LAUREL HILL HOUSE STUDY
MEETING # 2
OCTOBER 30, 2007, 7:00 P.M.
LAUREL HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION CLUBHOUSE
8380 LAUREL CREST DRIVE, LORTON, VA 22079

MEETING NOTES

WELCOME

Chris Caperton welcomed the group to the meeting and reviewed the agenda and process for the evening. Frazier Associates would present their findings and 4 options for the preservation of the house, and DPZ would document the comments from the group and post online to allow for additional comments and suggestions. DPZ will then review all the comments provided and direct Frazier as to the 2 options for further study. Those two options will be presented at a future meeting (tentatively scheduled for November 28, 2007).

The agenda, timeline, and PowerPoint presentation are posted separately under the October 30, 2007 meeting date at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/laurel_hill_house.htm

Note that the summary below includes descriptions and definitions found on the agenda provided by Frazier Associates.

PRESENTATION BY FRAZIER ASSOCIATES

Carter Green of Frazier Associates reviewed the work completed to date in order to prepare a historic structure report for the house. This discussion included the location of the house in the larger area, the house as the namesake (Laurel Hill) of the larger development and area, and the recognition of the history of the house from both the Lindsay and Prison eras.

Preservation Objectives were reviewed and the following definitions provided:

Rehabilitation – making possible an efficient compatible use for a property through repair, alterations and additions while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural or architectural values.

Restoration - accurately depicting the form, features and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

Reconstruction - the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

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Building History (Timeline and Probable Construction Sequence) and Condition
The building history was reviewed. Photographs and drawings of the house were shown. These included a sketch from the 1880s, a photograph from the early 20th century, a survey post 1918, photos from the 1920s, aerial photographs from 1937 and 1953, and photographs from the 1970s.

The floor plan of the house highlighting the probable construction sequence for nine different areas of the house was shown. Please see the PowerPoint presentation for this image. The earliest additions were to the east side of the house.

The building condition was reviewed. The house has deteriorated due age and water infiltration, and there has been a loss of historic fabric due to alterations (removal of original doors, windows, trim and the fireplace). The structural condition was also evaluated, and it was found that the house has significant structural integrity to merit consideration for restoration, although the structure is not without faults. There would be limits to the uses that are possible in the house without additional structural work.

Frazier Associates provided various photographs of the exterior and interior of the house and provided comments on various aspects of the house that led to their conclusions (doors, mantel, rafters, framing).

Historic Significance
The historic significance of the house was discussed. The original owner of the house (William Lindsay) was a Revolutionary War figure and the house has local significance more than regional. It is an example of an 18th century Virginia plantation of a person of modest means. The early 20th century alterations are extensive and given the loss of the historic fabric, they could be interpreted as another period of significance for the house. The gardens with their neoclassical design and association with progressive prison practices are significant and the house in its current configuration goes with them.

Proposed Treatment Options
The proposed treatment options were presented.

A-1. Restoration of Original House (the Brush-Everard House in Williamsburg, VA was shown as an example of the A-1 approach).
and
A-2. Original house with first east additions (similar to A-1)
These approaches would be based on a conjectural restoration and from
an analysis of existing house with unknown elements recreated based on other local houses of same era and type.
Pro-more manageable scope and cost, creates a landmark building for the development with a straightforward interpretation, creates an architectural symbol for the larger development.
Con- little original historic fabric remains and the small size may limit some potential uses.

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Proposed Uses: House museum/educational piece, welcome/visitors center, caretaker/staff residence.

A-3. Original house with redesigned additions
This approach would allow the creation of a new addition to efficiently house needed uses using the footprint of some of earlier additions.
Pro – same as above but the new additions could be designed to possibly meet new uses more efficiently than current configuration.
Con – Even with a new addition the small size still may limit some potential uses.
Proposed Uses: same as above

B-1. Early 20th Century House
This approach includes restoration of the porch and rear addition. Remove some of the other later side additions and restore earlier dormers.
Pro – Better able to host events in building, creates building style that can be interpreted along with gardens
Con – Poor condition of house will make for an expensive construction project, and it will be difficult to determine exact configuration of the house at that time.
Proposed uses: All of the earlier suggested uses plus the possibility of adding meeting/reception facility used in conjunction with gardens, possibility of having space for small exhibits.

B-2. Restore house in current configuration
This approach includes preserving the house in its current configuration.
Pro-Better able to host events in building, creates building style that can be interpreted along with gardens. This approach retains all eras and changes to the house.
Con – Poor condition of house will make for an expensive construction project.
Proposed uses: same as B-1

Grounds and Landscape Considerations
Elisabeth Lardner of Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects presented an overview of the grounds of the Laurel Hill House and the adjacent gardens. The house was sited on a north/south ridge between two drainage ways, which is typical for an 18th century house. There are reports that there were views of the Potomac River, but now those views are blocked by vegetation. The house grounds comprise approximately 2 acres and the gardens comprise approximately one-half acre. Ms. Lardner also discussed roads and circulation in the context of the house. There is a construction road trace to the east of the house. The outbuildings (a garage that sat to the north of the house) and gardens were also discussed, as well as the Lindsay family cemetery across the perimeter road.

