

## Town of Washington | Architectural Review Board

### Meeting Minutes | April 15, 2024

---

#### ***Present:***

Ryan Crabbe (ARB Member)  
Nanette Edwards (ARB Member, Secretary)  
Deb Harris (ARB Member, Chair)  
Wesley Kerr (ARB Member, Vice Chair)  
Drew Mitchell (ARB Member)  
Steve Gyurisin (Zoning Administrator)

***Call to Order:*** D. Harris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

***Approval of Agenda:*** D. Mitchell made a motion to approve the agenda; W. Kerr seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

***Approval of Minutes:*** D. Mitchell moved to approve the February 20, 2024, minutes; W. Kerr seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### ***Zoning Administrator's Report:***

- Zoning Administrator Steve Gyurisin provided a written summary of existing project activities. He reported reorganizing the Zoning Ordinance is still underway and he is working with the Town Council on short-term rental lodging.

#### ***Old Business:***

1. Request by Edward Fletcher, E. Fletcher Construction on Behalf of Thornton Matheson for a Certificate of Appropriateness for Improvement to the Home at 558 Gay Street. The proposed improvements are the addition of a mudroom connector and attached garage. The item was tabled by the ARB at the December 18, 2023, meeting at the homeowner's request.
  - a) Zoning Administrator Review: S. Gyurisin reported no zoning issues.
  - b) Applicant Presentation: Homeowner Thornton Matheson said she had received the ARB's project comments sent by S. Gyurisin on January 3, 2024, and had responded to the ARB with her feedback via a letter\* dated March 31, 2024. Within the letter she had included six figures that showed different design options. She indicated she would be agreeable to enlarging the windows and lowering the roofline of the mudroom connector. During the meeting she stated she felt that the connector did not detract from the house, that it conforms to the style of the Historic District, and that a garage with doors facing the street is found elsewhere in town.
  - c) Citizen Comments: A letter\* to the ARB received from town resident Gail Swift opposing the design was read aloud at the meeting.
  - d) ARB Review and Member Discussion: D. Mitchell said he would prefer a detached garage and an open breezeway but that the proposed lower roofline helps the connector appear more like a breezeway. W. Kerr said he appreciated the aspect ratio of the larger windows, questioned the vertical siding choice, noted the recessed depth of the connector was favorable, and clarified with the homeowner that the house does include a 10-foot floor to ceiling window off the front porch. N. Edwards reiterated some of the ARB considerations contained in the Zoning Ordinance and based on those felt the project was incompatible with other structures found in the Historic District. She suggested a connector redesign with a lower roofline, floor to ceiling windows, and a glass door

might have made it appear as if it were once a breezeway that had been enclosed. R. Crabbe said he felt that part of the unique charm of the town is that its properties feature disconnected structures. He said there are no other attached garages on Victorians in town and that he felt the proposed connector's architecture is inconsistent with that of the Victorian style as well as neighboring houses within the historic grid. He also was opposed to a glassed-in breezeway as he thought it may look too contemporary. D. Harris stated she agreed with R. Crabbe's comments and was uncomfortable with the design of the connector. D. Harris called for a vote on the project based on the additional options that had been provided by T. Matheson. D. Mitchell voted to approve the project with the mudroom connector featuring the lower roofline and windows as depicted in Figure 1. W. Kerr voted to approve with the lower roofline and the windows as depicted in Figure 4. N. Edwards, R. Crabbe, and D. Harris voted not to approve the project; therefore, the proposed attached garage with mudroom connector was not approved.

