

HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

INFORMATIONAL ITEM: STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: May 15, 2023
SUBJECT: Informational Item: Barcroft Apartments Section 3 Renovation

Background Information

Barcroft Apartments (Barcroft) is a 1,334-unit garden apartment community located along Columbia Pike corridor, between South George Mason Drive and South Four Mile Run Drive. 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 PDF). The Standards also require applicants meet with the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (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 require review by the HALRB. The same approach goes for projects in Conservation Areas needing HALRB review 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 residents' overall living environment.

Jair Lynch submitted a draft Master Financing and Development Plan (MFDP) to the County Manager in October 2022 as a requirement of the 2021 Arlington County Loan Agreement. The MFDP describes how Barcroft will be renovated and/or developed in the long term and includes options to build more affordable housing, deepen existing affordability at the property, and pursue other community goals. The MFDP is still a work in progress and more details will be presented to the HALRB later this year or into next year. The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff is working closely with Jair Lynch and other County departments and divisions to provide input on the MFDP.

The Jair Lynch project team is currently working with the County on a pilot renovation program focused on Section 3 of Barcroft Apartments. If this pilot program is successful, it will serve as the template for future renovation projects within Barcroft to enable a vibrant, mixed-income community in the years ahead. Section 3 of Barcroft includes Buildings 22-29 and is located east of South Four Mile Run Drive and flanks both sides of South George Mason Drive. Lastly, this renovation project is expected to be considered by the County Board in July 2023. The Jair Lynch project team is applying for affordable housing tax credit financing from Virginia Housing in September 2023. Applying for this type of financing requires a County Board-approved Use Permit which is why the team is aiming to present before them in July.

Proposal

Since the Jair Lynch project team is presenting the Section 3 renovation scope to the HALRB as an informational item, there are no HALRB motions/actions necessary at this time. However, the HALRB is being asked to provide high-level input on the proposed renovations, such as feedback on the proposed rear building additions and their massing, the exterior cladding material of those rear additions, and the proposed window fenestration schedule and pattern. The Jair Lynch project team will be revisiting the Design Review Committee (DRC) and the HALRB for the June meeting cycle to provide more details on the renovation program, such as materials for the windows on the additions and proposed alterations to the original buildings (e.g., window replacements at the basement stories, new exterior lighting, entry canopies, and landscape alterations and furnishings).

The renovation of Section 3 includes the construction of new, subordinate rear additions on buildings 24, 25, and 26. The proposed work will be consistent with both *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and the Conservation Area Standards of the N-FBC. These additions will include new interior spaces such as living rooms and bedrooms. The

architects have maximized the number of windows in the rear additions for residents to benefit from ample natural light and enjoy views of the surrounding mature trees. The Jair Lynch project team also is proposing more improvements to all the buildings located in Section 3, such as repairing and cleaning the existing masonry, including repointing work. The existing slate roofs will be repaired. The Packaged Terminal Air Conditioner (PTAC) units will be removed, and the existing mechanical systems will be replaced. The addition of small exhaust vents will accommodate new mechanical systems, laundry, and bathrooms and will be placed at the rear elevations only. The openings that remain from the removal of the PTAC will be infilled with matching brick and mortar to restore the facades.

The Section 3 renovation scope also must adhere to specific requirements from Virginia Housing for certain exterior and interior design aspects since the Jair Lynch team is applying for affordable housing tax credit financing. As such, there are certain aspects in this proposal that do not meet the N-FBC Conservation Area Standards. For example, there are requirements by Virginia Housing to install vinyl or composite cladding on exterior wood trim and to install canopies at entryways. Given the historic nature and importance of Barcroft, the Jair Lynch team is in the process of seeking exemptions from Virginia Housing for some of these requirements; decisions about the exemptions likely will not be made until the end of summer. More information will be provided to the HALRB as it becomes available.

DRC Review

The DRC considered the preliminary design for the Section 3 renovation at its May 3, 2023, hybrid meeting. The project team that presented at the DRC consisted of Lauren Riley of Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C.; Mehrdad Froozan from Bonstra Haresign Architects; Alice Hageman, Greg Ward, and David Hilde of Jair Lynch; and other members of their project team. The applicant explained how the renovation proposal would convert 18 two-bedroom units into 14 three-bedroom units (adding approximately 200 square feet) and 4 four-bedroom units (adding approximately 335 square feet). Although the additions will require the demolition of a portion of the rear elevation and roof, brick and roofing slate will be salvaged where possible for reuse in the complex. The DRC members were asked to provide design comments on three items:

- (1) the massing and compatibility of the rear additions;
- (2) the material cladding on the additions; and
- (3) the quantity and configuration of the windows located on the additions, particularly their pattern placement and the fenestration design.

