

LAUREL HILL HOUSE STUDY
MEETING # 3
JANUARY 22, 2008, 7:00 P.M.
LAUREL HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION CLUBHOUSE
8380 LAUREL CREST DRIVE, LORTON, VA 22079

MEETING NOTES

WELCOME

Leanna O'Donnell welcomed the group to the last scheduled meeting, reviewed the process to date, and outlined the agenda for the meeting. Frazier Associates would present their findings for the 3 treatment options they were asked to examine from a building code and cost estimate perspective. These three options were:

1. Reconstruction of 18th Century house with redesigned additions, evaluated as publicly-accessible house museum
2. Reconstruction of 1930s house in current configuration, evaluated as a publicly-accessible welcome center/visitor's center
3. Selective demolition to the foundation of the house, and options for interpretation of the house and site

The goal of the meeting was to hear Frazier's analysis, and make comments and ask questions. The final report will be provided to DPZ in mid-February.

The meeting materials can be viewed at
http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/laurel_hill_house.htm

The **Agenda** is posted under the January 22, 2008 meeting date, and the **Presentation** can be found under Resources entitled "Laurel Hill House Final Presentation."

PRESENTATION BY FRAZIER ASSOCIATES

Bill Frazier and 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. Frazier Associates reviewed much of the material presented at the October meeting of the Committee, which included the building history, building condition, historic significance of the house, and proposed treatment options.

The following proposed treatment options were presented.

Restoration of Original House (18th Century Dwelling with Redesigned Additions)

Pros:

- More Manageable scope and cost than a complete rehabilitation of current house
- Creates a “landmark” building for the development that relates to the original era of development

Cons:

- Little original historic fabric remains on which to base restoration/reconstruction
- Will require additional historical research, architectural investigations and archaeology
- Period of significance does not relate to current physical context or garden period
- Small size may limit uses
- Staffing and operations costs

Projected Cost Range: \$760,000 - \$950,000

Potential New Uses: Small museum (reconstruction)

*Note this was the use that Frazier was asked to use for this analysis

Reconstruction of 20th Century House

Pros:

- Creates building period of significance that can be interpreted along with garden
- Retains all eras and changes to the house to reflect FCPA preservation policies
- May provide more flexibility in potential uses for building

Cons:

- Poor condition of house will make for an expensive construction project
- Alterations have compromised architectural integrity of 18th century design that may have more public appeal than current design
- Staffing and operations costs

Projected Cost Range: \$910,000 - \$1,140,000

Potential New Uses: Visitor center, special events

*Note this was the use that Frazier was asked to use for this analysis

Interpretive Site

Pros:

- Least expensive options
- Easiest to implement
- Preserves some minimal aspect of the building
- Provides a historical and educational function through an exhibit to interpret all eras of property

Cons:

- Severe impact on historic fabric of a building determined to be a contributing structure in a state and National Register historic district

Projected Cost Range: \$170,000 - \$210,000

Potential New Uses: Interpretive Historic Site

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.

An important landscape consideration is how the house will connect to the gardens based on the option chosen for the house.

Site Options were presented based on the treatment options under discussion. There is limited evidence of site features, gardens and outbuilding for the 18th Century dwelling. For the 20th Century house option, the adjacent garden exists today, and there is good documentation of the yard and outbuildings from this time period through photos and surveys. There is also good information available for interpretive panels if used with the altered foundation and adjacent gardens.

Draft Criteria for Judging Options

Frazier Associates reviewed the preservation approaches (preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction) and then presented draft criteria that may be used as treatment options are evaluated. These include:

1. Overall Goals for the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Project
2. Historical Significance of House and Site
3. Current Condition of House and Site
4. Range of Possible Uses that fit House and Site
5. County, State and National Historic Preservation Standards or Policies
6. Funding Amount and Availability
7. Operational Responsibilities

DISCUSSION

Bill Frazier noted during the presentation that the costs presented are an estimate, and described them as an “Opinion of Costs” as they do not include soft costs such as additional research, archaeological work, landscape architecture work, etc. The costs only represent estimates of construction.

The discussion and questions have been organized by theme below:

Treatment Options

1. Comment that with Option 2 (20th Century house), it would be possible to include the garden restoration.
2. In evaluating the options using the criteria, timing is important because Option 2 will be affected the longer the house remains in its current condition; Option 1 will not be as affected as there is not much original historic fabric there.
3. Option 2-are there any challenges with building codes? Need to examine requirements for exits, enclosed stairways, sprinklers, structural improvements, second egress from the second floor, ADA access, storage and utilities, among others if building was open to the public.
4. Option 3 (interpretive site) would not be taken lightly by VDHR
5. Perhaps investigate constructing a roofline over the foundation with Option 3 to create a pavilion with a link to the garden.
6. Most of the Lindsay landscape is gone-the house doesn't tell much of that story without the outbuildings and surrounding land as a former prison. Need to be sure we are honest about the story we tell.
7. Williamsburg example-treatment began with less historic fabric than the Laurel Hill House has now. It was noted that many buildings in Williamsburg are considered examples of conjectural preservation.
8. How would these options be perceived by VDHR? Approach with VDHR should have options.

Draft Criteria for Judging Options

1. Criteria #1: What role could this criteria play, to ensure that this site is not isolated from the larger Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse site?
2. Criteria #1 (overall goals for Laurel Hill), #5 (preservation policies), and #7 (operational responsibilities) seem most important.

General Comments

1. Comment to involve students in research of the house, or create internships.
2. Are there any recommendations for temporary protective measures that could be taken now to further stabilize the house? Mention of potential treatment for termites.

3. It was noted that different individuals will associate significance to the property according to individuals, events, etc.
4. Comment that more research should be provided into the Lindsay family history.
5. What are the next steps if funding is the bottom line?
6. Can a contributing structures become non-contributing if it has been altered or in poor condition?
7. Nationally, in last 30-40 years, it is generally considered better to preserve the history of the building through time because each generation has had an impact. May have issues with significance and contribution to National Register District if take house back to 18th Century-need to know what we are taking it back to.
8. Has any research been done as to the interest of the public for a house museum vs. the use of the 1930s house?
9. Memorandum of Agreement stipulates review procedures for the house.
10. What would the use be if the Park Authority had responsibility for the house? No opinion at this point, FCPA has experience with historic structures and their challenges. Most important to tell the story, regardless of the option chosen.
11. Can FCPA collections save historic pieces of the house? Probably not.
12. Discussion of moving the Oakton Schoolhouse