



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of July 9, 2011

DATE: June 30, 2011

SUBJECT: Authorization to donate the historic Arlington Lustron Home to the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) in Columbus, Ohio, in order for it to become part of its permanent collection, and authorization of a final donation agreement to transfer the property to the OHS.

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the donation of the Arlington Lustron Home to the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, Ohio, in order for it to become part of its permanent collection, and authorize the County Manager to sign the final donation agreement to transfer the property to the OHS (Attachment A).

ISSUES: County Board approval is required to donate the Lustron Home, which is an historic manufactured steel house built by the Lustron Corporation. Because no suitable situation could be found for permanently keeping the Lustron Home in Arlington, donation to the Ohio Historical Society is the preferred option and is an appropriate course of action. All issues have been addressed. .

SUMMARY: The County has been presented with a rare opportunity to donate its historic Lustron Home, currently unassembled in storage, to the Ohio Historical Society, which is the birthplace of the Lustron Corporation. Since the County originally accepted the donation of the house in 2006, staff has been pursuing options for permanently reconstructing the building in the County, securing necessary funding, and determining a viable new use and programming. However, such efforts have not yet resulted in a viable solution for rebuilding the house locally, and the OHS currently has the financial and staffing resources to do so. The OHS will assume all costs, except for a minor amount of staff time, for shipping the house components to Ohio and plans to rebuild and interpret the Lustron Home as part of its permanent collection.

BACKGROUND: The Lustron is a pre-fabricated, all metal house produced in the post-World War II era. Only 2,680 Lustrons were built nationwide between 1948 and 1950; Arlington has only five remaining of its original eleven. The design and manufacture of Lustrons aimed not just to satisfy an overwhelming and immediate need for affordable housing, but to raise the quality of living for middle-class Americans. Lustrons were ingenious not only in their materials, but also for their open floor plan, space-saving built-in cabinetry, and maintenance-free and fireproof all steel construction. Today, throughout the nation, because of their small

County Manager:

County Attorney:

Staff: Cynthia Liccese-Torres and Michael Leventhal, DCPHD

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size and unusual construction, Lustrons are at great risk for demolition and are becoming increasingly rare.

In April 2006, the County Board unanimously accepted the donation of a Lustron Home from property owner Dr. Clifford M. Krowne. The County then hired a contractor to disassemble the building in May 2006, and all the house components were placed in temporary storage in a portable tractor trailer stored in Chantilly, Virginia. A detailed booklet and DVD documenting the disassembly of this house have been produced through funding from the Arlington Committee on Jamestown 2007. In May 2008, the County Board authorized the temporary loan of the Arlington Lustron Home to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. From June through October 2008, it was featured in a prominent exhibition about prefabricated architecture entitled “Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling.” Approximately three-quarters of the Lustron was rebuilt on-site and served as the focal point of the main interior gallery space for the “Home Delivery” exhibit. Visitors could walk through the Lustron and experience it first-hand while learning about its importance to modern architectural history. The MoMA incurred all shipping, installation, and disassembly costs associated with the exhibit loan. Upon conclusion of the exhibition in November 2008, the house again was disassembled and returned to Virginia where it remains in storage in Chantilly, still without a dedicated plan for its reassembly and reuse here in the County.

The Arlington Lustron Home originally was built in 1949 at 5201 12th Street South in the subdivision of Virginia Heights. It is a Westchester Deluxe 02 model in the “dove gray” color with two bedrooms, one bathroom, and 1,085 square feet of living space on one level. With the exception of the kitchen appliances and toilet, the home still retains nearly all of its original interior and exterior features, built-in cabinetry, metal paneling and roofing, windows and doors, and the original “Gas-o-matic” furnace.

During Summer 2010, Historic Preservation Program staff discussed the Ohio Historical Society’s interest in obtaining a Lustron Home for its collection. The OHS was very interested, especially since all Lustrons originally were manufactured in Columbus, just a few miles from the OHS. Though the OHS maintains the official Lustron corporate archives as part of its collection, the Society does not own an actual Lustron Home and often has considered such an acquisition. The Arlington Lustron Home is an ideal choice, as it is in nearly original condition, already disassembled in storage, and easily transportable. The OHS submitted a formal letter of interest (see also Attachment A) and has agreed to assume the costs to ship the house from Chantilly to Columbus. The Society intends to reconstruct and showcase the Lustron in its gallery space as part of an upcoming exhibit about mid-20th century Modernism to open in early 2012. Arlington County would be identified as the donor of the house. As a courtesy to the OHS since the storage facility is local, two members of the County’s Historic Preservation Program staff will oversee that the contents of the trailer box to be shipped are packed properly and securely prior to transport to Columbus. This task will take no more than one business day and the cost of staff time will not be reimbursed by the OHS.

