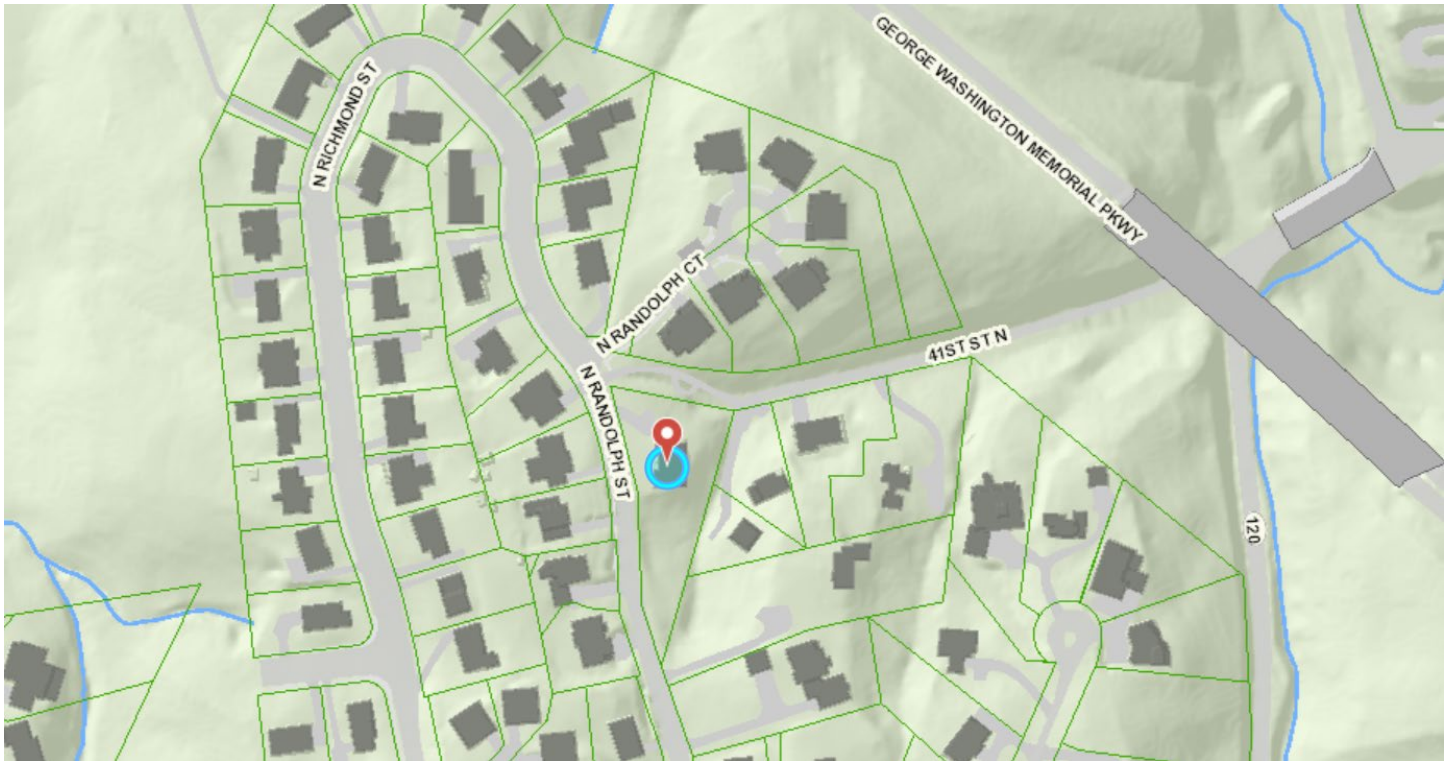


Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

Arlington County, Virginia



HALRB meeting March 16, 2022, Case 22-05 (HPCA22-00011)

4025 N. Randolph Street: Request to make various landscaping changes.





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ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Mical Tawney, Historic Preservation Specialist
DATE: March 10, 2022
SUBJECT: CoA 22-05, 4025 North Randolph Street, The Hermitage Local Historic District

Background Information

The Hermitage, located at 4025 North Randolph Street, is a Rustic Revival-styled log house constructed in 1931. The house is representative of the naturalistic qualities of the Rustic Revival style with its saddle-notch log construction, use of stone, and rustic interior finishes. The design of the house celebrates craftsmanship, echoes the rough-hewn textures found in nature, and embraces the surrounding landscape. It is unique to the architectural landscape of Arlington County as no other examples of the Rustic Revival style have been identified to date.

The log house's original materials and "H-shaped" floor plan remain evident and dominate the view of the property from North Randolph Street. The dwelling consists of a central single-story side-gable block with flanking, projecting front-gable wings on its northern and southern extents. The northern wing is one-story, and the south wing is one-and-one-half stories. There are two additions, constructed ca. 1985 and 1995. The house sits on a triangular-shaped lot that severely slopes downward towards its western extent.

Since becoming a Local Historic District (LHD) in 2017, no applications for Certificates of Appropriateness (CoAs) or Administrative CoAs have been made by the property owners.

Proposal

This application is for a retroactive CoA for landscaping alterations (no changes are being proposed to the historic house); all but one of the proposed project elements have been completed or are close to being finished. There are nine separate elements of this proposal. Below are descriptions for each element along with photographs of the various areas taken by staff during a recent site visit.

