

HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

INFORMATIONAL ITEM: STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board
FROM: Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: June 14, 2023
SUBJECT: Informational Item: Barcroft Apartments Section 3 Renovation

Background Information

Barcroft Apartments (Barcroft) is a 1,334-unit garden apartment community located along the Columbia Pike corridor between South George Mason Drive and South Four Mile Run Drive. Barcroft is identified in the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan (or Form Based Code) (N-FBC), which was adopted by the County Board in 2013. The N-FBC is an alternative zoning district that applies to multi-family residential areas along Columbia Pike that surround its commercial centers. When projects utilize the FBC, they first are required to receive a Use Permit from the County Board.

Barcroft is one of three multi-family residential areas identified as a Conservation Area in the N-FBC. In the case of Barcroft, the applicant is required to follow specific standards for Conservation Areas as identified in [Part 7, Conservation Area Standards](#) (scroll to page 7.1, or page 38 within the PDF hyperlinked above). The Standards also require applicants to meet with the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) a minimum of two times before the project can be considered by the County Board. Part 7 sets forth criteria that provide incentives to property owners to preserve the historic fabric and features of, and the affordability of housing within, these historic areas when renovation or development changes are proposed. The purpose of these Conservation Areas is to protect against destruction of or encroachment upon historic areas and to promote the preservation of affordable housing by allowing for more or different types of development when a property owner preserves historic features and traditional design. The Part 7 Standards are based on *The Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Concerning other policy focuses, Barcroft is ranked as Essential in the County's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). When properties have an Essential ranking and are applying for redevelopment or major exterior changes, projects likewise require review by the HALRB. The same approach with HALRB review applies to projects in Conservation Areas to assess conformance with the FBC Conservation Area Standards.

The units at Barcroft currently have rents that are affordable to low-income households earning up to 60 percent of the [Area Median Income](#) (AMI), which for 2022 is \$85,380 for a family of four in Arlington. In December 2021, the County Board provided a \$150 million loan to support acquisition of the property by Jair Lynch Real Estate Partners. This County loan, in combination with a [\\$160 million low-rate loan from the Amazon Housing Equity Fund](#), will support the preservation of all Barcroft apartments as affordable units. The funding also will help Jair Lynch address immediate repairs, add amenities, make property upgrades, and take steps to improve the residents' overall living environment.

Jair Lynch submitted a draft Master Financing and Development Plan (MFDP) to the County Manager in October 2022 as a requirement of the 2021 Arlington County Loan Agreement. The MFDP describes how Barcroft will be renovated and/or developed in the long term and includes options to build more affordable housing, deepen existing affordability at the property, and pursue other community goals. The MFDP is still a work in progress and more details will be presented to the HALRB later this year. The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff is working closely with Jair Lynch and other County departments and divisions to provide input on the MFDP.

The Jair Lynch project team is currently working with the County on a pilot renovation program focused on Section 3 of Barcroft Apartments. If this pilot program is successful, it will serve as the template for future renovation projects within Barcroft to enable a vibrant, mixed-income community in the years ahead. Section 3 of Barcroft includes buildings 22-29 and is located east of South Four Mile Run Drive and flanks both sides of South George Mason Drive. Lastly, this renovation project is expected to be considered by the County Board in July 2023. The Jair Lynch project team also is applying for affordable housing tax credit financing from Virginia Housing in September 2023. Applying for this type of financing requires a County Board-approved Use Permit, which is why the team is aiming to present before them in July.

The Jair Lynch project team is presenting the Section 3 renovation scope to the HALRB as an informational item and there are no necessary HALRB motions/actions currently. The renovation project will occur on buildings 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26, and rear additions are proposed for buildings 24, 25, and 26.

At its May 17, 2023, hybrid public hearing, the HALRB provided its initial input on the proposed rear additions and their massing, as well as their exterior cladding material and the proposed window fenestration schedule and pattern. In summary, the HALRB was comfortable with the proposed massing and scale of the rear building additions, utilizing salvaged brick from the demolished elevations along with new brick for the cladding of the additions, and using triple six-over-six double-hung windows in the additions. Specifically, for the "sleeping porch"-styled sections of the additions on building 25, the HALRB indicated its preference for pairs of six-over-six double-hung windows instead of triple double-hung windows. Concerning the attic vents on the additions, the HALRB suggested smaller-sized semi-circular vents.

Proposal

The remaining details of the Section 3 renovation scope to be considered by the HALRB include the following eight items:

- Different color options for the brick cladding on the “sleeping porch” sections of the additions;
- Attic vent design options for the additions;
- Vinyl window replacements at the basement stories of the existing buildings;
- Replacement of exterior entrance lighting;
- Tree plan and courtyard renovation;
- Repairs to the existing detached historic garages;
- Placement of new penetrations on rear elevations for utility vents; and
- Potential options for two specific elements required by Virginia Housing for the affordable housing tax credit, which include the covering of exterior wood elements and the installation of entry canopies.

Although a majority of the proposed scope is consistent with both *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation* and the Conservation Area Standards of the N-FBC, the following items are not consistent:

1. The removal and replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl basement windows matching the original configuration;
2. New penetrations for vents on the rear elevations;
3. Use of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim as per the Virginia Housing requirements; and
4. The installation of canopies above all entrances to meet Virginia Housing requirements.