2. Discussion of the Old Packing Shed Located at 330 Porter Street.

- Zoning Administrator S. Gyurisin reported that the packing shed is for sale. He toured the packing shed with its current owner and observed that the property, which is in the Town of Washington Historic District, is a contributing structure to the Historic District and has been allowed to deteriorate due to neglect. He noted that portions of the interior were past the point of no return and well on its way to being a candidate for demolition by neglect. Concerned with its safety, he spoke with a county building official to see if portions of the Building Code would apply to the property and it was determined that Rappahannock County had not adopted the Property Maintenance Code. He then contacted County Administrator Garrey Curry and learned that an unsafe building can only be boarded up after authorization by the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors. S. Gyurisin requested that the ARB Board accept his report, which provided recommendations to ARB in using the Historic District Demolition by Neglect provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. R. Crabbe made a motion to accept the report as submitted; D. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

*New Business:*

**Item #1: Request of Homeowner Deanna Akre to Renovate an Existing House at 199 Main Street.**

- a) Zoning Administrator Review: S. Gyurisin reported no zoning issues with the project.
- b) Applicant Presentation: On behalf of Ms. Akre, Project Architect Andy Lewis of Neumann Lewis Buchanan Architects explained the project will improve accessibility with two telescoping additions that will involve: renovation and additions to the existing house via a new two-story addition to the south side of the house with an added open breezeway connection to the studio; extending the back of the existing house on both the first and second floors; repair and repainting of the detached, adjacent studio and porte cochere and the addition of an exterior storage area at the rear of the studio; relocation and restoration of an existing potting shed to the northwest area of the property; and extensive new landscaping with gardens, terraces, a water feature and two pergolas.
- c) Citizen Comments: There were no citizen comments.
- d) ARB Review and Member Discussion: All ARB members responded with favorable comments. D. Mitchell made a motion to accept the proposal as submitted; R. Crabbe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Item #2: Request of Constance and Thomas Bruce to Replace and Add Windows and Doors to Their Residence at 577 Main Street.**

- a) Zoning Administrator Review: S. Gyurisin said there were no zoning issues.
- b) Applicant Presentation: Homeowner Connie Bruce explained that as a part of interior renovations the couple is seeking to add wooden windows and doors that would reflect the home's current style and be painted to match the existing windows. The project includes adding double windows on the south and north-facing sides of the house; adding a new vent to the top floor; replacing a single pane front door with double-paned, double doors; and adding French doors and a small landing on the north side of the house.
- c) Citizen Comments: None
- d) ARB Review and Member Discussion: D. Mitchell asked about the depth of the new landing and was told it will be 7 ft. – 8 ft. R. Crabbe made a motion to approve the application with the additional materials specifications provided in the architect's drawings; D. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Item #3: Request of Rappahannock County Government for a New Emergency Services Garage Behind the County Sheriff's Office, Located Off Mt. Salem Ave. Between Sherriff's Office and Radio Tower.**

- a) Zoning Administrator Review: S. Gyurisin said he met with Architect Rick Lessard and County Administrator Garrey Curry, Jr., P.E., to review the site plan and ensure setback and zoning requirements were met.
- b) Applicant Presentation: On behalf of applicant Garrey Curry, Architect Rick Lessard described the proposed structure as a three-bay, single story garage designed in the carriage house style with garage doors oriented facing the county spur. One garage bay will house an EMS vehicle; one bay is designated for Sherriff's office evidence collection; and the third bay, with a fixed door, will be divided into three sections: one for maintenance of firefighters' gear; a toilet room; and storage area. The finishes will include stucco over a pour-in-place concrete foundation; TruExterior horizontal Dutch lap siding; double hung windows with a stationary transom above; overhang details mimicking the adjacent EMS bunkhouse; recessed security lighting; matching siding used on a miniature screen for the mechanical equipment; and landscaping around the building perimeter.
- c) Citizen Comments: There were no citizen comments.
- d) ARB Review and Member Discussion: D. Mitchell and N. Edwards, proposed project neighbors, conveyed appreciation to R. Lessard for giving advance notice of the project. R. Crabbe asked for clarification on recessed lighting. W. Kerr made a motion to approve the project as submitted; D. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Item #4: Request by Stephen Plescow, P.E., Project Manager of Rush River Commons, for Phase 1 Signage, Leggett Lane.**

