

HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Lorin Farris, Principal Planner, Historic Preservation
DATE: August 18, 2021
SUBJECT: 4201 N. Fairfax Drive, CoA 21-17, Historical Marker Removal

Background Information

The Robert Ball Sr. Family Burial Ground is located at 4201 Fairfax Drive in the Ballston neighborhood and commercial area. The burial ground is immediately east of the Ballston Central United Methodist Church (CUMC). In 2016, the Ballston Station Housing Corporation (then Bozzuto Development Company and Monticello Partners) proposed redevelopment of the church building for construction of an eight-story residential building that would incorporate a new church, with on-site childcare and a preschool on the first two floors, a mixed income housing component with almost half committed as affordable housing, and below grade parking for residential and church uses. In addition, the applicant proposed to restore, maintain, display, and provide public access to a Tiffany stained glass window that the County received from the demolished Abbey Mausoleum. On November 5, 2016, the County Board heard the request to advertise (RTA) public hearings for the local historic district (LHD) designation of the burial ground, voted unanimously to advertise public hearings for the designation, and decided that the designation would be heard concurrently with site plan #443. The applicant committed to preserving the cemetery during testimony at the November 2016 RTA hearing and revised their plans to show a design that carved out approximately 502 square feet to preserve the burial ground. After the November RTA hearing, the proposed site plan #443 and boundaries for the LHD were reviewed by the HALRB at the January 18, 2017, public meeting, and the design guidelines were reviewed at the February 15, 2017, public meeting. In between these meetings, the HALRB sent a letter to the County Board dated February 1, 2017, where the HALRB indicated their support of the LHD designation of the burial ground, along with reservations on the design of the new building and the Tiffany window placement. Overall, while the HALRB would have desired that the design allowed the cemetery to be fully open to the sky, it acknowledged the importance of the creation of the LHD. On February 28, 2017, the County Board approved site plan #443 and the LHD.

Proposal

The applicants, now Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH), along with their partners/representatives (KCM Group, DCS Designs, Bean Kinney & Korman) are requesting approval to remove the Arlington County-owned historic marker sign and post located in the southeast corner of the project site just outside of the LHD boundary of the burial ground. The applicant has hired Worcester Eisenbrandt Inc. (WEI), a historic building restoration contractor, to remove and store the historic marker sign and post. WEI's proposal states that they will photo document the condition of the sign, install

scaffold around the sign high enough to lay a beam and chainfall, and wrap the sign with a moving blanket and secure it using chainfall or a hoist chain. WEI staff will hand dig around the base of the post, unless the signpost has a poured-in-place footing, which in that case WEI will cut the post as close to the footing as possible. The sign will be lifted out of the ground using a chainfall, and gently lowered onto a pallet padded with rigid insulation. The sign will be secured using a plastic banding strap and loaded onto a truck. The sign will be placed in a crate where it will be stored outside in a remote location. The applicant has also provided an alternative option for the removal of the sign. WEI proposes to discard the existing pole and reinstall a new pole in-kind for the historic marker sign. The relocation of the historic marker and new pole on the project site will be determined by the HALRB and DES during construction and prior to the issuance of Occupancy permits in 2023.

Design Review Committee Review

The DRC heard this case at its August 4, 2021, virtual meeting. Historic Preservation Program (HPP) requested that the applicant provide more information on WEI's professional qualifications to ensure they have worked on historic sites similar to the burial ground. The DRC recommended that it be placed on the discussion agenda for the August 18, 2021, HALRB hearing.

Recommendation

The HPP recommends approval of the subject application. In reviewing WEI's professional experience, the firm has specifically provided comprehensive historic building conservation and restoration services since 1987, but has been a specialist in masonry repair, renovation, and restoration since 1926. Approximately 70 percent of their projects have involved architecturally, historically, or culturally significant places, and specifically concerning historic cemeteries, WEI has worked at notable landmarks including Arlington National Cemetery, Alexandria National Cemetery, and Congressional Cemetery. The work proposal from WEI provided the appropriate care needed to remove the historic marker sign without causing damage. They will be using adequate equipment such as scaffolding, chainfall or hoist chains, moving blankets, pallets padded with insulation, plastic banding straps, and hand tools. If considered, the new pole for the historic marker sign will be replaced in-kind. Lastly, the historic marker sign will be secured in a crate stored outside in a remote location until it can be relocated to the project site, which will be discussed sometime in 2023.