DISCUSSION: Since the County first acquired the Lustron Home in 2006, staff in DCPHD and DPRCR have collaborated continuously to find a viable County location, use, programming, and funding for rebuilding and interpreting the Lustron here in Arlington. However, keeping the

Lustron under County ownership would require a significant investment of resources for its permanent siting, reconstruction, ancillary improvements for energy efficiency and accessibility to the public (i.e., installation of utilities, creation of on-site parking, etc.), as well as ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the building. The opportunity to loan the Lustron to MoMA did not generate substantial publicity or enough momentum to produce needed funding or establish a suitable new use so it could be rebuilt locally for permanent use. Although the ultimate project goal was to rebuild and interpret the Lustron in Arlington County, the next best option is to have it rebuilt elsewhere, ideally for educational and interpretive purposes instead of remaining in storage. If the County were to retain ownership of the Lustron Home, it would have to continue to pay annual storage costs of \$4,800.

The Ohio Historical Society has the financial, organizational, and programmatic resources to undertake the tasks of acquiring, rebuilding, and interpreting the Arlington Lustron Home, combined with an obvious connection to national Lustron history. Founded in 1885, the OHS strives to continue to fulfill its mission to “connect people to the past in order to create a better future.”¹ The OHS helps preserve and interpret the rich and diverse heritage of Ohio through the: administration of 58 historic sites and museums throughout the state; preservation and interpretation of its vast historic collections; and operation of the state’s archives and a research library, among many other charges. As part of the transfer of ownership of the Arlington Lustron Home, the Society is willing to assume all shipping costs and will credit the gift as being donated by Arlington County. Given that there are no available County funds to continue to pay for storage costs, or for reassembly and regular maintenance/upkeep if the house could be rebuilt locally, staff believes that donating the Arlington Lustron Home to the Ohio Historical Society is a viable and acceptable alternative. The future use of the Lustron Home by the OHS will be at the discretion of the Society. Yet the organization’s mission and its proven successes in the stewardship of historic properties are conducive to the Lustron being promoted and well cared for.

Even if Arlington County donates its Lustron Home to the OHS, Arlington will continue its leadership role in national Lustron preservation. The Lustron documentation project completed by the County in 2007 is among the most detailed projects of its kind in the country. Both the booklet and video that were produced are still available on the County website, as well as at the national online clearinghouse for Lustron research at www.lustronpreservation.org. Lustron owners and advocates across the country continue to contact Arlington’s Historic Preservation Program staff for technical advice and general questions about Lustron history and Arlington’s various Lustron projects. A partnership with the OHS as a result of the County’s donation of its Lustron Home will have a dramatic, positive, and lasting impact on the promotion of Lustron preservation nationwide.

The donation agreement (Attachment A) outlines the specific terms of the transfer of ownership of the Lustron Home to the OHS. The terms, which were drafted in collaboration with the Society’s curatorial staff, address the Society’s intent to rebuild the house, pay related shipping expenses, as well as how it will credit the donation as being from Arlington County for exhibition purposes. The final agreement already has been signed by the Director of Collection Services for OHS.

¹ 2010 Ohio Historical Society Annual Report, p. 5. Report available online at: <http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/portal/about-p.shtml>.

The County's Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) is aware of the proposal to donate the Arlington Lustron to the OHS and agrees with staff that it is an acceptable solution since funding is not available at this time to keep it in Arlington. Both of the preservation non-profit organizations in the County, the Arlington Heritage Alliance and the Arlington Historical Society, have been avid supporters and advocates of the County's Lustron preservation efforts in recent years. However, neither organization currently has the financial resources required to partner with the County to permanently rebuild the Arlington Lustron locally. County staff also has considered applying for various preservation grants to help raise needed funds, but extensive staff time would be required to complete the grant applications and multiple monetary awards would be needed given the scope of the project. The original donor of the Lustron Home, Dr. Clifford Krowne, has been very supportive of the County's efforts to preserve, document, and display his former property at MoMA. The preservation staff intends to keep him apprised of the OHS's interest in acquiring his former property for long-term educational purposes.

FISCAL IMPACT: Because virtually all shipping costs to relocate the Arlington Lustron Home to Columbus, OH, will be paid directly by the Ohio Historical Society, the physical shipment of and transfer of ownership to the OHS will have minimal fiscal impact to the County, except for the maximum eight hours to be spent by two County staff members to oversee the final packing of the trailer prior to shipment. The donation of the Lustron Home to the OHS also will eliminate the storage fees currently incurred by the County (\$400 per month). The storage fees have been paid through the remainder of FY 2011, which coincides with when the Lustron would be shipped to Ohio and transferred to OHS ownership.

CONCLUSION: Staff recommends that the County Board donate the historic Arlington Lustron Home to the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, Ohio, in order for it to become part of its permanent collection. Staff also recommends that the County Board authorize the County Manager to sign the final donation agreement, a copy of which is attached hereto as Attachment A, to transfer the Lustron to OHS ownership.