- a) Zoning Administrator Review: S. Gyurisin reported he had been working for some time with S. Plescow on the square footage of the proposed project signs and that the proposed Phase 1 sign package does not require a special use permit.
- b) Applicant Presentation: S. Plescow described the proposed Phase 1 signs for the commercial office/retail buildings as minimal and in keeping with other commercial signs in town. None of the signs will be illuminated. The project includes:
  1. One campus identification sign, located near the corner of Leggett Lane and Warren Avenue, oriented toward the corner and not visible on approach to town via Warren Avenue. It will be free-standing, double-faced and mounted within a metal frame on a

wooden post, with the total post height approximately 10 ft. tall. The outline of the sign frame that encloses the sign panel is approximately 35 in. wide by 37.5 in. tall.

2. Office building signage on the south elevation, the main building entrance, will have a 16 in. by 16 in. building sign next to the entrance door, and an 8 in. by 10 in. sign on the entrance door to the retail space. On the west elevation, there will be a 24 in. by 24 in. sign on the entrance door to the retail space, and a circular sign in the large window of the retail space measuring 36 in. by 28 in. with a 12 in. diameter.
  3. The Food Pantry will have one 24 in. by 36 in. information sign, with its hours of operation, at the entrance to the building on the western elevation.
- c) Citizen Comments: A town resident noted that Washington is one community with no other campus signs in town, and expressed concern that the RR Commons' site entry identification sign may convey to visitors that RR Commons is a separate community rather than an integrated part of town. Rush River Commons creator Chuck Akre said that he hoped the site will be referred to as "The Commons" and be treated no differently than referring to any other building in town. He also said he felt the sign's aesthetic was more pleasing than that of the nearby Fire Department's message board sign on Warren Avenue.
- d) ARB Review and Discussion: D. Mitchell said he appreciated the citizen comments but found the signs functional and appropriate. W. Kerr clarified that the window sign at RR Commons will be viewed by the public off Leggett Lane as compared to the Patty O's Café window sign that is primarily viewed on private property. S. Plescow responded that the window sign is beneath a porch. R. Crabbe questioned the height and location of the identification sign and wondered if it could be closer to the building. S. Plescow responded that the height could be lowered by one to two feet, however its location was determined by constraints imposed by underground utilities, that the height of the sign is in perspective to the two-story building, and that extensive landscaping is planned adjacent to the building on Warren Avenue. D. Mitchell moved to approve the application as submitted; R. Crabbe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Item #5: Request by The Inn at Little Washington to Add a Sunroom Porch Enclosure at the Rear of "The Mayor's House," 443 Main Street.**

- a) Zoning Administrator Review: S. Gyurisin reported no zoning issues.
- b) Applicant Presentation: On behalf of The Inn at Little Washington, Project and Design Coordinator Alicia Fatula proposed the addition of a glass enclosed porch to the back of the Mayor's House, which would be approximately an 8 ft. by 23 ft. wood-framed enclosure with 12 in. by 20 in. double-pane, wood mullioned window lites. French doors would open onto three steps with wood railing on either side, and the steps would match the interior bluestone slate porch flooring. Roofing will match the roofing currently on the house.
- c) Citizen Comments: None
- d) ARB Review and Discussion: N. Edwards asked for clarification on the location. W. Kerr made a motion to approve the application as submitted; D. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

***Closing Comments and Adjournment:***

D. Harris adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting is May 20, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nanette Edwards, ARB Secretary

\*Letter attached

Thornton Matheson  
[Thorntonmatheson@gmail.com](mailto:Thorntonmatheson@gmail.com)  
202-468-8458

March 31, 2024

Deborah Harris  
Chair  
Architectural Review Board  
Washington, VA

Dear Board Chair and Members:

Thank you for your comments on my application for the construction of a north extension consisting of a side entry hall and garage at 558 Gay St, which I received from the Town Manager on January 3. I submit this letter in reply to those comments.