1. The applicant has stabilized an existing stone wall along the northwest corner of the property at the intersection of North Randolph Street and what used to be 41st Street North. The original wall was in disrepair and falling apart. The applicant incorporated the stone in the original wall into the construction of the new wall; mortar was used as a binding agent. The new wall measures about 18-24” in height and has a flat stone surface at the top where hikers, walkers, and bikers are encouraged to sit.



2. The applicant would like to install an asphalt apron between their driveway and North Randolph Street to make a smoother transition between the main road and the Hermitage’s driveway. This work has not been completed yet. The photo below shows the area where the applicant would like to install the apron.





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3. On the west side of the property (along North Randolph Street), the applicant has stabilized the original gravel/river jack stone margin between the road and the west garden. The area used to have a portion of a split-rail wood fence that has since been removed. The applicant replaced it with a new low concrete-block wall clad in a native stone veneer. The wall has not been completed yet but will also have a stone cap at the top. The wall measures 1-2 inches in height. In between the wall and North Randolph Street are river jack stones with a few larger decorative rocks and areas for plantings and other vegetation. The purpose of this wall is to help divert runoff from the road damaging the western garden.



4. Behind the new wall along the western side of the property is the western garden. The applicant has added new steppers to this terraced garden to stabilize the soil; there are four terraces in total. Native stone (matching the stone used throughout other portions of the hardscaping project) was used for the terrace walls. Dead vegetation was removed from this area and new native plants will be added later. Landscape fabric has also been used to stabilize the area and help with drainage.



5. The walkway from North Randolph Street to the main house entrance also has been updated. The original walkway was uneven and broken in areas and had rotten 2 x 6 lumber edging along it. The applicant replaced any broken stones and created a more uniform rise and tread to the walkway and stairs. LED downlights were installed at each step and a simple iron handrail was added along the north side of the steps. Additionally, the applicant relocated the mailbox at the top of the walkway and added a stacked stone wall (8-12" in height) behind the mailbox to hold it in place and stabilize the soil around it. The walkway is made of "Pennsylvania slate" or "Pennsylvania steppers" and largely matches what was original used in this location.



6. Along North Randolph Street, closer to the southwest portion of the property, the applicant installed a granite cobble-stone pull-off area for parking. Originally, the area had been composed of gravel and dirt and was used for the same purpose. To the east of the pull-off area, a stacked stone wall (8-12" in height) composed of the same slate and stone as the new walkway was installed to hold the soil around the region in place. Four LED downlights also were installed in the wall.





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7. Along the western side of the house is a patio area composed of slate pavers. The applicant replaced any broken slate pavers with new ones. Originally, the areas closest to the house's foundation featured river jack stone with lumber edging; this has since been removed and replaced with flat slate pavers to create a uniform look between these areas and the rest of the patio space. Vegetation, including two Dogwood trees, was removed; however, both trees did not meet the size requirements to need a CoA or ACoA for their removal. Nine LED spotlights also have been installed to illuminate the log construction along the façade.



8. Access to the main entrance is granted via two steps; both steps were narrow and did not allow for those entering the house to stand on them while opening the door. The applicant has since extended the tread of the two steps with slate matching the original stairs. The area outlined in red is the earlier stair.



9. Finally, the applicant has installed two walkways and a patio space along the house's south elevation. Previously, this area had one informal and irregular slate paver walkway and stairs. The applicant has since repaired this walkway to make it more uniform and widened the top of the walkway to create a patio space for seating. The patio area has a concrete base with slate pavers; they match the rest of the slate used along the western elevation of the house. An additional walkway leads from the patio to the house's rear elevation; materials are the same as the other walkway. LED downlights have been installed along the walkway steps and near the patio. LED spotlights were installed along the patio area near the south elevation of the house.



DRC Review

The Design Review Committee (DRC) considered this application at its March 2, 2022, virtual meeting. The commissioners appreciated the applicant's apology for not obtaining a CoA prior to the start of the hardscaping project and expressed their gratitude for the applicant's attention and stewardship of the Hermitage. Mr. Dudka did not express any issues with the design because the changes utilized native and vernacular materials that would have been found on the site. The other commissioners agreed that the landscaping design was appropriate. The DRC placed this application on the Consent Agenda for the March 16, 2022, virtual HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation staff recommends approval of the subject application as submitted. The project addresses erosion issues throughout the property, particularly in the western portion and along North Randolph Street, and fixes deteriorated hardscaping. The project has been thoughtfully designed so as not to detract from the overall character of the historic property; the applicant has re-used original materials where possible and incorporated matching materials throughout. Additionally, the changes to the landscape fix safety issues such as uneven stairs, loose and damaged pavers, and crumbling walls. The design also addresses structural threats to the Hermitage with the removal of vegetation along the west elevation that had begun to cause rot in the logs and damage to the house's foundation. Finally, the project, in particular the wall located at the intersection of North Randolph Street and 41st Street North, lends itself to the larger community. The applicant wants people to use the wall for seating while out for walks or taking a break from riding their bike; such changes encourage the interaction of the public with the historic property which is an expressed desire of the applicant. Staff finds that the project is



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appropriate and follows the Landscaping and Site Guidelines in the *Hermitage Historic District Design Guidelines*.