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 13, 2024

SUBJECT: CoA 24-07, 3511 22nd St. N., Maywood Local Historic District (LHD)

Background Information

The *Maywood National Register Nomination* describes the pre-1923 contributing dwelling at 3511 22nd Street N. as follows:

> The two-bay-wide, wood-frame dwelling rests on a solid parged foundation. It is clad in asbestos shingles and has a front-gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. It has a one-story, one-bay, wood-frame gabled portico on square posts and one-over-one wood-sash windows. Window and door surrounds are unmitered with a projecting sill and molded lintels. Other notable features include hinged wood louvered shutters, a large shed-roof addition to the east elevation and several shed-roof additions to the rear elevation.

In October 2004, the HALRB approved CoA 04-26 for the installation of a new main and secondary roofs on the house. The project included the installation of metal shingles on the main roof (existing was metal shingles) and the installation of standing-seam metal on the secondary (front entrance, east side sunroom, and rear entrance – existing was either standing-seam or asphalt shingles). In January 2005, the HALRB approved CoA 04-34 to replace the existing brick chimney with a metal flue and relocate it by three feet, to add a 1/1 double hung sash attic window at the center of the rear gable elevation, and to install two flat skylights on the roof. In December 2013, the HALRB approved CoA 13-11 for the removal of the front porch and sunroom, the installation of a new window in the front gable end, and the construction of a new front porch and one-story side addition as well as a new rear deck. This project was amended three times between 2013 and 2014 (CoA 13-11A, 13-11B, and 13-11C) with small revisions and additions to the project.

Proposal

The applicant is proposing to install multiple (a total of 23) solar panels on the main and secondary roofs of the house. The proposal includes the placement of 12 solar panels on the western gable of the main roof; six on the eastern gable of the main roof; two on the south-facing gable of the cross-gable section of the roof; and three on the roof of the front porch (the south elevation). The proposed placement allows for maximum solar production. The solar panels will have silver lining to match the roof color. Each solar panel would measure 44.65” wide by 67.8” tall, and the height between the roof surface and the face of the panel would be 6”. The solar meter will replace the current utility meter on the west elevation of the

house and an alternate current (ac) disconnect, which would allow someone to turn off the entire system in an emergency, will be installed to the south of the solar meter. A conduit, which is used to protect and cover the wires associated with the solar panels, would run from the utility meter on the west elevation up to the attic where the conduit would be installed, if the attic is accessible. If the attic interior is not accessible, the applicant would install the conduit on the roof's exterior at a 90-degree angle and in a silver color to match the roof coloring.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Review

The DRC considered this application at its March 6, 2024, hybrid meeting. Both Mr. Davis and Mr. Wenchel expressed concerns about the visibility of the proposed solar panels on the front porch roof from the public right-of-way. They noted a preference for the applicants to revise their design by moving this panel configuration to a different, less-visible segment of the roof. Discussion did not center on the panels located on the main roof. Mr. Davis also asked if a shade study had been completed as part of this work; the applicant experienced technical difficulties and was not able to answer this question. Mr. Davis noted it would be useful to have a better understanding of the rationale for the suggested placement of panels for this project. The DRC members placed this item on the Discussion Agenda for the March 20, 2024, hybrid HALRB public hearing.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff recommends partial approval of this subject application as submitted. Since the project proposes to place solar panels on the main roof of the historic house, on primary building elevations that are visible from the public right-of-way, and to use multi-roof solutions it requires HALRB review according to Appendix G of the *Maywood Design Guidelines* rather than the administrative review process via the HPP staff. However, the proposed panels would comply with the following Appendix G specifications:

- The panels will have a low profile;
- The panels will be mounted less than or equal to 6" above the surface of the roof;
- The panels will be set at angles consistent with the slope of the supporting roof;
- The panels would blend with the surrounding features of the historic resource with respect to color of the panels; and
- The panels will be arranged in an organized configuration.

The main objectives regarding solar panels noted in the *Maywood Design Guidelines* are to: 1) protect the historic character of the buildings; and 2) reduce the visual impacts of solar panels as seen from the public right-of-way. However, in the subject application, from certain angles, all panels would be visible from the public right-of-way. The panels with the most visibility from the primary elevation are those that would be located on the front porch roof and the south-facing side gable section of the cross-gable roof. Thus, the HPP staff recommends that the solar panels proposed in these specific areas either be relocated to less visible locations on the roof or removed from the project to comply with what is recommended in the *Maywood Design Guidelines*.

Although the panels on the main front-gable roof would be visible from certain angles of the main façade right-of-way due to the front-gable roof design and positioning of the house along the street, the HPP staff agrees that the panels' low profile and silver coloring will help limit their visibility. Furthermore, staff thinks it is important, and possible, to balance the needs of both historic preservation and environmental stewardship within the Maywood LHD. Given that the proposed solar panels must achieve a certain amount of production and the optimal siting for the panels is on the southern (front) portion of the house,

placing the panels on the northern (rear) side of the house would not be as effective for solar production. The HPP staff agrees it would be inappropriate to deny the current applicant the use of solar panel technology largely due to the front-gable positioning of their roof and situation of the house along the street, two facts the applicant cannot change. It also should be noted that although the historic house is a contributing resource in the LHD, the roofing materials that would be impacted by the installation of the solar panels are in fact replacement stamped metal shingles and standing-seam metal.

Finally, there are two examples of properties in Maywood where solar panel technology is visible from the public right-of-way: the non-contributing house at 2836 23rd Rd. N. (CoA 22-07) and the contributing garage at 2324 N. Edgewood St. (CoA 20-04). For the first project, the installation was determined appropriate because the panels were placed on the rear of the house and were not visible from the main façade right-of-way. For the second project, the installation was determined appropriate because the garage was set back 88 ft. from the right-of-way and the material impacted by the installation was not historic. These two examples could be considered potential points of comparison although the circumstances differ from those of the subject application. In conclusion, the HALRB needs to consider the details of the proposal and decide whether the proposed placement of the solar panels is appropriate in this case for both the subject property and the overall LHD.