The first bulleted ARB comment states: “As requested in the past two ARB meetings, the ARB requests options to consider as a part of the application, beyond the original submission. One subsequent option was provided to the ARB, but this did not appear to incorporate the ARB’s and the public’s concerns and comments.” I find this comment confusing. As noted in my response to the November ARB meeting minutes conveyed via the Town Manager, the discussion at the November meeting revolved around adding windows to the west façade of the side entry—an entirely appropriate critique of the submitted design, as discussed below. There were no public comments at that meeting, and to the best of my recollection and that of my builder (and despite what is recorded in the final November minutes), there was also no requirement to submit multiple additional design options. A design option incorporating windows into the west façade of the side entry (Figure 1) was duly submitted to the ARB prior to the December meeting.

Regarding the ARB’s subsequent request for multiple design options, I would like to clarify the functional goals of the submitted proposal. As noted at the November ARB meeting, I purchased the house with the intention of using it as a personal residence and to that end have the following program items:

1. Side entryway into kitchen with cloakroom and pantry storage capacity
2. Enclosed garage with EV charger
3. Indoor passage between garage and main house

I consider the last item to be essential because, although I do not require adaptations in line with full ADA standards, I do have mobility issues relating to past knee, back and foot surgeries. I am therefore only considering plans that fulfill all the above program items. As discussed below, I believe those plans to be fully compliant with both the ARB Guidelines and the Town of Washington Zoning Ordinance.

The historic three-bedroom house at 558 Gay St. was constructed circa 1890 in the country Victorian style, with later additions in the form of a west-facing bay window and an east-facing two-story extension. The renovation plan for the house by NLB Architects of Middleburg, VA, was painstakingly designed to reflect the style of the historical building and surrounding neighborhood while enhancing the building's appearance, functionality, and stature. I appreciate the ARB's partial recognition of that vision in its approval of the proposed modifications to the eastern extension at its December 2023 meeting.

The ARB comments and the November minutes primarily object to the proposed north extension because attached garages are not consistent with the Victorian style. The comments note that there are currently four attached garages in the Town of Washington but argue that they are preferable to the proposed garage because three of them are less prominently located, while the attached carport at 509 Main Street, though prominently located, "...does not detract from and is subordinate to the architecture of the house."

Chapter 5 of the ARB Guidelines, which addresses additions to historical buildings, clearly envisions the potential need for such additions and places no restriction on their function, and no prohibition on attached garages appears anywhere in the Guidelines.

Although the Guidelines do not prescribe applying more stringent architectural standards within the Town's original survey area, they do allow consideration of a building's prominence (page 1). At the November ARB meeting, the Board noted that 558 Gay St., located in the northeast corner of the Town, is not a prominent location. Relative to Main St., its location parallels the house with attached garage at 12 Harris Hollow Rd. (Figure 2).

The ARB guidelines also lay out clear principles for the design of additions to historical buildings, which NLB's plans seek to carry out in every detail. "*The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment...Additions should be clearly subordinate to the existing resource in overall size including height, width, depth, scale, form and massing*" (p. 81). The proposed extension is clearly subordinate to the main house in terms of its size, and its juxtaposition to the historic house was designed to complement and enhance its appearance by repeating its architectural form in miniature (Figure 3).

The Guidelines also stipulate that additions should "*recognize the period of construction on the existing building and implement measures that provide some differentiation between the new and the historic original, while being compatible with the design, style, decorative features, form, massing size scale, proportion, rhythm of openings, and the quality and texture of materials...A new addition should not replicate the earlier building's details or ornamentation*" (p. 81). Accordingly, NLB's design balances conformity with the historical house's structure and pattern and use of distinctive yet plainer materials that reinforce the subordinate status of the addition. For example, the extension repeats the roof gable window in simpler form and uses vertical rather than horizontal boards. The garage was designed to resemble a Victorian carriage house, with side-hinged rather than top-opening doors.