Given the historic nature and importance of Barcroft, the Jair Lynch project team and the HPP staff are in the process of seeking exemptions from Virginia Housing (for items #3 and 4 above). However, decisions about the exemptions will not be made until this Fall. More information will be provided to the HALRB as it becomes available.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

During the DRC hybrid meeting on June 7, 2023, the Jair Lynch project team presented the remaining details of the Section 3 renovation scope. Concerning the brick color on the “sleeping

porch” sections of the additions, the DRC preferred option 1, which was a lighter multi-tone brick that would utilize salvaged historic brick. The DRC changed its preference from the May DRC meeting and instead preferred the modern design of three rectangular attic vents with the middle vent being taller than the two flanking it. The DRC agreed this modern design of the vents could assist with distinguishing the new additions from the original historic buildings. The DRC acknowledged that it would be appropriate to replace the original metal-framed basement windows with vinyl windows with the same fenestration pattern, as this was seen as a small change and the other windows in Section 3 already have been replaced with vinyl windows.

The DRC did not have any issues with replacing the light fixtures. Ms. Liccese-Torres requested that for the HALRB submittal, the applicant indicate the number of light fixtures being replaced per building and indicate if any new locations for light fixtures were being proposed. For the trees located in Section 3, the DRC acknowledged the project team’s approach, specifically with the removal of seven healthy trees to enable the construction of the rear additions. However, Ms. Farris voiced some concerns about the proposed removal of tree #3343 in the tree plan, a white oak with a diameter of 38 inches. She requested the applicants consider some creative thinking as to how their project could honor the loss of this tree. For the existing detached garages, the DRC supported the overall proposed repairs but had questions about the existing garage door material and what the replacement garage door material would be.

The DRC recognized that Virginia Housing required cladding of wood trim elements, including the fascia boards near the roofline and the decorative door surrounds. The cladding material would either be vinyl or aluminum. Concerning the installation of entrance canopies, the DRC supported option 2 for the main entrances because of its simple shed-roof design. Although the project team only provided one option for the rear entrance canopies, the proposed design was also simplistic and supported by the DRC members. Ms. Farris explained that the canopy installation would be sensitive to the historic building materials and that the HPP often recommends that punctures be made into the mortar joints since they are easier to repair than the actual brick. Ms. Farris also reiterated that she is hopeful the project team will receive a waiver from Virginia Housing concerning these two requirements.

Recommendations

At this time, the HALRB is being asked to provide design feedback to the Jair Lynch project team for these additional eight proposed details for the renovation project within Section 3. The HALRB can provide its official recommendations and concerns to the County Board when the Use Permit is considered in July 2023.

The HPP staff does not have issue with the two-tone color option for the brick cladding on the “sleeping porch” sections of the additions, the modern-styled rectangular-shaped attic vents for the additions, replacement of the exterior lighting, repairs to the garages, and the new penetrations on the rear elevations for utility vents. These specific items follow the guidance of both Part 7 of the Conservation Area Standards in the N-FBC, and *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties*, specifically standards #1, #2, and #9:

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1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Although most of the proposed scope is consistent with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and the Conservation Area Standards of the N-FBC, the following items are not consistent:

1. The removal and replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl basement windows matching the original configuration;
2. New penetrations for vents on the rear elevations;
3. Use of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim as per the Virginia Housing requirements; and
4. The installation of canopies above all entrances to meet Virginia Housing requirements.

The HPP staff considers the proposed replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl as a minor change to the historic material of the existing buildings. All the original windows in Section 3 already have been replaced except the basement story windows, and although the steel-sash basement windows are original, they are not considered character-defining features to Barcroft. The HPP staff acknowledges that the original window configuration and fenestration pattern is important to retain, which the applicant is proposing to do for the basement replacement windows. Concerning the new penetrations for vents on the rear elevations, the HPP staff sees this as necessary for the historic buildings to adapt to the needs of its current and future residents without negatively affecting character-defining features. These penetrations will be minimal and will only be visible on the rear elevations.

The HPP staff agrees that the cladding of existing wood trim materials and the installation of entrance canopies, as per the Virginia Housing requirements, likewise are minimal changes to

these character-defining features. The applicant will be required to repair any deteriorated wood prior to cladding it with vinyl or aluminum. Although this cladding will be a visible barrier, the wood material will still exist, and the cladding treatment can be reversible. As for the canopies, the proposed designs will not overshadow the decorative door surrounds on the facades and are compatible to the overall design of Barcroft. Additionally, the installation of the canopies will only affect the mortar joints and will not cause damage to the historic brick material. The cladding of existing wood materials and installation of entry canopies mostly follows standards #6 and #10 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

The HPP staff also is encouraged by the applicant's ongoing conversations with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources on the likelihood that the applicant's request for waivers of these Virginia Housing requirements will be approved even if they cannot currently be guaranteed.

Regarding the tree preservation and removal plan, the HPP staff is concerned about the proposed removal of the white oak tree, noted as #3343 on the plans. The County's Urban Forester considers this a historic tree and believes it is more than 100 years old, as white oaks grow slowly; it probably was planted after the Civil War period (1861-1865). White Oak trees are not currently thriving in Arlington County due to the Oak Wilt Disease that has devastated this tree species. There are also concerns from the County's Urban Forester about the courtyard renovation negatively affecting the health of the surrounding trees. The HPP staff strongly recommends that the project team revisit discussions with Urban Forestry to discuss their concerns.