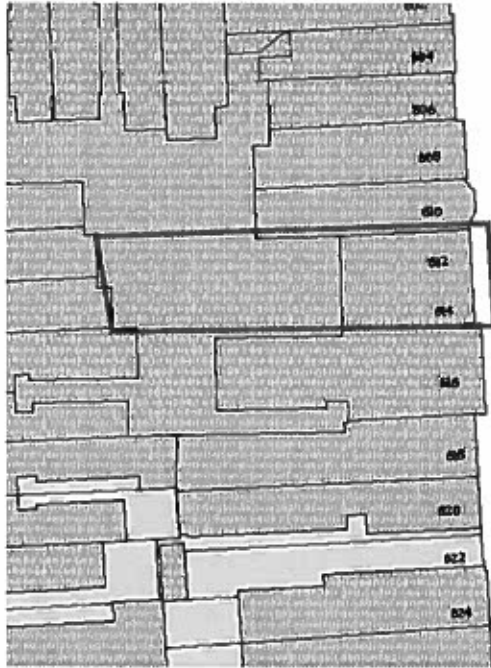
The plan removes nearly no remaining historic fabric. Roof shingles are from a later addition and will clean and treated rather than replaced.

Location and type of mechanical equipment has not been shown. Proposed plans for new green technology will be need to be reviewed by the Commission for Final Review.

Staff Recommendation

- Approve the concept plan as submitted.

Site Plan



East Elevation



614 South Wolfe Street



612 South Wolfe Street
(Possible ADA entrance)



Aerial views



From South



From West



From North
Rear Elevation



Rear West Elevation

612

614



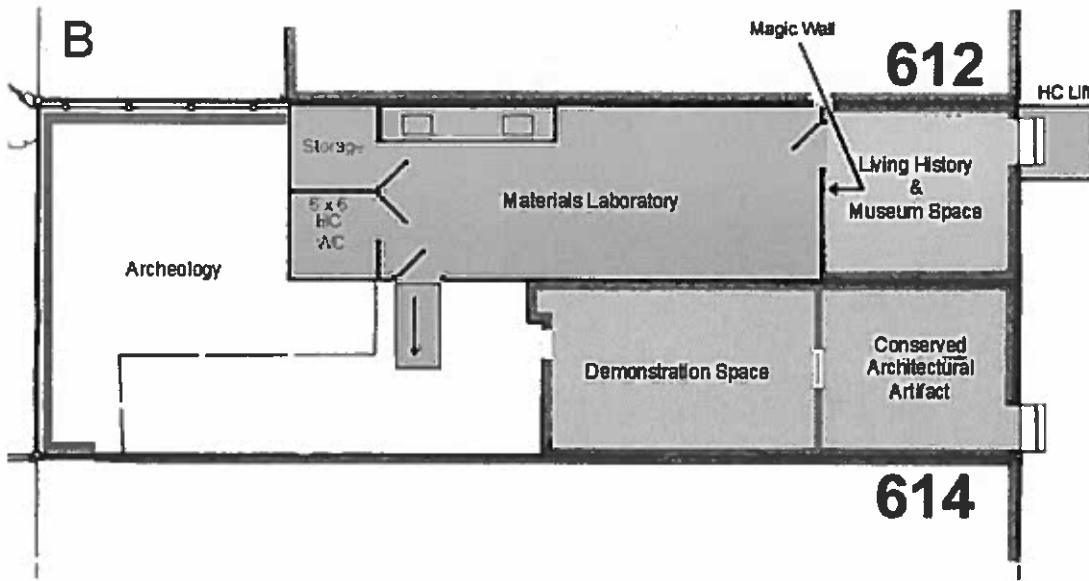
Location of new truss roof and materials laboratory addition



Rear yard of 612

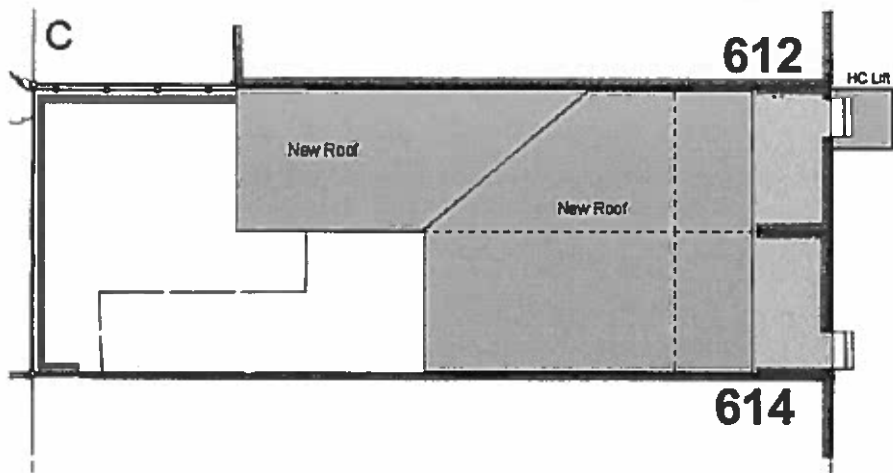


Proposed Material Laboratory addition





Rear of 612 and 614





Truss roof from East



Truss roof from West

Rear Yard fence line