The Guidelines state that doors and windows should “*respect the form, size, proportion, scale, spacing, and rhythm of existing door and window openings on the existing building*” (p. 82). The Board’s request at the November ARB meeting for west-facing windows to be added to the side entry façade was thus entirely justified. The original concept plan in fact had such windows (Figure 3), but they were removed when the size of the side entry and garage were reduced to protect the nearby mature tree. The original windows were patterned after the standard windows on the main house and clearly preserve that fenestration pattern. By contrast, the windows in the option presented at the December ARB meeting (Figure 1), were patterned after the bay window on the west façade, with coffered panels underneath. Either design could therefore be said to reflect the fenestration pattern of the historical edifice, although given that the bay window was not original the former configuration might be considered more authentic. I would be happy to install either configuration.

Extending the side entry windows from floor to ceiling, as suggested in the ARB comments, would not conform with the fenestration patterns of the main house, as none of the existing windows in the west façade are floor-to-ceiling. Installing disproportionately larger windows in the extension would detract from its subordination to the main house by drawing attention away from it. Also, since the area in front of the western windows will be fully planted, as discussed at the November meeting and shown in Figure 4, the below-window space will be largely concealed. Nonetheless, the size of the western side entry windows could certainly be increased relative to the underlying panels to replicate the proportion of those elements on the main house. For example, the window-to-panel on the extension in Figure 4 is 0.70, whereas for the bay window the ratio is 0.75. Figure 5 shows an approximation of the larger window-to-panel ratio.

Chapter 5 of the Design Guidelines sanctions reduced-height rooflines on connecting passages to promote reversibility. Lowering the side entry roof in line with the bottom of the garage roof, as proposed in the comments, is not possible due to the change in floor levels from the side entry to the kitchen. The roof could, however, be lowered to the same level as the top of the front porch roof (Figure 5), although this would to some extent disrupt the pattern repetition between the main house and the extension. This would require reducing the side entry roof angle from 10/12 to approximately 6/12.

Regarding the extension’s setback, as noted at November ARB meeting and recorded in the minutes, the project proposal is in full accord with all setback regulations. Moving the north extension further back from the street is moreover not possible without intruding on the pecan tree’s critical root zone (Figure 6). As the two mature pecan trees flanking the house add greatly to its symmetry and charm, I have taken pains to ensure that the proposed renovations protect their health.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these points. I hope that, based on the above discussion, we can agree on final revisions to the proposed renovations at the April 15 ARB meeting.

