

**ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL RESTORATION
AND PRESERVATION COMMISSION**



LLOYD HOUSE
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
220 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET
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Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the appeal of the April 22, 2015 decision of the Parker-Gray Historic District Board of Architectural Review to deny the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (AHRA) application to demolish the four Ramsey Homes located at 699 North Patrick Street (BAR CASE # 2015-0088). The members of the Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission recommend that you fully support the decision to deny the demolition request.

The Ramsey Homes are listed as contributing resources of the Parker-Gray National Register Historic District. They are an important example of the federal government's effort to provide housing for African-American war workers. Moreover, they were designed by a notable local architect, Delos H. Smith. He was one of the first appointees to the Board of Architectural Review. Smith was a noted ecclesiastical architect, whose work included two annex buildings at St. Paul's Church at 228 South Pitt Street, as well as the United States Capitol's Prayer Room. He specialized in the Colonial Revival and Federal Revival styles, making the design of the Ramsey Homes in the International style all the more interesting and unique.

From our understanding of the proposed undertaking, AHRA intends to use federal funding to complete this work, which would trigger compliance with both the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Both procedural laws have provisions that require consideration of historic properties in project planning. This process will answer three important questions about this project:

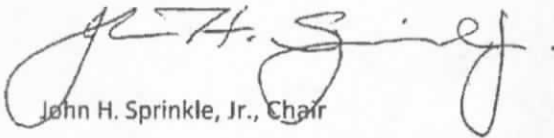
1. Are the Ramsey Homes eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places?
2. Since the Ramsey Homes contribute to the Parker Gray Historic District, what impact would their demolition have on the overall integrity of the historic neighborhood?
3. If the decision is taken to demolish the homes, what is the appropriate mitigation of this adverse effect on the community and its history?



If the Council should overturn the decision of the Parker Gray Historic District Commission and approve the proposed demolition, the ability of AHRA to use federal funding on this project may be compromised because decisions about the ultimate fate of these historic properties were made outside of the appropriate compliance process for both NEPA and NHPA. We are certain that City Council would not want to hazard AHRA's ability to receive federal funding on this and future projects, thus placing a further burden on Alexandria's taxpayers.

Our recommendation to AHRA is to fulfill its commitment to complete the NHPA and NEPA compliance process, as required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, before moving on to requesting permission to demolish the Ramsey Homes. City Council can support this goal by confirming the decision by the Parker Gray Historic District Board of Architectural Review to deny AHRA's premature request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. H. Sprinkle, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John H. Sprinkle, Jr., Chair

Alexandria Historical and Restoration Commission