

# Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

Arlington County, Virginia



**HALRB meeting January 19, 2022, Case 21-30 (HPCA21-00073)**

**2415 Shirlington Rd:** Request to install an opening in east façade to access a new exterior walk-in cooler, remove an existing chimney, and make landscaping changes to improve ADA accessibility.





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**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)  
**FROM:** Serena Bolliger, Historic Preservation Planner  
**DATE:** January 12, 2022  
**SUBJECT:** CoA 21-30, 2415 Shirlington Road, Green Valley Pharmacy Historic District

**Background Information**

The Green Valley Pharmacy, originally built in 1942 as a grocery store, was designated as an Arlington County local historic district (LHD) in 2013. The building is one-story in height with a rectangular-shaped plan. It is constructed of 12-inch cinder blocks faced in textured stucco. The large single-pane windows have aluminum surrounds and rest on brick rowlock sills; the sills on the smaller windows on the south elevation have been covered in stucco. The main entrance door at the southwest corner is solid glass within an aluminum surround and has a fixed glass transom above. The building's simple design has minimal architectural ornamentation, with the most distinctive feature now being the prominent corner entrance. The signage that had been centered underneath the roof line on both street-front elevations was removed at the same time as the mansard roof.

There have been minimal changes made to the building over time. The HALRB approved CoA 18-13 in July 2018 for: 1) the demolition of the false mansard roof (built ca. 1983) and restoration of the building's roofline to its original minimalist design; and 2) removal of a healthy tree (greater than 15" diameter at dbh) abutting the rear of the building. The HALRB later approved CoA 18-13A in September 2018 for the installation of a metal cap on the parapet and 18-13B in December 2018 for the installation of a new HVAC system. Most recently, the HALRB approved CoA 20-15 in September 2020 to allow the existing service door on the southeast façade to be expanded to code standards.

**Proposal**

The applicant, in partnership with the property owner, is applying for several exterior changes to convert the building into an operating restaurant. The applicant is requesting the following items:

- Installation of a new opening in the building's east (rear) elevation measuring 42" x 92" and gasket sealed to a new free-standing cooler;
- Installation of a new 29'9" x 8' walk-in cooler;
- Removal of the existing rear chimney and patching of the wall to match;
- Pouring of a 12'-wide concrete driveway around the building for car access to parking (NOTE: four parking spaces will be outlined within the LHD parcel, including two ADA-compliant spaces)

in front of the building and two parallel spaces along the north side of the building. The remaining parking spaces are on the adjacent parcel outside the LHD parcel boundaries);

- Installation of nine concrete-filled bollards along the north elevation of the building;
- Installation of a grease container, a cardboard dumpster, and a trash dumpster on a concrete pad at the northeast corner of the building;
- Installation of ADA-compliant curbs and ramps throughout; and
- Installation of movable planters and outdoor seating which are exempt from design review as they are removable but are included in the packet as they will be part of the landscape for longer than six months.

### **Design Review Committee Review**

The Design Review Committee (DRC) first considered this project at its December 1, 2021, virtual meeting. Mr. Wenchel had several concerns: 1) placing new parking in front of the storefront instead of alongside it; 2) inserting a new opening into the building when commercial buildings often have varying needs as businesses change; and 3) placing the cooler close to the building without an air gap. Mr. Wenchel advocated for a separation between the rear of the building and the proposed cooler so there would be minimal impact to the original building. He noted this would also help indicate the cooler as newer construction and reduce potential impacts on the rear elevation from moisture and mold. Mr. Davis suggested that the coloring of the cooler match that of the building. He stated that such an addition could be appropriate given the service nature of the building. The DRC originally recommended that this item be placed on the Discussion Agenda for the December 15, 2021, virtual HALRB public hearing. However, the HALRB Chairman requested on the day of the scheduled hearing that the item be deferred due to a written request by the Green Valley Civic Association to have more time to review the proposal.