Mr. Davis thought that the placement of the additions on the rear of the three buildings was appropriate if the ridgelines of the additions were lower than the ridgeline of the existing buildings. Ms. Meyer agreed and appreciated that the rear additions could not be seen from the

public right-of-way. She said that the massing and ridgelines all seemed appropriate. Mr. Dudka, who did not attend the DRC meeting but provided comments to the HPP staff in advance, thought staggering the additions was a good approach because it reduced their bulkiness. Concerning building 25, Mr. Dudka questioned if the double brick pattern near the roofline was intentional to differentiate the addition from the original building; the applicant confirmed this intent. Mr. Dudka also was interested in understanding more about roof drainage for the additions; the applicant was not prepared to discuss this aspect yet.

Concerning the material cladding on the additions, Mr. Davis thought the use of brick was appropriate, but he was open to introducing a siding material to differentiate between the additions and the existing buildings. The applicant presented a previous rendering proposing a vertical board and batten design, and Mr. Davis suggested a horizontal siding. Ms. Meyer disagreed with this suggestion, stating that the brick additions could be differentiated by the brick pattern or color. She asked the applicant to provide colored renderings in the future to show these options. Mr. Dudka had not provided input to the HPP staff on the materials because the notes stated it would all be brick, and he could not tell if that was still the proposed option. Staff reiterated that this was the only material being discussed at this time, and that materials of windows would be presented later.

Mr. Davis asked about the additions' attic vent shape. The applicant proposed the half circular vent to match the existing condition but were open to suggestions. Mr. Davis thought the size of the new attic vents were too large. The applicant mentioned they used the same size as existing for continuity, but the architect agreed the sizing was too big. The HPP staff likewise agreed that the attic vents were too large, but the shape was appropriate, unless another vent shape could indicate this as new construction. Mr. Davis and Ms. Meyer agreed on the half circle vent shape but suggested to change the size/proportion.

Lastly, the HPP staff asked the DRC to weigh in on the window quantity, pattern placement, and fenestration design. The architects proposed large double-hung windows flanked on both sides by smaller double-hung windows, all of which could have a six-over-six fenestration pattern. Ms. Meyer was comfortable with the six-over-six pattern but was unsure about the three-window grouping as being appropriate for a bedroom space. Staff asked for clarification from Ms. Meyer if she would prefer a two-window pattern or a one-window pattern. Ms. Meyer agreed she would like those options explored. The architects agreed that the three side-by-side windows might be too much but understood the applicant's desire to maximize natural light and provide ample views of the trees. Mr. Davis agreed with Ms. Meyer's concerns but appreciated the focus on increasing natural light and views of the trees; he likewise suggested the architects explore different options with three windows, two windows, and one window. Mr. Davis preferred the continuity of the six-over-six fenestration pattern on the additions. Mr. Dudka had not shared any concerns or questions about the windows with the HPP staff.

Mr. Davis had an additional question about the chimneys, and whether the applicant planned to keep or remove them because boilers were no longer needed as a heat source for the building. The applicant replied that they had no intention of removing the chimneys but plan to remove the boilers.

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The HPP staff closed the discussion by explaining how the HALRB would receive the same overview of this project, with initial discussion focusing on the massing and materiality of the additions and the configuration of the windows within the additions. Mr. Davis asked when the applicant would receive confirmation about the Virginia Housing exemptions; the applicant reiterated they did not expect to get answers until August.

Recommendation

At this time, the HALRB is being asked to provide design feedback for the proposed renovation of all buildings within Section 3, including rear additions to buildings 24, 25, and 26. As at the May DRC meeting, the HALRB discussion will focus on the massing and materiality of the new additions, as well as the configuration of the windows in the additions.

The HPP staff does not have concerns about these three focus areas presented to the DRC. The proposal follows the guidance of Part 7 of the Conservation Area Standards in the N-FBC, and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties*. As such, the subject application complies with Standard #9 as follows:

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.

The HPP staff remains enthusiastic about the renovation proposal overall and is especially appreciative of the applicant's receptiveness to design feedback. The HPP staff agrees that the proposed exterior restoration plan is both appropriate and sensitive to the character-defining features of Section 3 of Barcroft Apartments. The proposed additions, which follow Standard 9 and are compatible in design to the existing historic buildings, will not detract from the scale or massing of the existing buildings. The HPP staff agrees that the compatible design of the additions will be distinguishable from the existing architecture and staff encourages the HALRB to suggest specific ways that the relationship between old and new construction can be enhanced (i.e., use of materials, colors, architectural details, etc.). In conclusion, the HPP staff supports the preliminary renovation proposal.