



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: HALRB
FROM: Mical Tawney, Acting Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: December 12, 2023
SUBJECT: 3421 21st Ave. N., CoA 21-31D, Maywood Local Historic District (LHD)

Background Information

The *Maywood National Register Nomination* describes the dwelling at 3421 21st Avenue North as follows:

The three-bay-wide, brick dwelling rests on a solid American bond brick foundation. Likely of wood-frame construction with a brick veneer exterior, the building has a side-gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. It has a one-story, single-bay wood-frame portico on paired square posts, and six-over-six wood-sash windows. Windows feature rowlock sills and soldier-course lintels. Other notable features include a one-story porch on the west elevation, a molded wood cornice with gable-end returns, and a one-story wood-frame rear addition clad in vinyl siding.

Constructed circa 1933, the home is one of five documented Sears mail-order kit homes in the Maywood neighborhood. It is most likely an example of the Wexford model, with floorplan 13337B.

In January 2022, the HALRB approved CoA 21-31 for the demolition of an existing 1980s-era rear addition and construction of a two-and-one-half-story rear addition with a center patio. The application also included the construction of a courtyard area outlined by brick-faced planters for stormwater purposes and a detached two-car garage. In June 2022, the HALRB approved CoA 21-31A to scale back the initial project to only renovating the historic house and removing the 1980s-era addition. In October 2022, the HALRB approved CoA 21-31B to reduce the size of two windows in the garage and to modify three wood windows on the house from single-lite to three-lite windows. In February 2023, the HALRB approved CoA 21-31C to modify the doors in CoA 21-31; the application requested that the front door be a paneled door with six-lites, the side and rear doors be 15-lite doors, and the basement door be a paneled door with nine-lites. Finally, in July 2023, the HALRB approved CoA 23-18 to replace the existing fixed, louvered vinyl shutters on the front of the house with operable, raised panel wooden shutters and to remove the remaining vinyl shutters from the rest of the house.

Proposal

The applicant is requesting retroactive approval of a different front door than what was originally approved in CoA 21-31C. The door that has been installed is wood with three rows of three clear glass lites (nine total) over two vertical wood panels. The applicant also is requesting to install two railings at the landing of the front entrance with 4" x 4" wood newel posts, 2" x 2" wood balusters, and a 2" x 4" wood rail that is beveled on the top. This request is also retroactive and an amendment as it is different

from what was approved in CoA 21-31A. Finally, the applicant no longer wants to install the previously-approved privacy fence that was to be built along the west elevation of the property via CoA 21-31A.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

At its December 6, 2023, hybrid meeting, the DRC considered this proposal. The commissioners did not have any comments about the proposed front door, the railings at the front entrance, or the request to not install the privacy fence. However, there were questions about whether the stairs leading up to the front entrance were code compliant given that they did not have a handrail. The applicant confirmed that they were code compliant and stated that the County had confirmed that it met code requirements.

Mr. Wenchel asked if the house, prior to the applicant's ownership, had a railing at the stairs. Ms. Tawney confirmed with photographs that the house did have a metal railing along the stairs. The applicant noted that the house at that time had a different grade which likely necessitated the use of a stair railing; they repeated that the current change in grade does not require a railing along the stairs. The applicant also noted that the choice to not include a stair railing was consciously done as he felt that it made the front entrance appear more welcoming. Mr. Wenchel expressed doubt that the stairs met code, stated his desire to investigate it more, and reiterated his opinion that the front entrance's design would benefit from having a stair railing. This item was placed on the Discussion Agenda for the December 20, 2023, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Staff Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff recommends approval of the subject application. The front door and railings at the front entry landing meet the requirements outlined in the *Maywood Design Guidelines*, specifically Chapter 5: Exterior Renovation and pg. G-19 of Appendix G: Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness. Both are made of wood and match similar designs seen in Maywood. Additionally, privacy fences are not required of properties in Maywood. The inclusion of this element of the project in this application is to ensure accurate record keeping with regards to this CoA project. Neither staff nor the HALRB have the power to mandate that a fence be constructed in the LHD. Furthermore, should the applicant decide to install a privacy fence in the future, this action could potentially be approved via the Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness (ACoA) process should it meet the specific criteria outlined in Appendix G of the *Maywood Design Guidelines*.

Regarding whether the front stairway should have a railing, neither the HPP staff nor the HALRB can require the applicant to install a railing. The *Maywood Design Guidelines* do not require that all front stairs have railings. There are other examples of houses in the LHD without railings along the front stairs (e.g., 3603 22nd Street N., 3614 22nd Street N., 3613 23rd Street N., 3209 21st Ave. N., and 3202 23rd Street N.). Although the subject house previously had a metal railing along the stairs, it was likely due to code requirements given the site grading at that time. Further, the handrail at this stair was not considered to be a significant historic characteristic of the property. It also should be noted that Arlington County's Inspection Services Division approved the building permit without the front handrail, since it is not required by code, on November 14, 2023.

Finally, the HPP staff finds that this proposal complies with Standard #9 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and



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shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.