The DRC reviewed the project again at its January 5, 2022, virtual meeting. The DRC members stated concerns about the removal of the chimney given that it is one of the few original architectural elements on a simple commercial building. Mr. Dudka considered the proposed cooler to be a removable feature of the building and asked for a drawing of the proposed rear elevation. Mr. Wenchel expressed concern about the potential lack of maintenance of the rear elevation once the cooler is installed. The DRC members recommended that the applicant seek alternate customized cooler constructions which would allow the retention of the chimney. The DRC further recommended that this item be placed on the Discussion Agenda for the January 19, 2022, virtual HALRB public hearing.

### **Staff Recommendation**

The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff recommends approval of the subject application. The proposed restaurant use would return life to a vacant building whose pharmacy business served as the center of the Green Valley community for decades. Staff understands that the secure interior space legally required for medication storage for the building to return to its pharmacy use is now beyond the capacity of the existing building footprint. Further, staff appreciates the owner's pursuit of a new business to fit the existing space. This conforms with the intent of Standard #1 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

Standard #1: A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

The Green Valley Pharmacy was designated as an LHD based on three qualifying designation criteria (as per §11.3.4.A.6 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance):



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- Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation;
- Its association with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the county, state, or nation; and
- Its suitability for preservation or restoration.

The *Local Historic District Designation Form* describes the Pharmacy's "Significant Features" as follows:

The most significant features of the Green Valley Pharmacy are its historic, cultural, and social significance and the building's prominent location in the heart of Nauck [now Green Valley] at the intersection of Shirlington Road and 24<sup>th</sup> Road South.

Further, the *Green Valley Pharmacy Local Historic District Design Guidelines* state the following about the building:

The original massing of the building and arrangement of fenestration remains unchanged. Stylistically, the Green Valley Pharmacy is of non-descript architectural design and is a simple, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building without architectural detailing.

The significant features of the site include the rectangular-shaped commercial building, the adjacent paved parking areas, and the building's prominent location at the corner of Shirlington Road and 24<sup>th</sup> Road South. The priority for preservation of the site will involve maintaining the historic and architectural integrity and character of the entire building, mainly as a one-story commercial building with a corner entrance.

Although the standing brick chimney on the east (rear) elevation is original to the building based on the construction drawings stored with the Center for Local History (at Central Library), the chimney is non-functional and is not listed as a character-defining feature of this commercial building in either the LHD designation form or the approved design guidelines. A utilitarian chimney is not characteristic of commercial architecture nor typical to the function of this building as a grocery store (original use) or a pharmacy. The HALRB has allowed the removal of non-functioning chimneys in the past, most recently in residences (where they are typical), such as at 3313 22<sup>nd</sup> Street N. (CoA 21-27) and 3614 22<sup>nd</sup> Street N. (CoA 18-31) in the Maywood LHD.

The proposed installation of an exterior cooler would allow the adaptation of the existing building footprint without a major impact on or expansion of the historic building, which complies with Standard #1 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Interestingly, a walk-in cooler was approved by a County building permit in October 1944 (removal date unknown), showing that the proposed cooler addition is in keeping with the use of the building and landscape. Furthermore, the surface of the cooler will be parged to match the building's existing wall treatment. The applicant also offered to paint the cooler white so it would blend into the existing building for minimal visual impact. The cooler will be set two inches away from the rear building wall to create an air gap and thus will not damage the historic fabric of this elevation. The cooler will allow for the addition of usable square

footage with minimal alteration to the historic massing and materials, as per Standard #9 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

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.

Although staff would prefer not to introduce a new door opening on the historic building, staff believes it would not be inappropriate for a commercial building to have a second rear service entrance. Also, this new opening would help maximize the efficient use of the building as a restaurant.

Staff appreciates that pull-in parking spaces are preferred for ADA parking since parallel parking is less accessible. Staff also recognizes that historically there was parking in front of the building.

None of the proposed outdoor seating or planters are fixed and as such comply with Standard #9 above.