

HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
FROM: Lorin Farris, Principal Planner, Historic Preservation
DATE: August 18, 2021
SUBJECT: 4201 N. Fairfax Drive, CoA 21-15, Burial Ground Reduction and Fencing Design

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 immediately east of the Ballston Central United Methodist Church (CUMC). In 2016, the Ballston Station Housing Corporation (then Bozzuto Development Company and Monticello Partners) proposed redevelopment of the church building for construction of an eight-story residential building that would incorporate a new church, with on-site childcare and a preschool on the first two floors, a mixed income housing component with almost half committed as affordable housing, and below grade parking for residential and church uses. In addition, the applicant proposed to restore, maintain, display, and provide public access to a Tiffany stained glass window that the County received from the demolished Abbey Mausoleum. On November 5, 2016, the County Board heard the request to advertise (RTA) public hearings for the local historic district (LHD) designation of the burial ground, voted unanimously to advertise public hearings for the designation, and decided that the designation would be heard concurrently with site plan #443. The applicant committed to preserving the cemetery during testimony at the November 2016 RTA hearing and revised their plans to show a design that carved out approximately 502 square feet to preserve the burial ground. After the November RTA hearing, the proposed site plan #443 and boundaries for the LHD were reviewed by the HALRB at the January 18, 2017, public meeting, and the design guidelines were reviewed at the February 15, 2017, public meeting. In between these meetings, the HALRB sent a letter to the County Board dated February 1, 2017, where the HALRB indicated their support of the LHD designation of the burial ground, along with reservations on the design of the new building and the Tiffany window placement. Overall, while the HALRB would have desired that the design allowed the cemetery to be fully open to the sky, it acknowledged the importance of the creation of the LHD. On February 28, 2017, the County Board approved site plan #443 and the LHD.

Proposal

The applicants, now Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH), along with their partners/representatives (KCM Group, DCS Designs, Bean Kinney & Korman) are requesting approval to reduce the burial ground and install fencing and a gate around the LHD perimeter. Additionally, they are seeking approval for the proposed location of future interpretive signage. They are seeking to install a cast-in-place concrete wall with a stone veneer around the burial ground along the north, east, and south perimeter of the LHD. The applicant will use the existing 1950s stone wall along Fairfax Drive for the

stone veneer of the new perimeter wall. Resting on top of the new perimeter wall will be a cast iron ornamental fence manufactured by Stewart Iron Works. The fence will have a height of 48", have 1/2" square pickets each spaced by 4", along with 1" square posts and 1-1/4" x 1/2" channel rails. The applicant is proposing a cast iron gate along the north wall to allow for maintenance and access by County inspectors and Ball family descendants. The north and south perimeter walls are centrally anchored by large square structural columns of the proposed building. Lastly, the applicant is proposing to install interpretive signage on the north side of the wall near the northeast corner. The interpretive signage will detail the history of the burial ground and the history of the Ball family in Ballston. The HALRB will review the interpretive signage at a later date prior to issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the church.

Design Review Committee Review

The DRC heard this case at its August 4, 2021, virtual meeting. The DRC recommended that the applicant provide accurate architectural renderings of the burial ground with the proposed wall and gate, along with simplified architectural specification sheets to provide detail on the wall's construction, measurements, and placement. The item was placed on the discussion agenda for the August 18, 2021, HALRB hearing.

Recommendation

Historic Preservation Program recommends approval of the subject application. The reduction of the burial ground to approximately 550 square feet follows with what was approved by the County Board in 2017 for site plan #443. The proposed fencing follows the design guidelines by placing the cast-iron fencing on top of the perimeter wall to avoid disturbing any below-ground features. The proposed metal pickets provide the public visibility of the gravestones from outside the fence, along with a gate to allow for maintenance, and access by County inspectors and Ball family descendants. There will be no major ground disturbance within the LHD boundaries during installation of the perimeter wall and cast-iron fencing. The proposed location of the interpretive signage on the north side of the perimeter wall will prevent blocking pedestrian flow on the sidewalk and blocking main views of the burial ground along the east side of the perimeter wall. The proposed work will not adversely affect the character defining features of the burial ground. Lastly, the design guidelines and the site plan conditions provide detailed steps for the applicant if there are any human remains, grave markers, or other burial artifacts found or recovered during construction and excavation at the project site.