



CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Serena Bolliger, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: August 9, 2022
SUBJECT: 4102 North Old Glebe Road, 22-17, Walker Chapel and Cemetery Historic District

Background Information

The Walker Chapel and Cemetery was designated a Local Historic District (LHD) on October 3, 1978. The original church building was demolished between 1936 and 1952. The current chapel was constructed by 1962. The Walker Cemetery is still active, and the entire parcel consists of approximately 2.13 acres. The publication entitled *Graveyards of Arlington County, Virginia*, compiled by the Arlington Genealogy Club in 1985, states:

The Walker family started using the “Walker Graveyard” as a family burial site in 1848 when David Walker was buried there.

The cemetery as it is today was deeded in three parts. The first part was conveyed by Elizabeth Bowen on 1 December 1858 to “William, James and Robert Walker, and James and John Reid as trustees, the lot to be used as a graveyard.” (William, James, and Robert were sons of David Walker).

The second part was conveyed by Elizabeth Bowen on 3 August 1871 to five trustees (including Robert and William Walker) “to be held as a site for a Methodist Protestant Church and Burial Grounds.” This parcel comprised the remainder of the original cemetery. The first Walker Chapel Church was built on this site and was dedicated in 1875.

On 1 October 1879, Robert Walker conveyed a triangular parcel of land to the trustees of Walker Chapel for a nominal consideration of \$1. This is the parcel on which the present edifice and the other part of the cemetery is located.

In December 2019, the Chapel and Cemetery Trustees submitted a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) application seeking conditional approval of a conceptual project to provide their board with reassurance that they could begin fundraising. The HALRB granted conditional approval in January 2020 (CoA 19-27) and final approval in March 2021 (CoA 19-27A).

As the LHD was designated in 1978 before design guidelines were individually developed for districts, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Cultural Landscapes are used to guide design review.

Proposal

The proposed project involves removing an unused fire escape which wraps around the rear corner of the building. The applicant proposes to infill the second-story opening with a fixed cellular PVE sheet with a full-height cruciform design inlaid. The ground level fire entrance and landing will remain, and the existing handrail at this entrance will be extended to enclose the landing.

DRC Review

The DRC heard this case at its August 3, 2022, meeting. Mr. Dudka asked if the applicants had considered infilling the spot with a window rather than with what was proposed. Mr. Davis asked why the applicants were keeping a portion of the landing area (around on the elevation closest to N. Glebe Road) in place. Mr. Dudka postured that it might have to do with the building's structure. Ultimately, the commissioners agreed that this was an improvement to the building and placed the application on the consent agenda of the August 17th, 2022, HALRB virtual meeting.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff recommends approval of the application. The fire escape has been unused for some time and appears structurally unsound. It is not character defining to the church (Standard #2) and is located primarily on the rear of the building.

Given the lack of documentation on this LHD (there are no design guidelines and only a brief site history), staff cannot currently ascertain whether the administrative and school portion on the rear of the building are original to the 1962 church construction. However, given that this doorway is being retained as an opening and that the landing at the ground level is remaining, the fire escape could be returned without major effect to the building, which complies with Standard #10. The way the doorway is being infilled will differentiate the opening from the existing windows, complying with Standard #9.

To conclude, the design meets the intent of Standards #2, #9, and #10 of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

Standard #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.

Standard #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.

Standard #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.