



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Serena Bolliger, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: June 13, 2023
SUBJECT: CoA 23-10, 1729 Queens Lane #168, Colonial Village Local Historic District (LHD)

Background Information

Colonial Village was the first large-scale rental housing project in America insured by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). It was once the most talked about architectural project in the nation, and in 1948 the Urban Land Institute described it as “one of the outstanding developments of its kind in America.”

Colonial Village had a major influence on apartment design in the 1930s. Intending it to be a model for future projects, FHA officials worked with developers to create an apartment complex with exemplary site planning. Colonial Village was one of the first to apply innovative garden city planning concepts to a low- and middle-income apartment complex. These concepts include low-density superblock development, clustering apartment units into spacious richly landscaped courtyards, separating pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and using an undeveloped interior greenbelt.

The *Colonial Village National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form* describes the complex as follows:

Buildings within the Colonial Village apartment complex conform to a uniform architectural style. All buildings are Colonial Revival in style and have a consistent scale of two and three stories, brick construction (six-course American bond), soldier course window heads, brick dentiled cornices, and a variety of such Colonial Revival details as pilaster and pediment door surrounds; multi-light, round-arched windows with raised keystones and springers; decorative relieving arches; false roof balusters; and brick quoins.

The *Nomination* includes examples of the types of windows in each phase of construction (4/4, 6/6 double hung sash windows), however it does not mention window material at any time, whether original or replacement. However, windows are discussed in the *Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia 1934-1954 Multiple Property National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (000-8825)*. When considering an update to the *Guidelines for Replacement Windows in Colonial Village*, the nature of the window material was discussed at the October 2015, HALRB public hearing and recorded in the meeting minutes as follows:

“Mr. Liebertz provided background information on Colonial Village. He stated that the existing windows date primarily from the conversion of this portion of the complex from apartments to condominiums. He discussed the current design guidelines that require a very specific window: an aluminum-clad wood window with certain specifications. Unit owners have objected to the cost of installing these specific windows and many have neglected to replace the deteriorated windows due to these concerns. Mr. Woodruff asked staff to comment on the material of the original windows. Ms. Ballo responded that the original windows were constructed of wood.

Mr. Liebertz stated that staff was approached by Colonial Village III to amend the guidelines to allow for a different type of window material. He commented that the National Park Service (NPS) and the approved National Register Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) on garden apartment complexes in Arlington County considers windows to be a less important architectural element when evaluating the National Register eligibility of garden apartments. The Virginia State Historic Preservation Office and the NPS have approved state and Federal historic tax credits for projects using vinyl windows to replace previous replacement windows. Vinyl windows are never an acceptable substitute when original wood windows still exist. The proposed vinyl windows replicate the appearance of the historic window to the greatest possible extent. Therefore, the HP staff supports amending the existing window guidelines for Colonial Village to allow for greater flexibility to the unit owners.

Mr. Woodruff asked staff how they arrived at the conclusion that the windows are not a character-defining feature of the complex. Mr. Liebertz replied that the MPD evaluated all garden apartment complexes in Arlington County. That analysis determined that replacement windows were not critical in determining if there was a lack of architectural and historic integrity for garden apartments. Character-defining features included of garden apartments include their height, massing, pathways, landscape, relationship to thoroughfares, etc.” (p. 6-7)

“Mr. McGraw presented the Paradigm window sample outlined in their proposal (hybrid single-hung, vinyl-sash, one-over-one window with six-over-six simulated divided lights). He noted that the window is the same window installed at Buckingham. He discussed the issues of simulated divided lights and glass thickness. The Paradigm window lacks a screen bevel that often characterizes a vinyl window. He noted that the grid is ¾” from end to end. The National Park Service approved this window at numerous projects, including the Dahlgreen Apartments in Washington, D.C. Mr. McGraw discussed the ease of maintenance with the window.

The Chairman asked the board to discuss the proposed window as a template for the new guidelines. Mr. Laporte asked for a specification for the windows. Mr. Liebertz stated that the guidelines, to be written by staff, will not require the Paradigm window, but a window that has a matching exterior appearance. Mr. Dudka described it as a form-based code for windows, similar to the current specifications. He shared his concerns regarding different iterations of similar windows that could create a hodge-podge appearance.” (p.7-8)

The *2015 Guidelines for Replacement Windows in Colonial Village* as approved by the HALRB are as follows:

Criteria for Replacement Windows

- The replacement window should be made of virgin polyvinyl chloride (PVC).
- *The HALRB also encourages home-owners to install wood windows. These windows, however, must meet the same specifications as the vinyl windows in order to ensure a uniform



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exterior appearance. Any wood window proposal will require a Certificate of Appropriateness reviewed by the HALRB.

