

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: July 13, 2023
SUBJECT: 400 N. Manchester Street, Reevesland Renovation and Addition

Background Information

Constructed in c.1900, the historic Reeves Farmhouse is located in the Boulevard Manor neighborhood. The property became a Local Historic District (LHD) in 2004 and a County-held easement protecting the exterior was recorded in 2018. Given its LHD status, the HALRB has authority to review and approve any proposed major alterations. Reevesland is noted for its architectural history and its association with the rural and agricultural history of Arlington, as it was the last operating dairy farm in the County. The period of significance for the LHD encompasses the years that the Reeves family operated their dairy farm. The buildings associated with the period of significance—the farmhouse and milk shed—are historically significant.

Arlington County began searching for appropriate uses for Reevesland in 2010. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), who manages this County-owned property, requested HALRB approval in August 2015 to demolish a non-contributing detached garage, as well as the reconfiguration and resurfacing of the existing driveway, the addition of new hardscape features, and removal of two trees (CoA 15-13). At that time, the HALRB also provided additional input regarding a proposed subdivision of the house lot via a Unified Residential Development (URD) within the LHD. The URD proposed an area for possible additions or additional construction of outbuildings within the subdivided lot. The HALRB chose to defer consideration of the entire Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) request and the URD, as it was made clear that the Planning Commission and/or the County Board could continue to act on the URD effort. In September 2015, the County Board approved a use permit to create the URD, with modifications from the Zoning Ordinance requirements for setbacks, lot width, lot coverage, and public parkland. In 2017, DPR returned to the HALRB to request the demolition of the garage, renovation of the driveway, addition of parking spaces, and construction of a grass paver access drive to the milk house; the HALRB granted approval (CoA 17-11).

In 2017, Habitat for Humanity of Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia (hereafter Habitat) approached Arlington County and proposed a rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the farmhouse as a group home for residents with developmental disabilities. In February 2020, the County and Habitat reached a non-binding agreement for the project with a signed Letter of Intent (LOI). After the LOI was signed, the project stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific conditions of the LOI must be met prior to County conveyance of the property to Habitat.

The Reeves Farmhouse project team consists of L'Arche of Greater Washington, D.C. (L'Arche), HomeAid National Capital Region (HomeAid NCR), and Habitat. L'Arche will be the owner and operator of the Reeves Farmhouse upon completion, providing housing, services, and supports to up to four adults with intellectual disabilities. Habitat serves as the project manager responsible for managing the predevelopment process, securing all necessary approvals, and assembling project financing. HomeAid NCR is the construction manager and will coordinate with their long-time community partner and general contractor, Toll Brothers, to complete the construction project. HomeAid connects vetted local nonprofits with building experts and trade partners who provide donated and or significantly discounted construction services and materials.

Since September 2022, Habitat and its project partners have been in active discussions with County staff across several programs and departments, including the Historic Preservation Program (HPP), Planning, Housing, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Environmental Services, Human Services, Zoning, Inspection-Services, Real Estate Bureau, County Attorney's Office, and the County Manager's Office.

In January 2023, DPR held a community meeting for the Boulevard Manor Civic Association to update neighbors on the project and reintroduce the concept designs for the adaptive reuse of the historic farmhouse. The proposed design concept includes: 1) restoring the exterior of the farmhouse, 2) modernizing and renovating the home's interior, 3) constructing two new historically compatible additions, and 4) modifying some aspects of the grounds and landscaping.

This is a brief architectural description of the historic farmhouse:

The Reevesland farmhouse is a two-story building with a stone foundation. The original tenant farmhouse of 1865 featured a gabled roof and a modified T-plan. The wood framing remains as underlying physical evidence of a number of additions and remodeling undertaken over more than 100 years, with the major changes occurring from 1878 to 1911. The earliest sections of the house have a simple box cornice with gable returns, a plain frieze, and double corner boards. There is a bracketed one-story porch on the east side and a small open porch at the rear.

