



CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: HALRB

FROM: John Liebertz, Historic Preservation Planner

DATE: September 12, 2018

SUBJECT: Technical Amendment to the *Fenwick Court Townhomes Design Guidelines*

Background Information

The Arlington County Board designated the Eastman-Fenwick House, located at 6733 Lee Highway, as a local historic district on May 31, 1980. At the time of designation, the district encompassed 1.25 acres of land which included the historic 1876 house. In 1993, a developer purchased the property, preserved the historic Eastman-Fenwick House on a new, smaller lot, and constructed the adjacent Fenwick Court Townhomes. Built in 1995, 19 of the 30 three-story townhouses comprising Fenwick Court are located within the boundaries of the Eastman-Fenwick House Historic District and require a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior changes (see map below). At the time of their construction and ultimate approval by the HALRB via a CoA, the HALRB required that the townhomes' massing, exterior elevations, architectural fixtures, detailing, and materials recall those of the Eastman-Fenwick House.

Since design guidelines were not submitted or approved with the local designation or the new construction of the townhomes, and were not required by the Zoning Ordinance at the time, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation have served as the default guidance for alterations to all the properties within the Historic District. This proved problematic for the townhome owners and historic preservation staff for two reasons. The first is that less than half of the townhomes are located within the historic district boundary. This has resulted in changes being approved for one half of the community that would not necessarily be approved in the historic district-governed portion. Secondly, the Secretary's Standards are an uneasy fit when applied to newer construction dating to the early-1990s.

In 2014, the HALRB, in coordination with the Architectural Review Board of the Fenwick Court Homeowner's Association, recommended the County Board adopt proposed design guidelines which were clear, concise, and appropriate for use in guiding changes to the 1990s-era townhomes. The County Board approved the new design guidelines on September 20, 2014. The same standards are used by the Architectural Review Board of the Fenwick Court Homeowner's Association to review changes to those townhomes that are not located within the historic district.



Figure 1: The red hatched area is the boundary of the Eastman-Fenwick House Local Historic District.

Discussion of the Proposed Amendments to the Design Guidelines

Since the approval of the *Fenwick Court Townhomes Design Guidelines*, Historic Preservation Program staff has reviewed and approved through the Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness (ACoA) process only one application for new windows. In August 2018, a second applicant noted discrepancies between prior approvals for window replacement within and outside of the boundaries of the historic district. This included the following:

1. The installation of metal or PVC capping for window trim.
 - a. The current guidelines allow for wood window trim or cellular polyvinyl chloride (PVC) window trim, such as AZEK.
2. The use of muntins (grids) between $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1" in width.
 - a. The current guidelines allow for only 1"-wide muntins (grids).

DRC Review

The Design Review Committee (DRC) discussed the proposed amendments to the *Fenwick Court Townhomes Design Guidelines* in September 2018 as part of its review of CoA 18-18 for the replacement of windows. The committee recommended the approval of the amendments to the design guidelines pending review at the September 19, 2018, HALRB hearing.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the HALRB approve the proposed technical amendments to allow for metal or PVC capping for window trim and the use of muntins ranging between $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1" in width. This amendment would: 1) allow for a consistent utilization of materials within the Fenwick Court Townhomes as intended in the creation of the new design guidelines in 2014; 2) have no adverse effect on the historic setting of the Eastman-Fenwick House; and 3) permit materials appropriate for 1990s-era townhomes. Technical amendments to historic district design guidelines do not require County Board approval as per the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance.