



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

INFORMATIONAL ITEM: STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)

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DATE: January 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Informational Item: Barcroft Apartments Section 1 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. Constructed in 1941 and designed by Architect William H. Harris, Section 1 of Barcroft includes Buildings 1-16 that are mostly sited along Columbia Pike and South Thomas Street, also casually referenced as “the spine” of Barcroft. In 2022, EHT Tracerics conducted an architectural survey of the Barcroft Apartments, and the following excerpt describes a portion of Section 1:

Section 1, the first and largest section to be constructed, exemplifies the Barcroft Apartment’s original Colonial Revival style design approach and intended garden setting. Buildings are smaller than those in later sections, typically L- or C-shaped in plan, and arranged to form small courtyards connected by paths. Parking is situated away from buildings; early plans called for multiple parking lots within the Section 1, but most were removed from later drawings in favor [of] locating parking within the five detached garages at the section’s perimeter. Section 1 buildings are comprised of solid materials including slate roofs and American bond brick and have design features rarely repeated in other sections including blind openings and cupolas. Brick pilasters are not found in later sections.

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 hyperlinked PDF). The Standards also require applicants to meet with the 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.

The Jair Lynch project team presented to the HALRB the renovation projects of Barcroft Apartments, specifically focused on Section 3 of the complex in June and July 2023, and on Section 4 in September and October 2023. Both renovation projects involve the Jair Lynch project team applying for affordable housing tax credit financing from Virginia Housing. Applying for this type of financing requires a County Board-approved Use Permit, and the project scope will need to adhere to Virginia Housing's Minimum Design and Construction Requirements (MDCR). In both instances, the HALRB preferred to request waivers for entry canopies and the cladding of wood exterior trim.

Proposal

The Jair Lynch project team now is presenting to the HALRB proposed alterations to a portion of the original Section 1 of Barcroft Apartments, specifically Buildings 12-16, as an informational item. There are no necessary HALRB motions/actions needed at this time.

The Section 1 scope for Buildings 12-16 includes the following items:

- Repair of exterior masonry (including brick and cast stone); repoint deteriorated mortar where necessary matching the existing size, shape, color, and texture; and repaint previously painted brick as necessary.
- Gently clean and wash all existing brick and concrete facades with low- to medium-pressure adhering to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* and "NPS Preservation Brief #1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings."

- Removal and replacement of steel-sash basement windows matching the original configuration. All new windows are proposed to be vinyl to match existing adjacent windows.*
- Removal and replacement of existing mechanical systems including existing through-wall mechanical system openings. Patch exterior walls to match surrounding brick.
- Removal and replacement of non-original light fixtures with new compatible fixtures.
- Repair of slate roofs and replace flat roofs (Note: not visible from the street because blocked by brick parapets).
- Repair and paint existing metal railings.
- Repair and paint existing non-original shutters.
- Repair and paint building entry doors and frames.
- Repair and paint corroded metal lintels.
- Addition of outdoor amenity spaces and landscape improvements.
- Addition of accessible ramps and entrances on Building 16.
- Creation of new opening and extension, as well as opening of a blind window, to create new accessible entries on Building 16.*
- Addition of a new entry canopy above two accessible entrances located on Building 16 to meet Virginia Housing MCDR.*
- Addition of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim per Virginia Housing MDCR.*

* Conservation Area standard modification necessary to meet MDCR requirements

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. Removal and replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl basement windows matching the original configuration;
2. Use of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim as per the Virginia Housing requirements; and
3. Installation of canopies above entrances to meet Virginia Housing requirements.

Given the historic nature and importance of the Barcroft Apartments, the Jair Lynch project team is in the process of seeking exemptions from Virginia Housing (for items #2 and 3 above). However, official determinations about the exemptions have not yet been made. More information will be provided to the HALRB as it becomes available.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

The DRC considered the renovation proposal at its January 3, 2024, hybrid meeting. Mr. Davis asked if any trees would be cut down as part of this renovation phase. The applicant confirmed that as of then, there were no plans to remove any trees. Ms. Foster asked a clarifying question about the material proposed for the entry canopies of the accessible units; the applicant replied it would be metal. Mr. Wenchel asked about the accessibility of the walkways around the buildings

and noted a specific set of stairs in one walkway. He asked for clarification about how those with potential disabilities would access areas like the outdoor gathering spaces. The applicant stated that they were installing two new community gathering spaces, one closer to Building 16 where the two new accessible units would be added and another closer to the other buildings. Mr. Davis asked if they had explored installing a window next to the new doorways for the accessible units. The applicant responded that they had studied this but felt the inclusion of a window next to the door was too “aggressive” and that the units should get a lot of light from other existing windows. The DRC members had no other questions.

Recommendations

The HALRB is being asked to provide design feedback to the Jair Lynch project team for this specific portion of the Section 1 renovation project for Buildings 12-16. The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff does not have issue with the following aspects: repairs to the masonry; repointing the deteriorated mortar; the cleaning approach towards the brick and concrete facades; patching the exterior walls to match surrounding brick where mechanical systems will be removed; replacing non-original light fixtures with new compatible fixtures; in-kind replacement of gutters, downspouts, and asphalt roof shingles; repairing and painting existing metal railings, non-historic shutters, and metal lintels; adding outdoor amenity spaces and landscape improvements; and adding accessible ramps and units on Building 16. 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:

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. Removal and replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl basement windows matching the original configuration;
2. Creation of new opening and extension, as well as opening of a blind window, to create new accessible entries on Building 16;
3. Use of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim as per the Virginia Housing requirements; and

4. Installation of canopies above all entrances on Building 16 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 this portion of Section 1 already have been replaced except the basement story windows; although the steel-sash basement windows are original, they are not considered character-defining features to the complex. The HPP staff acknowledges that the original window configuration and fenestration pattern are important to retain, which the applicant proposes to do for the basement replacement windows.

The incorporation of a new opening and extension, as well as the opening of a blind window, to create two new accessible entries on Building 16, will occur on secondary side elevations and will not affect the overall design of Section 1 within the complex. Although the blind window opening will be lost, the placement of the new opening for an accessible entrance is sensitive to the design and will not negatively affect the main facade of Building 16, which is the location of the most ornate areas. The HPP staff sees this change as necessary to adapt Building 16 for its current and future residents.

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 reversed. As for the canopies over the new accessible entrances on Building 16, the proposed designs will not detract from the main facades. These canopies are compatible to the overall design of Barcroft and will be mounted in the mortar joints so as not to 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.

Concerning the canopy designs for the two new accessible units, the HPP staff appreciates the simplicity of the proposed metal canopy and agrees canopies for these specific entrances are appropriate as they will directly benefit the residents of these units. If the Virginia Housing MDCR waivers are not granted, the HPP staff encourages the HALRB to consider the overall design approach for the canopy designs throughout the complex (for example, a traditional

aesthetic as preferred by the HALRB and approved by the County Board most recently in the renovation phases of Sections 3 and 4, versus a more modern design).

The HPP staff remains 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.