A detailed analysis of the evolution of the various construction phases of the historic farmhouse can be found in a 2004 report by John Milner Associates, Inc., "An Historical, Architectural, and Archaeological Survey: Torreyson-Reeves Farm, Arlington, Virginia." The applicants provided an excerpted illustration from this report as part of their HALRB submission (see pages 4-8).

On April 19, 2023, the HALRB reviewed the proposed massing and overall design concepts for the restoration of the exterior of the historic farmhouse and the construction of two new additions. The applicant sought preliminary HALRB approval of a CoA to satisfy one of the main conditions of the signed LOI. The HALRB considered all aspects of the current proposal and determined that a preliminary CoA could be granted at that time, but further design details were needed prior to issuance of a final CoA. Upon receipt of the preliminary CoA, the applicants proceeded with the preparation of construction drawings to be submitted to the County for a Use Permit Amendment. The applicants are currently returning to the HALRB for a final CoA, which includes additional details on materials and specifications. Regarding details for related stormwater requirements and tree replacements, the HPP staff has been working with the applicants and determined that these items will most likely impact areas outside of the LHD boundary; therefore, these aspects do not need to be included in the final CoA. However, the HPP staff will remain part of the ongoing discussions on these items throughout the permitting process.

Proposal

Habitat's proposal includes more details involving the restoration of the farmhouse's exterior, a new two-story addition at the south elevation (rear), and a new one-story addition at the southwest elevation (side). These alterations will increase the house's bedroom count to seven bedrooms and provide ADA-compliant access and gathering spaces. Their proposal includes the following items concerning the historic farmhouse:

1. Existing clapboard siding to remain and be prepped/repainted if the condition is acceptable (or replaced in-kind to match existing and repainted if in a deteriorated condition);
2. Existing wood trim to remain and be prepped/repainted if conditions are acceptable (or replaced in-kind and repainted to match existing if in poor condition);
3. In-kind replacement of the existing one-over-one wood windows and wood trim;
4. Existing turned wood posts and brackets on front porch to remain and be prepped/repainted if conditions are acceptable (or replaced in-kind to match existing and repainted if in a deteriorated condition);
5. Install, prime, and paint a 30"-high wood guardrail on the front porch as required by the Zoning code;
6. Install new sloped wood ramp along the front elevation that is primed and painted, and install new 36"-high wood handrail for ramp that is primed and painted;
7. Existing wood soffit and fascia at the front porch eaves to remain and be prepped/repainted if conditions are acceptable (or replaced in-kind and repainted to match existing if in poor condition);
8. Reconstruct and paint the interior brick chimneys with flagstone caps;
9. Replace the asphalt roof with new dimensional asphalt shingles;
10. Existing wood eaves to remain and be prepped/repainted if conditions are acceptable (or replaced in-kind and repainted to match existing if in poor condition);
11. Install prefinished PVC trim along the fascia and soffit on the eaves;
12. Install new solid core wood, five-panel front entrance door that is primed and painted;
13. Install new, prefinished aluminum round gutters;
14. Install new, prefinished 3" round aluminum downspouts; and
15. Install two, fixed vinyl windows in the new shed-roof dormer.

The applicant's proposal includes the following details for the one-story addition:

1. Install dimensional asphalt shingle roofing;
2. Install new, prefinished/smooth Hardie lap siding and new PVC edge trim;
3. Install new, prefinished one-over-one vinyl windows with PVC trim;
4. Install new, prefinished PVC fascia at the eaves and PVC soffit underside of the eaves;
5. Install new solid core wood, five-panel door on the west elevation that is primed and painted; and
6. Install new, prefinished 3" round aluminum downspouts.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

The DRC considered the proposed modifications to the preliminary design proposal at its July 5, 2023, hybrid meeting. The applicant team, consisting of Habitat, L'Arche, HomeAid NCR, and project architects Scott Matties and Caleb Lightfoot of Wiencek Associates, provided an overview of the project.