The Park Authority is completing a study of the Laurel Hill House Gardens (due January 2008). These neoclassical gardens to the southeast are structurally in good condition and many of the design elements are visible.

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Discussion
Bill Frazier of Frazier Associates began the discussion about the options for the house. He stated that any restoration would require reconstruction due to the condition of the house, and that new materials would be needed regardless of the approach chosen. He said that there may not be enough historic fabric for the house to be an education tool if the goal was to have an original 18th century house.

The reuse options need to take into consideration that the building is small with small spaces (second floor offices, exhibits, etc.) rather than assemblies or use for larger events. It was noted that larger events or uses would require additional structural work. Bill Frazier noted that the costs will be high for these options (costs for two options will be provided at the next meeting). He also described briefly that different levels of restoration are possible (using similar finishes that would have been used with the original house, etc.). He also noted the importance of tying the future use of the house into the site and surrounding area.

The committee and meeting attendees then asked questions and made comments on the presentation, which were captured by staff in both notes and on a flipchart.

<u>Options for Restoration and Use</u>

1. The A-1 and A-2 options present an opportunity for Fairfax County to tell the story of a modest, ordinary house of the late 18th century. Frazier Associates would look at other houses in Virginia in this timeframe to get an idea of what was there since so much of the historic fabric has been lost. Additional research and archaeological investigations are necessary to take the house back to the original structure.
2. One option could be to demolish the house, keep the foundation and install a historical marker and look at ways to tell the story of what was there.
3. If the original house option is chosen, it may be necessary to keep some of the additions to utilize for space for bathrooms, kitchen, office, and to comply with ADA requirements. It was suggested that a checklist be compiled to list what we want to see out of the building.
4. Comment to have a "How we know what we know" type of display, describing how preservation work is done, and utilize this project as part of a strategic plan for that educational purpose. This could be set up as a 20 year plan to showcase the Laurel Hill House project. This could be on-going to show the evolution and journey of the site.
5. Use the restored house as an "ordinary house" example next to a Fairfax County History Museum (if that museum was located in the adjacent adaptive reuse site).
6. A determination needs to be made if the reuse of the house should tie-in the 1930s gardens with an 18th century house? Would this create a disjointed story or interpretation?
7. The future use could link to the gardens – perhaps weddings or similar events could take advantage of the site as a whole.

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8. Cost considerations may be significant – the cost would probably be less to take the house back to the original structure (fewer rooms, etc.) than restoring the existing building (more cost but more space).
9. If the house is restored as the original structure use photos to tell the story of the 1930s house.
10. Use the house as a Lindsay house museum (with picnic areas, trails, etc)
11. If federal funding is used, need to investigate Section 106 requirements.
12. Why do we want a house museum? House museums are closing, have funding problems, need staff, and are costly. Why should we create a house museum with these cost implications? Are there existing funds for this?
13. Restoring the original house structure could cost $300 per square foot or more (this is not an official estimate)

Restoration and Rehabilitation

1. How do we go back to the original house and what needs to be removed? The porches, windows, and interior elements need to be removed. The character defining areas would be restored accordingly.
2. Does restoration involve the use of fiberglass and machine cut pieces for restorations? Frazier noted that for a restoration for this house the same materials could be used, without using new products like fiberglass given the small amount of materials.
3. Research into the historic elements can be quite involved, if one chooses, examining nails, scraps of wallpaper, paint, and decorative trim, etc.
4. Does restoration require the installation of sprinkler systems? Code analysis would be needed to determine requirements based on use and the size of the house.

Site Considerations

1. Archaeological investigation would help to determine the location of outbuildings on the property. GPR or remote-sensing techniques could be used to locate the gravesites.
2. A determination needs to be made if the reuse of the house should tie-in the 1930s gardens with an 18th century house? Would this create a disjointed story or interpretation?
3. 18th century sites are often interpreted with 20th century Colonial Revival gardens. The different time periods can be documented by signage and other interpretive means.
4. We should use the gardens and brickwork along original road to the house to showcase heritage plants from the area.
5. The future use could link to the gardens – perhaps weddings or similar events could take advantage of the site as a whole.

Miscellaneous

1. Comment that a newspaper ad that William Lindsay's widow placed listed the outbuildings on the property—a copy will be provided to Frazier Associates.
2. Staff should provide the full chapter of the Lindsays of America that was referenced. Staff will coordinate this with the committee and Frazier Associates.

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3. Could students work on restoring the house? This might be possible with proper instruction on preservation, perhaps utilizing the preservation trades network.
4. A request was made that staff provide the Park Authority's plans for interpretive signs in Laurel Hill Park. Several of these signs are now installed in the recently opened areas of the park. The remainder of the signs are in draft form. The signs discuss the larger area, and are not specific to the Laurel Hill House. Staff has confirmed with the Park Authority that the draft signs are not yet available for posting online or distribution.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

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