- The exterior color of the replacement window must be white.
- Replacement technique must be “complete frame” not “replacement frame” or “sash pack.”
- The dimensions of the replacement window must match the dimensions of the existing window.
 - o The window opening will not be expanded or infilled.
 - o The rails and stiles must be between 7/8” to 1.25” (this is the visible width from the exterior).
 - o The width from the edge of the glass to the edge of the frame will not exceed 2 7/8”.
- Replacement windows must have the same number of lights (glass panes) as the existing window.
- The replacement window must have either true or simulated divided lights and the division of lights must be identical to that of the existing window.
 - o The replacement window must have narrow muntin bars (external grids) no less than 3/4” and no more than 7/8” wide and a minimum of 1/4” depth.
- Bathroom window may be lined with white or beige colored opaque film only.
- Capping must be done with a pre-finished protruded aluminum with a squared profile that matches the dimensions and design of the existing capping (brick mould and mullion).

Since 2015, individual condo owners in Colonial Village have been applying for window replacements by ACoA primarily with the Paradigm 7800 hybrid window. However, this window has been discontinued and the Colonial Village Board and Colonial Village owners have not been able to find any replacement windows which fulfill the existing ACoA criteria.

At the May 17, 2023, hybrid public hearing of the HALRB, the Historic Preservation staff presented seven window options for the HALRB to consider compared to the existing guidelines. The commissioners informally discussed a range of dimensions, considering which options would be appropriate to include in an update to the 2015 *Guidelines* given the replacements now available on the open market and their proximity in design to the windows already installed in the Colonial Village LHD. The commissioners informally considered:

- a) increasing the distance between the glass and the edge of the frame (top and side) by 1/4” (from 2 7/8” to 3 1/8”); and
- b) allowing fiberglass and clad windows as long as the white color exactly matched that of the existing aluminum and vinyl windows in the LHD.

Proposal

The applicant is requesting to replace eight aluminum windows with eight vinyl Earthwise double-hung windows. The proposed windows have a single movable screen which can slide up within a low-profile channel. Dimensions of the window are as follows:

- Distance between the glass and the edge of the frame (top) is 2 1/4"
- Rail: 1 1/4"
- Distance between the glass and the edge of the frame (side) is 3"
- Stile: 1 1/4"
- Meeting rail: depth is 5/8"
- Muntin: width is 7/8"
- Muntin: height is 3/16".

The major visible difference appears to be the shape of the muntin, which in the *2015 Guidelines for Replacement Windows in Colonial Village* are shown in cross section as a trapezoid, mimicking a standard block wood muntin with glazing putty sealing the glass. On the proposed Earthwise window, the muntin appears as three stepped layers.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

The DRC considered this application at its June 7, 2023, hybrid meeting. Mr. Davis stated that since this window fulfilled the new measurement guidelines considered by the HALRB in May 2023, he thought these windows could be appropriate. Mr. Wenchel expressed concern that the photo of the muntin appeared to be larger than the dimension approved in the *2015 Guidelines for Replacement Windows in Colonial Village*. Ms. Bolliger measured the muntin and confirmed that it was 7/8", which is within the range in the *2015 Guidelines*. The DRC placed this item on the Discussion Agenda for the June 21, 2023, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation staff recommends approval of this application as submitted. The *Colonial Village National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form* describes the location, size, layout, and glazing pattern of the windows in the complex, but does not outline their material or structural dimension, which indicates that the fenestration pattern is character-defining, but the window material details are not.

Therefore, the proposed replacement windows meet the intent of Standards #2 and #5 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

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.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Originally, Colonial Village was constructed as an affordable rental apartment complex, so the windows all would have been identical then maintained and replaced by the same entity, creating a uniformity of appearance. The buildings in the LHD have been converted to condominiums, so given the varied ownership, visible uniformity is important to retaining the aesthetic appearance of the buildings.



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The condo owners and the Colonial Village Board have not been able to find a window that fulfills the existing 2015 *Guidelines*. Upon reviewing these window dimensions, it appears that the difference between the range of measurements approved for the 2015 *Guidelines* and this proposed window do not vary widely enough for the window to appear visibly different from the ground. Staff would prefer standard trapezoid muntins but as the width matches the dimensions recommended by the 2015 *Guidelines*, the added element should appear minimal. Additionally, a majority of the windows in Colonial Village are not visible from the public right-of-way but only from privately owned land within the LHD.