June 21, 2011

Cynthia Liccese-Torres
Historic Preservation Planner
Arlington County Government
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Cynthia:

On behalf of the Ohio Historical Society, I am thrilled that the County Board of Arlington County is considering donating your Lustron Home to our organization. Based in Columbus, Ohio, nearly 2500 Lustron homes were manufactured and located in 36 states. The homes represent a significant aspect of post-war culture and are especially important to the state of Ohio. As Ohio cities and suburbs expanded after World War II, the Lustron Corporation was emblematic of the post-war boom. The Ohio Historical Society holds the archival records of the Lustron Corporation, which went out of business in the 1950s, as well as the papers of Neil Collins, director of marketing for Lustron Corporation. The addition of a Lustron Home to the collection would provide an unprecedented resource for the students, teachers, and researchers who visit the Ohio Historical Society to study the history of post-war housing.

This donation is in keeping with the mission of the Ohio Historical Society: To spark discovery of Ohio history and help people connect with Ohio's past to understand the present and create a better future. Our core values—authenticity, collaboration, relevance and stewardship—are in keeping with the goal of making this important piece available to the public.

It is our intent that the Lustron Home would become part of the permanent collection of the Ohio Historical Society and would be credited as a gift from the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia, that was made possible by the generous donation of Dr. Clifford M. Krowne. We also plan to cover all costs associated with shipping the home to Ohio and will coordinate directly with the shipping company to make arrangements. If, at any time, OHS would consider deaccessioning the home from our collection, the County Board would have first right of refusal of the home.

Thank you again for considering this donation. The Arlington Lustron Home is an important piece of our history and we are excited about the possibility of caring for it. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this further. I am looking forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela O'Neal", written in a cursive style.

Angela O'Neal
Director of Collections Services

Agreement for Donation

Whereas, the County Board of Arlington County ("Donor" or "County Board") is the owner of certain property which consists of the pieces of a historic metal house that was originally produced by the Lustron Corporation (Lustron Home), and which has been disassembled and stored; and

Whereas, the County Board incurs charges for the cost of storage of the Arlington Lustron Home, but currently has no foreseeable use for it; and

Whereas, the County Board is authorized to make donations or gifts to nonprofit organizations and agencies engaged in commemorating historical events; and

Whereas, the Ohio Historical Society ("OHS" or "Society") is engaged in, among other things, commemorating historical events; and helping people connect with Ohio's past in order to understand the present and create a better future; and

Whereas, the OHS desires to receive the Arlington Lustron Home, which was originally manufactured in Ohio, and to preserve it.

Therefore, the County Board and OHS agree that the County Board will donate all of the available components of the disassembled Arlington Lustron Home, originally constructed in 1949, but not including the original bathroom medicine cabinet; the modern kitchen appliances (sink, dishwasher, stove, and refrigerator); or the original bolts and screws to OHS under the following terms and conditions:

Terms of Deed of Gift:

1. Donor hereby declares it is the sole legal owner with all right, title and interest to the material, free and clear of all restrictions, liens and other charges whatsoever.
2. Donor transfers all right, title and interests (including, but not limited to, all applicable copyright, trademark and related interests) it may own in the material, except as set forth below, to OHS to be used by the Society at its discretion.
3. As a courtesy to the OHS, the Donor will see that the contents of the trailer box to be shipped are packed properly and securely prior to transport to Columbus. The Donor also will provide a list of the pieces to aid in the unpacking and reassembly by the Society.
4. OHS will coordinate directly with A & A Transfer, Inc., of Chantilly, VA, to schedule the direct payment for and shipment of the trailer box containing the house components. OHS agrees to cover all associated costs of shipping to Columbus, including the transport fees, purchase of the trailer box in which the house components are currently stored, and insurance coverage for the transport of the

Lustron Home. OHS agrees that Donor will have no responsibility for any shipping costs, and that it will notify Donor at least seven (7) days in advance of the date of shipment.

5. OHS agrees that, for the purposes of physical exhibition and in the OHS Collections Catalog, the Lustron Home shall be credited as follows:

The Arlington, Virginia Lustron Home is a gift from the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia, that was made possible by the generous donation of Dr. Clifford M. Krowne.

6. OHS acknowledges receipt of the Lustron Home in "as is" condition, with all parts Arlington County possesses except as stated above, and understands that minor conservation work may be needed upon reconstruction, such as spot cleaning and cosmetic repairs. OHS agrees that Donor will have no responsibility for such conservation work.
7. OHS is under no obligation to permanently exhibit the Lustron Home and may remove it from public view at any time. However, if the Society decides to sell or dispose of the Lustron Home in the future, OHS agrees that the County Board will be notified in advance in writing and given the right of first refusal to buy or accept the return of the Lustron Home, on the same or more favorable terms as OHS is offering to any other party.
8. This Agreement for Donation is the entire understanding between the Donor and Society and supersedes and replaces any previous understandings between the parties concerning the subject matter addressed in this Donation Agreement.

This agreement shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the heirs, assigns and legatees of the parties hereto.



Angela O'Neal for the Ohio Historical Society

6/22/2011

Date

Barbara M. Donnellan, Designee for the Arlington County Board

Date