The project team explained their approach for the proposed windows for both the historic farmhouse and the additions. For the historic farmhouse, they are proposing in-kind wood replacement windows that will be one-over-one, with one-over-one vinyl windows proposed for use in the additions instead of aluminum clad wood windows. The applicants advocated that using replacement wood windows in the farmhouse section justified the use of a more economical window material in the additions and in the new shed-roof dormers on the farmhouse. The farmhouse also has two, six-over-six wood windows on the second floor that the applicant would like to replace, but requested clarification from the DRC if these windows should be six-over-six to match the existing configuration or one-over-one. The DRC members stated that they were comfortable with changing this configuration to one-over-one. Concerning these six-over-six windows, Mr. Wenchel did not believe their changing to one-over-one would be an issue because they were not located on a main elevation. Mr. Davis was comfortable with the vinyl windows on the additions and the dormer windows.

Concerning the historic farmhouse roof, the applicants are proposing to replace the existing asphalt with new dimensional asphalt shingles. The materials along the roof fascia and soffit on the eaves will be prefinished PVC trim, and the existing wood roof eave will remain if in good condition (or be replaced in-kind and repainted to match existing if in poor condition). The front porch wood eaves will remain and be prepped/repainted or replaced in-kind to match existing. Mr. Dudka did not have concerns with the use of PVC material on the roof. Mr. Wenchel saw these proposed changes as minor and thought the general public likely would not notice such material changes. Mr. Davis thought it made sense to use synthetic material at the roof eaves. Mr. Wenchel asked if a metal-seam roofing material could be considered for the front porch roof instead of asphalt shingle. Staff indicated that the original porch roof material could be investigated by reviewing historic Sanborn maps and/or the Milner reports. Mr. Wenchel was very complimentary of the new proposed porch railing and stated that it ties together nicely with the railing on the ramp.

The DRC and HPP staff agreed that the updated proposal should be presented to the full commission for its consideration on the Discussion Agenda at the July 19, 2023, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The HPP staff recommends approval of the subject application as submitted and supports the proposed restoration/renovation plan for Reevesland. Since the Reevesland LHD does not have adopted historic district design guidelines, the HPP staff and the HALRB must consider all proposed alterations according to the guidance provided in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. As such, the subject application complies with Standards #2, 5, 6, and 9 as follows:

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 #5: Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

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Standard #6: Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

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 proposal overall and is especially appreciative of the applicant's receptiveness to design feedback over the past several months. The HPP staff agrees that the proposed exterior restoration plan is both appropriate and sensitive to the character-defining features of the historic farmhouse, thereby complying with Standard #2.

The repair or in-kind replacement of the exterior materials and/or features, including the one-over-one wood windows on the historic farmhouse, follows Standards #5 and #6. The removal of the existing vinyl/aluminum siding and trim and restoration of any existing wood siding and trim likewise follows Standards #5 and #6. The removal of the existing asphalt shingles and/or existing metal roofing and replacement with new dimensional asphalt shingles complies with Standard #6, as does the in-kind replacement of the main entrance door and the removal/reconstruction of the brick chimneys.

Following Standard #9, the proposed wood railings and wood ramp on the front porch will not detract from the overall design, function, or aesthetics of this historic design feature, plus will allow the farmhouse to become ADA-compliant which is an essential requirement for the new residents.

The construction of a new shed-roof dormer on the farmhouse's north roof ridge follows Standard #9 and is compatible in design to an existing dormer located on the 1911 section of the house. The installation of vinyl fixed windows in the new dormers will distinguish between the historic and new construction, and will not detract from the overall design, function, or aesthetics of the historic farmhouse.

The proposed one- and two-story additions will not detract from the scale or massing of the historic farmhouse, as their designs are compatible with the existing vernacular architecture. The proposed use of synthetic materials on the additions is compatible to the overall design and character-defining features and materials on the historic farmhouse, as well as helps distinguish the historic and new construction, thereby meeting Standard #9.

In conclusion, the proposal does not conflict with the intent/guidance of the recorded County-held exterior preservation easement. When the final CoA is issued, the HPP staff will seek additional approvals from the County Manager as per the easement process for these major modifications.