



COMMONWEALTH PRESERVATION GROUP

MEMORANDUM

To: Megan Melinat, Easement Architect
Virginia Department of Historic Resources

From: Paige Pollard

Subject: Vowell-Snowden-Black House
619 South Lee Street
Alexandria, VA
Easement file 100-0111ep

Date: September 21, 2017

Introduction

The Vowell-Snowden-Black House (DHR Easement File No. 100-0111) is located at 619 South Lee Street in Alexandria, Virginia. Constructed c1798-1800, the three-story Federal style dwelling retains much of its historic plan, features, and finishes. The property contains a number of historic and modern additions, as shown on the enclosed annotated site plan; these include a historic flounder addition and carriage house, and two modern one-story brick additions, as well as a swimming pool and tennis court. All resources on the L-shaped property are enclosed within a fence, wall and heavy vegetation, obscuring much of the site from public view.

Since 2014, the current owners have been planning a major rehabilitation of the primary residence; the renovation design seeks to preserve the historic core and allow the owners to live in the original house. In order to accommodate modern needs, the applicant has consistently planned to construct additions to the primary dwelling. Integral to this planning process has been close coordination with VDHR.

The enclosed plans, described below, incorporate the proposal we presented to Megan Melinat on August 15, 2017. As discussed in our meeting, this design is intended to minimize the impact to the historic building in order to address the comments received from VDHR by letter on August 5, 2014. This schematic set is intended to allow for formal comment by VDHR. Once comments are received, the team will refine the details of the design and submit that material for additional comment from VDHR.

Justice Black House Treatment Proposal

The applicant proposes to make modifications to the site in order to retain the historic dwelling in its original state, while inserting modern amenities into existing and new additions. The new additions will be contemporary yet compatible to the design of the original house so that the developmental history of the complex is readily apparent.

✓ The two modern one-story brick and wood frame additions will be removed. One is located to the north of the historic flounder (c2000), while the other is appended at the south of the main dwelling (c1970). The historic two-story brick flounder will remain in place; however, the hyphen connecting the brick flounder to the main dwelling will be modified. A portion of the hyphen features a curved treatment similar in style to a McVeigh curve. The curve overlaps original 1st and 2nd story windows at the rear of the dwelling. The curved treatment does not appear in the historic photos included in the HABS report on the property. This curve inhibits air flow, thus allowing moisture damage and limiting maintenance for the portion of masonry wall and the 2 windows it covers. For these reasons, the applicant proposes to remove the curve as shown on the enclosed demolition plans. Several modern ✓ site features will also be removed; these include the tennis courts, brick and slate patios, brick walkway, pond, and pool. The existing site plan is shown on Sheet 1; an annotated version of this document is also included to more clearly delineate the historic and modern portions of the property.

The applicant proposes to construct two new additions and a detached garage, as shown on the proposed site plan (Sheet 7). Each of the additions will be appended to the existing dwelling via a small hyphen; they are designed to be subordinate to the primary historic dwelling in both volume and massing. One will be attached at the rear (west) of the extended two-story and one-story flounders. This addition will accommodate mechanical equipment, a family room/gym, and a guest room with bathroom. The second will be constructed in place of one of the existing one-story brick and frame addition to the south of the historic dwelling and will be set back from the façade of the historic building to limit visual impact. It will use the existing access point in the dining room. This addition will house more mechanical equipment, play room, kitchen, office, mudroom, and an additional bedroom with bathroom. A brick walkway with an overhead cover will connect this addition to the new garage.

The garage will be placed at the southeast corner of the site. It will be styled similarly to the other new additions to the site in a clearly contemporary manner in order to differentiate from the historic portion of the property. The garage will contain two garage doors and a small room to the south for bike storage.

The historic dwelling will retain its original floor plan and use, as shown on Sheets 8-11. The continuous stair hall, located in the northwest quadrant of the house, will provide access to all floors. Storage will remain in the basement, while the first floor will continue to feature the public areas of the house (foyer, living room, and dining room). The second floor contains the master bedroom, bathroom, and closet, contained within each of the original rooms. A new door will be inserted between the master bedroom and master bath to allow direct access from one to the other. The third floor will retain two bedrooms and a hall bath.

The existing detached carriage house will be retained at the southwest corner of the lot. The applicant proposes to modify the carriage house slightly by replacing the existing solid wood doors with glass and wood garage doors, as shown on Sheet 21. The existing doors were installed by the previous owner, and are a modern alteration.

The applicant also proposes to insert a new in-ground pool to the southwest of the historic dwelling, in place of the brick patio and frame arbor proposed to be removed. See Sheet 7 for location of the pool and Sheet 18 for a perspective view looking towards the interior of the ell formed by the historic dwelling and its additions.