Respectfully,

Thornton Matheson

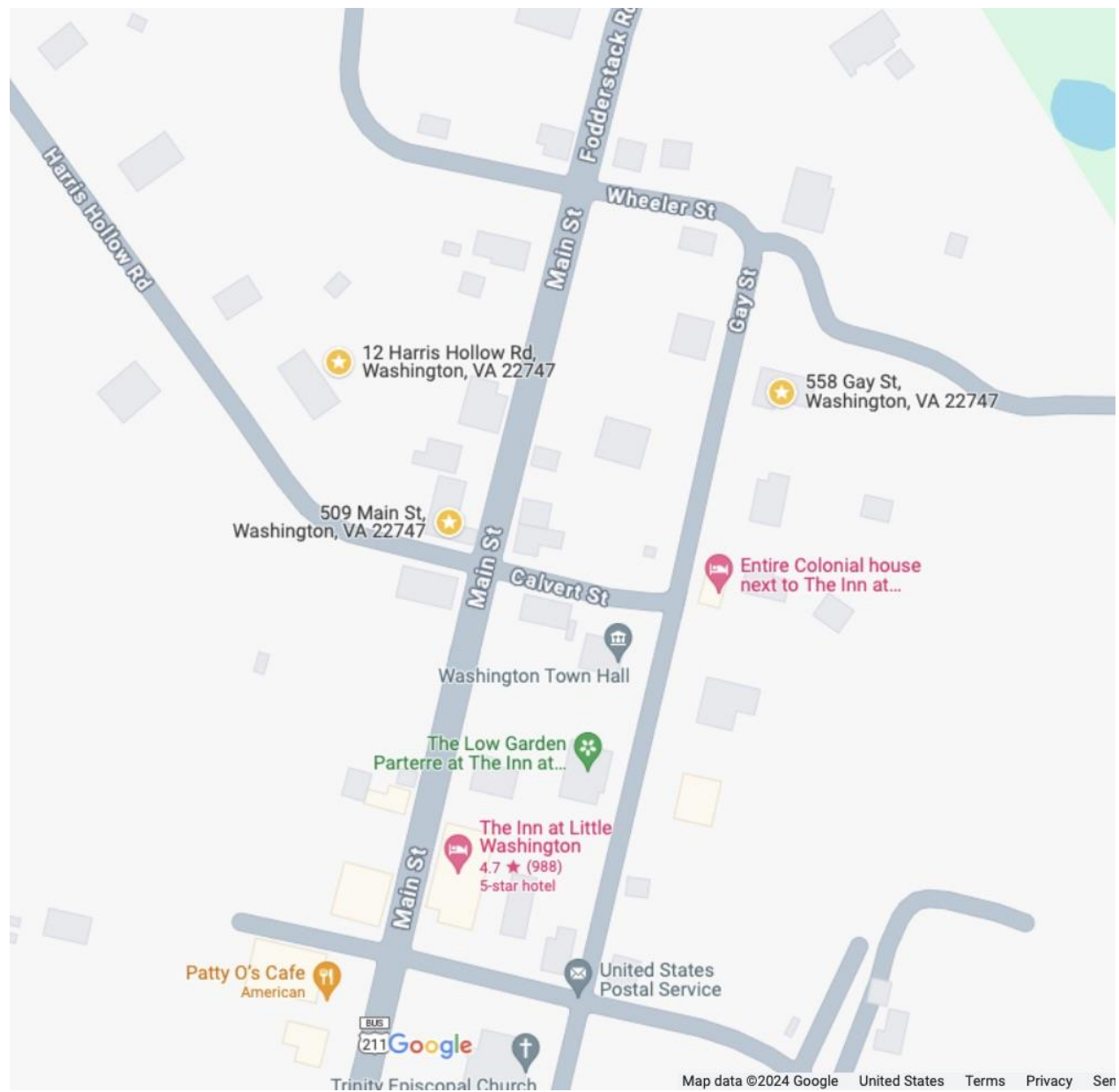


Figure 2. Location of 558 Gay St., 509 Main St, and 12 Harris Hollow Rd.





Figure 3. As prescribed in the Design Guidelines, the proposed extension is subordinate to the main house in size and repeats its general patterns with differentiation of detail.



Figure 4. Earlier concept plan reflecting fenestration pattern of standard windows on main house and transom over front door.



Figure 1. Fenestration option presented to ARB for December meeting repeating pattern of bay window.



Figure 5. Earlier concept plan showing lower roofline on side entry hall.

