

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:** October 11, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** Informational Item: Barcroft Apartments Section 4 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. 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 hyperlinked above). 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.

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 in the future. 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 most recently worked with the County on a pilot renovation program focused on Section 3 of Barcroft Apartments; the HALRB reviewed that project at its July 19, 2023, public hearing. Similar to the Section 3 renovation project, the next phase of renovation will occur in Section 4 of the complex (buildings 32, 33, and 34) with no bumpouts proposed. This new phase will 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).

The Jair Lynch project team presented the project at the HALRB's September 20, 2023, hybrid public hearing. The majority of the discussion centered around two topics: 1) the ramp guardrail options proposed at the rear of Building 33, and 2) if the HALRB recommended a modern designed canopy with tie backs to the traditional canopy design that was approved in the Section 3 renovation. Since there were limited HALRB members in attendance, it was suggested that the Jair Lynch project team focus the discussion on these two items at the October HALRB meeting. This would fulfill their need to present to the HALRB a minimum of two times before the project can be considered by the County Board.

The Jair Lynch project team is presenting the Section 4 renovation scope to the HALRB as an informational item. There are no necessary HALRB motions/actions needed at this time.

### **Proposal**

The Section 4 renovation scope includes the following items:

- Repair of exterior masonry (including brick and cast stone)

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- Repointing of deteriorated mortar where necessary, matching the existing size, shape, color, and texture
- Gentle cleaning and washing of all existing brick and concrete facades with low- to medium-pressure adhering to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* 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 proposed to be vinyl to match existing adjacent windows\*)
- Removal and replacement of existing mechanical systems, including existing through-wall mechanical system openings, and patching of exterior walls to match surrounding brick
- Removal and replacement of non-original light fixtures with new compatible fixtures
- Replacement of gutters and downspouts in-kind
- Replacement of asphalt roofs with new asphalt
- Repair and painting existing metal railings
- Repair and painting existing non-original shutters
- Repair and painting corroded metal lintels
- Addition of ADA-compliant pathways and entrances with fiber-glass doors at rear elevation of Building 33
- Addition of new entry canopies above entrances to meet Virginia Housing MDCRs\*
- Addition of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim per Virginia Housing MDCRs\*
- Addition of new penetrations on rear elevations for bathroom exhaust, dryer, and HVAC vents\*
- Construction of a new trash enclosure north of Building 33

\* 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. The removal and replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl basement windows matching the original configuration;
2. New penetrations for vents on the rear elevations;
3. Use of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim as per the Virginia Housing requirements; and
4. The installation of canopies above entrances to meet Virginia Housing requirements.

Given the historic nature and importance of Barcroft, the Jair Lynch project team and the HPP staff are in the process of seeking exemptions from Virginia Housing (for items #3 and 4 above). However, decisions about the exemptions will not be made until later this Fall. More information will be provided to the HALRB as it becomes available.

### **Design Review Committee (DRC) Review**

The Jair Lynch project team was not requested to attend the October 4, 2023, hybrid DRC meeting. During the September 20, 2023, HALRB meeting, it was suggested to simply have the applicants return to the full commission in October to receive feedback concerning the canopies and guardrails.

### **Recommendations**

The HALRB is being asked to provide design feedback to the Jair Lynch project team for the Section 4 renovation project. The HPP staff does not have issue with the: repairs to the masonry; repointing the deteriorated mortar; the cleaning approach towards the brick and concrete facades; patching the exterior wall to match surrounding brick where mechanical systems were 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 ADA-compliant walkways and entrances with fiber-glass doors at the rear of Building 33; and constructing a new trash enclosure. 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.

Different from the September submission, concerning access to the new ADA-compliant units, the project team made adjustments by working with the existing grade and pathways to reduce the walkway slopes and eliminating the need for any guardrails or railings.

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:

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1. The removal and replacement of the steel-sash basement windows with vinyl basement windows matching the original configuration;
2. New penetrations for vents on the rear elevations;
3. Use of vinyl or aluminum cladding on existing wood trim as per the Virginia Housing requirements; and
4. The installation of canopies above all entrances 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 Section 4 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 Barcroft. The HPP staff acknowledges that the original window configuration and fenestration pattern is important to retain, which the applicant is proposing to do for the basement replacement windows.

Concerning the new penetrations for vents on the rear elevations, the HPP staff sees this as necessary for the historic buildings to adapt to the needs of its current and future residents without negatively affecting character-defining features. These penetrations will be minimal and will only be visible on the rear elevations.

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 reversible. As for the canopies, the proposed designs will not overshadow the decorative door surrounds on the facades and are compatible to the overall design of Barcroft. Additionally, the installation of the canopies will only occur on the rear elevation of Building 33 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, the HPP staff recommends the traditional design option that was preferred and approved by the HALRB in the Section 3 renovation project. The HPP and the HALRB are receiving these renovation proposals in separate phases, making it challenging to propose where it could be appropriate and/or creative to introduce an additional modern designed canopy. Therefore, the HPP sees the traditional canopy option as a way to keep new elements consistent throughout the entire Barcroft Apartment complex.

The HPP staff is 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.

Regarding the tree removal and replacement plan, the HPP staff is cognizant of the eight live trees proposed for removal and one live invasive tree. The HPP staff recognizes that the tree removal is necessary to reconfigure the pedestrian circulation and accommodate ADA parking spaces. Further, the HPP staff understands the benefits of these changes and that the tree replacement requirement of 22 new trees will mitigate the removal of eight existing trees. The HPP staff recommends that the project team communicate with Urban Forestry to discuss and refine the tree removal and replacement plan.