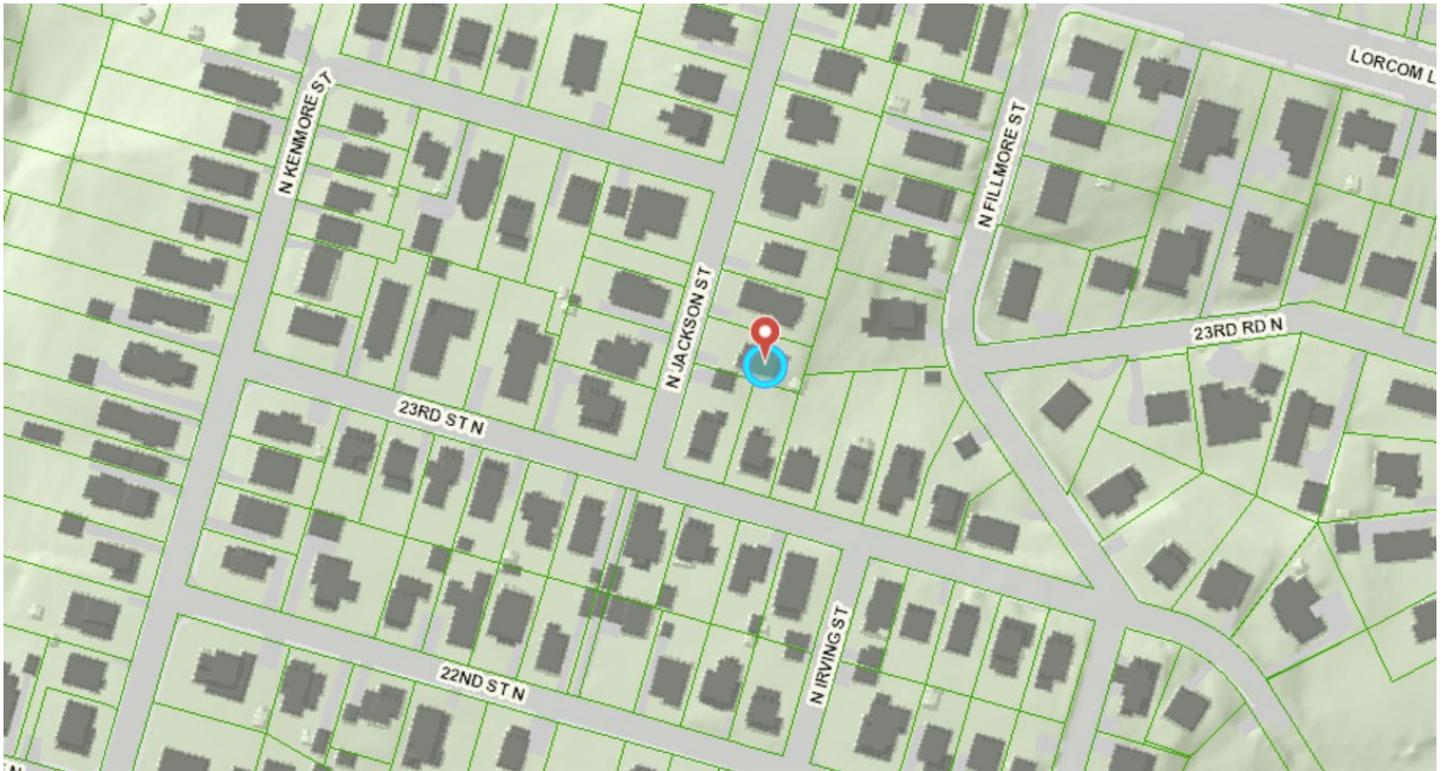


Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

Arlington County, Virginia



HALRB meeting March 16, 2022, Case 22-03 (HPCA22-00006)

2309 N. Jackson St.: Request to remove sweetgum tree in rear of property.





HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

To: HALRB
From: Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Planner
Date: March 10, 2022
Subject: 2309 North Jackson Street, CoA 22-03, Maywood Local Historic District

Background Information

The dwelling at 2309 North Jackson Street was constructed in 1983. The *Maywood National Register Nomination* describes the house as follows:

The two-bay-wide, wood-frame dwelling rests on a solid brick stretcher foundation. It is clad in vinyl siding and has a front-gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. The one-story, single-bay, shed-roof front porch has turned posts. Windows are 1/1 wood-sash. Other notable features include a projecting front gable with wood fishscale shingles, projecting eaves, and a vinyl cornice and soffit.