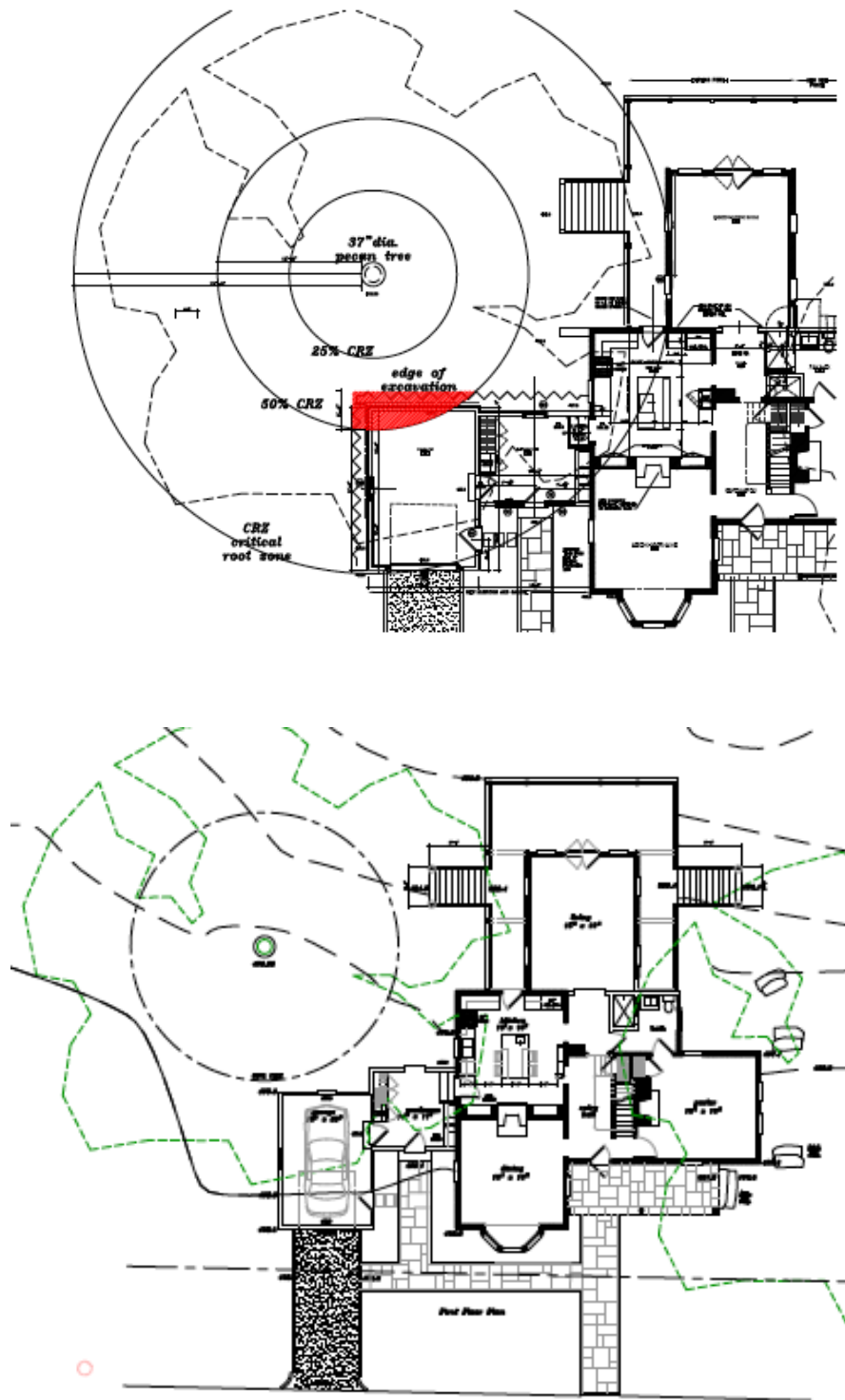


Figure 6. Revision of garage footprint to protect critical root zone of pecan tree.

**From:** [Gail Swift](#)  
**To:** [Joe Whited](#)  
**Cc:** [Town Clerk-Barbara Batson](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: 588 Gay Street  
**Date:** Monday, April 15, 2024 8:55:00 AM

---

Fyi  
Gail Swift  
540-671-0944

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Gail Swift <gailswift@gmail.com>  
**Date:** April 14, 2024 at 6:16:46 PM EDT  
**To:** Deborah Harris <deborah.harris@washingtonva.gov>  
**Subject:** **588 Gay Street**

Hi Deb - I may not be at the meeting because of so much going on with some family health issues; but I did want to give you my thoughts being a resident of the town, and also someone who almost purchased that lovely grand Victorian house, so I know it well.

First, many thanks to the ARB for insisting that the owner present other options other than the garage and “mudroom” connecting it to the house. The current design would certainly destroy the look of the iconic house that currently mirrors its twin only 3 doors down Gay Street. Part of the great history of the town is the story of the two sisters and how their homes came to be.

I do hope everyone “stands their ground” and insist on a design more in keeping with the home. I am not against a garage except that the garage doors open to the street instead of to the side which would be more appropriate. I am against some random reasoning of need that is not necessary.

Kind regards,

Gail