



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: March 7, 2024
SUBJECT: CoA 21-15A, 4201 N. Fairfax Dr., Robert Ball Sr. Family Burial Ground Local Historic District (LHD)

Background Information

The Robert Ball Sr. Family Burial Ground is located at 4201 Fairfax Drive in the Ballston neighborhood and commercial area. The burial ground is situated along N. Stafford St. east of the new mixed-use development called Unity Homes at Ballston at the former location of the Central United Methodist Church (CUMC). The burial ground contains the gravestones of members of the Ball family.

In 2016, the Ballston Station Housing Corporation (then Bozzuto Development Company and Monticello Partners) proposed redevelopment of the 1923 church on site for the construction of an eight-story residential building that would incorporate a new church, an on-site childcare and preschool, a mixed income housing component, and below grade parking for residential and church uses. Additionally, the applicant proposed to restore, maintain, display, and provide public access to a religious-themed Tiffany-stained glass window that the County salvaged from the demolished Abbey Mausoleum. The County Board approved both the site plan and the LHD in February 2017. Since that time, the project partners changed (Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing [APAH]; KCM Group; DCS Designs), and the County Board approved several amendments to the site plan project (including making it all affordable housing instead of mixed income units). Construction of the new building and installation of the restored window are now complete.

In August 2021, the HALRB approved CoA 21-15 to reduce the size of the burial ground, to install a cast-in-place concrete wall with a stone veneer topped by a cast iron ornamental fence, and to install an interpretive marker about the burial ground. That same month, the HALRB also approved CoA 21-16 to allow the temporary removal and storage of the headstones in the burial ground during the demolition of the church and construction of the new building, and CoA 21-17, for the temporary removal and storage of the County's aluminum historic marker about Ballston.

In October 2023, the HALRB approved CoA 21-16A to allow the six historic headstones and markers to be reinstalled in the burial ground; this CoA also permitted the reinstallation of a seventh headstone in the LHD boundaries. This headstone had been previously removed and stored in the church. In October and November 2023, the HALRB reviewed the proposed text and design of the new historic marker being installed by the applicant at the LHD; it was at the November 2023 public hearing that the HALRB made a motion of support for the historic marker as drafted with any outstanding text edits finalized with the Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff.

Proposal

The applicant is proposing to decrease a portion of the existing cast iron ornamental fence on top of the boundary wall located on the north side of the LHD to install the new historic marker. The historic marker would be installed at a 45-degree angle to allow for readability. The size of the area in which the fence would be reduced would measure 3' wide by 1' 6" tall. A horizontal cast iron rail would be installed under the marker for added stability.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

The DRC considered this application at its March 6, 2024, hybrid meeting. There were no comments or questions, and the DRC members placed this item on the Consent Agenda for the March 20, 2024, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The HPP staff recommends approval of this application as submitted. The proposed work would be a minor change from what was previously approved and installed by the applicant; the fence would simply have a segment removed and the remaining fence would stay in place which conforms with the *Robert Ball Sr. Family Burial Ground Design Guidelines* (pg. 4 – “Fencing should not be placed within the grass area itself, so as to avoid disturbing any below-ground features, but should instead be placed on top of the perimeter wall.”). As such, the proposed work would not adversely affect the character-defining features of the burial ground. Additionally, the historic marker would remain in the same area that was previously approved for its installation. Finally, the installation of the historic marker at an angle would improve the pedestrian experience with the LHD since it would make reading the historic marker easier and more accessible.