The dwelling is listed as a non-contributing resource to the Maywood National Register Historic District. The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff believes that the shed located at the rear of the property pre-dates the dwelling. However, the shed is not mentioned in the nomination form, and due to extensive changes, it lacks integrity of materials, design, workmanship, and feeling.

Proposal

The subject proposal is a request to remove a 20" diameter breast height (DBH) sweetgum tree at the rear of the property. The tree is located directly next to the shed and touches it. The property owners stated they are planning to make future landscape improvements to their property, including the replacement of a retaining wall near the shed and sweetgum tree, but this future project depends on whether the tree remains in place or is granted removal. They also acknowledged that they use the shed regularly and that it is part of the functionality of their property. The owners plan on following the County's guidelines for tree replacement requirements.

DRC Review

The Design Review Committee (DRC) heard this case at its March 2, 2022, virtual meeting. The HPP staff explained that the County Urban Forester assessed the tree and determined it had healthy roots, trunk, and branches. The tree did have some sapsucker damage, but this generally was not of concern. The Forester noted that the shed appeared to have been built around the tree, and that the tree is in conflict with the roof edge. The Forester also observed that if the tree were to be removed, there was limited area in the back yard to plant a new canopy tree due to existing hardscape. Some of the DRC members expressed concerns that the tree would continue to come into contact with the shed's roof. However, the DRC recognized that the HALRB does not typically approve the removal of healthy trees, unless the trees

are detrimental to a contributing historic resource; in this case, the shed is a non-historic structure. Therefore, the DRC recommended that this item be placed on the Discussion Agenda for the March 16, 2022, virtual HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The HPP staff recommends denial of the application given HALRB precedent and the County Urban Forester's finding that the subject tree is healthy and poses no safety hazards. All trees over 15-inch DBH are protected in the Maywood Local Historic District as per the *Maywood Design Guidelines*. It should be noted that the Forester did not make a formal recommendation to retain the tree, but in conversation with the HPP staff, a statement was made that the subject tree was on the property before the shed and therefore should receive priority. Therefore, the HPP staff recommends denial of the subject application as it fails to comply with Chapter 7: Site Elements of the *Maywood Design Guidelines*.

In terms of HALRB precedent, the HALRB has only permitted the removal of healthy trees when their loss is unavoidable. In a similar application, the HALRB denied a request to remove a 17-inch pine tree from the property at 3628 21st Avenue North (CoA 17-19A) in September 2017. The property owner in this case stated that the soil around the tree was poor and was compromising a nearby retaining wall, that the tree was leaning enough to pose a danger to their property, and that the roots and poor soil surrounding the tree had made large portions of their yard difficult to use. This tree was not in contact with any dwelling or structure. The County Urban Forester evaluation stated that the tree should not be removed since it was healthy. The HPP staff likewise recommended that the tree be retained based on the analysis of the Forester and the *Maywood Design Guidelines*. Therefore, the HALRB denied the removal.

However, staff recognizes that although the subject sweetgum tree is healthy, it is in contact with the non-historic shed, which is causing damage to the structure. If the HALRB were to approve the removal of the sweetgum tree, this would allow the following:

1. The property owners could continue to use the shed without there being a hazard, or further damage to the structure.
2. The property owners could continue to complete further landscaping improvements, including the replacement of a retaining wall and other projects.
3. The property owners could replant a canopy tree(s) depending on the County Tree Replacement requirements, either on their property or at an allowable alternate location.

Although the option to approve the removal of the sweetgum tree would reduce Maywood's tree canopy now, ongoing damage to the shed could potentially cause it to become unstable, unusable, and/or unsafe.