



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Mical Tawney, Historic Preservation Associate Planner
DATE: June 12, 2024
SUBJECT: CoA 24-14, 2907 23rd St. N., Maywood Local Historic District (LHD)

Background Information

The *Maywood National Register Nomination* describes the pre-1923 contributing dwelling at 2907 23rd St. N. as follows:

The three-bay-wide, wood-frame dwelling rests on a solid parged foundation and rises one-and-a-half stories with a raised basement. It is clad in wood shingles and has a side-gable roof sheathed in standing-seam metal. It has one-over-one and one-light hinged wood-sash windows. Window and door surrounds are beaded. Other notable features include a shed-roof dormer, wide, overhanging eaves with brackets and exposed rafter tails, a battered exterior-end chimney of brick and stone masonry, and a stuccoed addition to the front elevation.

In September 2003, the HALRB approved CoA 03-26 for the removal of a large, damaged red oak tree. In April 2016, the homeowners submitted CoA 16-05 for the installation of a free-standing porch on the existing front porch. The Design Review Committee (DRC) did not recommend its installation and asked the applicant to explore alternate locations for a screened-in porch and return to the next DRC meeting. However, the CoA was never pursued. In July 2018, the Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff approved ACoA 18-12 for the installation of a new HVAC unit at the northwest corner of the dwelling. In December 2019, the HPP staff approved ACoA 19-23 for the installation of 161 linear feet of a 4'-high Gothic style picket fence at the rear of the property. In April 2022, the HPP staff approved ACoA 22-07 for the installation of an air handler for a mini split system at the rear of the house.

Proposal

The homeowners are seeking retroactive approval of a newly installed accessibility walkway that was installed at the front of the house. The applicants replaced the steps located between the front porch and 23rd St. N. with a concrete walkway measuring 11.3' at the widest part by 15' long. This installation makes the transition between the front porch and the street level more accessible, thereby allowing the applicants to age-in-place and resolve accessibility concerns. The concrete-block walkway is parged with smooth-faced concrete; the applicants stopped working on the project once the HPP staff became aware of the exterior alteration. If the CoA is issued, the owners' intent is to stucco the walkway surface to match the existing front porch. Additionally, retroactive approval is needed for a 4'-high, wood picket fence (to match the existing) that was reinstalled along the sides of the new walkway and secured with metal posts. This fence is flush in height with the fencing around the house running alongside 23rd St. N.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

The DRC considered this application at its June 5, 2024, hybrid meeting. Mr. Davis wanted to further understand the location and positioning of the walkway in relation to the rest of the house. Staff and the applicant answered his questions. They reiterated that the new walkway connects the existing porch to 23rd St. N. and that the rest of the surrounding areas along 23rd St. N. and the side of the house, which have an existing flagstone finish, were unchanged.

Mr. Davis noted his preference for flagstone on the new walkway to match the surrounding areas and asked the applicants their reasoning for the selection of concrete with a stucco finish. The applicants replied that the material selection was made so that the walkway blended seamlessly with the front porch, to which it is directly connected, which is composed of stuccoed concrete. Mr. Davis asked if the flight of stairs leading from the front of the house down to the side yard at the corner of N. Fillmore St. and 23rd St. N. remained in place; the applicants confirmed. Mr. Davis also asked if the fencing along the new walkway was flush with the existing surrounding fence along 23rd St. N. and the applicants said it was. The applicants reiterated the necessity for improved accessibility to their house, their safety concerns, and their desire to age-in-place. Mr. Davis said he felt the design was appropriate and that he understood the logic behind the project. The item was placed on the Consent Agenda for the June 20, 2024, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The HPP staff recommends approval of this application. Typically, new walkways in Maywood can be reviewed via the administrative CoA process; however, the new walkway is larger than the 36"-wide listed as appropriate for approval by staff. Furthermore, the new walkway is located along the front elevation which also necessitates HALRB review – only walkways installed in the rear half of the side yard or in the rear yard can be reviewed via the administrative CoA process. Additionally, a CoA is required for permanent exterior accessibility modifications to properties in Maywood. It is for these reasons that this project is coming before the HALRB for review.

The *Maywood Design Guidelines* permit modifications to houses to allow for accessibility, but do not offer specific design parameters for these modifications (pg. iv). Historically, most houses were not designed to be readily accessible to people with disability or other accessibility needs thereby necessitating the adaptation of historic spaces. Per the National Park Service *Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible*, “solutions for accessibility should not destroy a property’s significant materials, features, and spaces, but should increase accessibility as much as possible” (pg. 14). Additionally, “accessibility modifications should be in scale with the historic property, visually compatible, and whenever possible, reversible. Reversible means that if the new feature were removed at a later date, the essential form and integrity of the property would be unimpaired” (pg. 2). Thus, the subject walkway at 2907 23rd St. N. would not impact any of the property’s significant materials or features. It is at a scale that is appropriate with the surrounding landscape, is visually compatible with the existing front porch, and is a reversible alteration. Further, the walkway is not visible from the public right-of-way due to the existing fence surrounding the property. Additionally, the materials for the walkway are appropriate as per Appendix G of the *Maywood Design Guidelines* (pg. G-18).

The new fencing along the sides of the walkway matches the location of where previous fencing had been located on the property. The fencing is flush with the surrounding fencing along the property which helps it blend in with its surroundings. Additionally, this fencing could be approved via the administrative CoA process per Appendix G of the *Maywood Design Guidelines* (pg. G-6).



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In conclusion, the walkway and fence also meet the intent of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, specifically Standards #9 and #10:

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

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall 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.