



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING, HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT
Neighborhood Services Division

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MEMORANDUM

TO: HALRB

Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation

FROM: Planner

DATE: May 15, 2014

SUBJECT: Woodbury Park Apartments, Administrative Change and Minor Site Plan Amendment to Site Plan #364, Historic Preservation Comments

Background

Woodbury Park Apartments, also known as Lee Gardens North, is an excellent example of a 1940s garden apartment complex. The complex was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 26, 2004, and is ranked in the Essential category of Phase 1 of the Arlington County Historic Resources Inventory (HRI).

Constructed in 1949-1950, Lee Gardens North is located on ten acres north of 10th Street North and west of Arlington Boulevard in the neighborhood of Clarendon-Courthouse. The siting, massing, symmetry, form, and ornamentation of the property is distinctly Colonial Revival in style, with detailing and some fenestration elements influenced by the Art Deco and Moderne styles. The seven (7) flat-roof buildings have rectangular, H-shaped, and T-shaped footprints and are attached by gable-roofed structures to create a variety of irregular footprints.

Set upon partially raised foundations pierced with window openings, the buildings stand three stories in height. The buildings are constructed of masonry with brick laid in six-course American bond with concrete detailing surrounding select window openings. Architect Mihran Mesrobian added visual and aesthetic interest by alternating the use of red and blonde bricks for the buildings themselves and to distinguish such elements as the water tables, string courses, cornices, and quoins. Several of the blonde brick buildings have been painted over time. The flat roofs have metal coping obscuring the built-up composite cladding and the gable roofs have molded cornices, enclosed tympanums, and asphalt-shingle cladding. The public entries, which are not particularly prominent, are sheltered under half-hipped porticoes. Paved walkways, sidewalks, brick walls with concrete detailing and posts, playgrounds,

courtyards, and parking improve the landscape and contribute to the campus-like aesthetic. The buildings were renovated at the turn of the 21st century with the reconstruction of many of the entry porticoes, replacement of the original windows with vinyl sash, and minor modifications of some interior apartment layouts.

The applicants are seeking to modify exterior elements of the complex, both on the buildings and to the grounds. They are applying for historic preservation tax credits from both the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the National Park Service (NPS). The planned exterior modifications include the following:

- Moving the trash compactor.
- Adding hardscape and other landscape elements to the courtyard between 2334 and 2306 11th Street North.
- Replacing the 1980s-era building entrances with more appropriately designed entrances.
- Replacing failing brick, which amounts to about 8% of all brick.
- Regrading two courtyards into terraced courtyards.
- Constructing two new additions flanking the courtyard at Building 6 (each addition will be 400 square feet. One will be used as a leasing reception area and the other as community space).
- Replacing vinyl windows.

Issues

New Additions: The new additions will contain a leasing center and resident lounge at the entrance to the courtyard for Building six. The two additions will have square footprints, large sections of windows on each building, and pyramidal roofs sheathed with standing seam metal. The additions are designed to be clearly differentiated from, and yet complementary and secondary to, the existing garden apartments with very spare traditional detailing and restrained use of materials. The design and location of these additions also will be reviewed as part of the rehabilitation tax credit application. The County's Historic Preservation staff supports the proposed additions given that the complex currently lacks a formal community gathering space. Also, this location is ideal in that it is unobtrusive to the overall community layout, is central to the complex, and will beautify an otherwise service-oriented area.

Entrances: The proposed changes are, in large part, in keeping with the overall design of the historic garden apartment complex. The redesign of the front entrances will be the most visible change. The proposed design will replace the 1980s-era hipped roof entrances with new flat-roofed Moderne style entrances more in keeping with the original style. The new entrance canopies will be wrapped with a ribbed metal fascia, and the existing masonry piers will be clad in AZEK.

Brick: The buildings constructed of blonde brick have weathered quite differently over time than the red brick buildings. The blonde brick is much more brittle and porous and has been greatly impacted by decades of freeze/thaw cycles. Since at least the 1980s, the blonde buildings have been painted a similar neutral color at least twice in an effort to help disguise some of the spalling and deterioration. Although painting helped mask some of the visual flaws, the applicants fully realize this is not a long-term treatment for the condition and some of the bricks are beyond repair and need to be replaced. The applicants have been very proactive

about finding the most appropriate long-term conservation solution and worked closely with the County's historic preservation staff and the NPS. It is recommended that any cleaning of brick faces be done carefully and according to recommended NPS guidance. The replacement bricks to be used need to match the existing historic material in terms of texture, size, and shape. Any painting of brick is recommended to match the original color of the brick as closely as possible. The paint should be smooth-based without any kind of aggregate.

Windows: The original windows were removed in the 1980s when the buildings were last extensively renovated. The applicant is proposing to install new vinyl windows that are the same as those used in the rehabilitation of Buckingham Village 3.

Landscaping: The one courtyard on 11th Street North that will be redesigned is already paved. The reconfigured hardscape will be an attractive complement to this building. The proposal to terrace the other two courtyards, and the new circulation paths and bike racks, also will help to enhance the use and appearance of these areas.

Conclusion

The use of AZEK cladding on the new entrance canopies may require further detailed review by VDHR and NPS. Typically, the HALRB does not recommend the use of AZEK on historic buildings, only on additions. However, staff would recommend deferring judgment on the use of this material to both VDHR and the NPS given that this is a state and Federal tax credit project and not an Arlington local historic district.

The Historic Preservation Program staff is supportive of the proposed modifications to the historic Woodbury Park complex and recommends approval of both the Administrative Change application and the proposed Minor Site Plan Amendment.