

Docket Item #8
SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2006-0058

Planning Commission Meeting
September 7, 2006

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for a special use permit to expand an existing outdoor garden center.

APPLICANT: Carla Thomas and Randee Wilson d/b/a Nature By Design

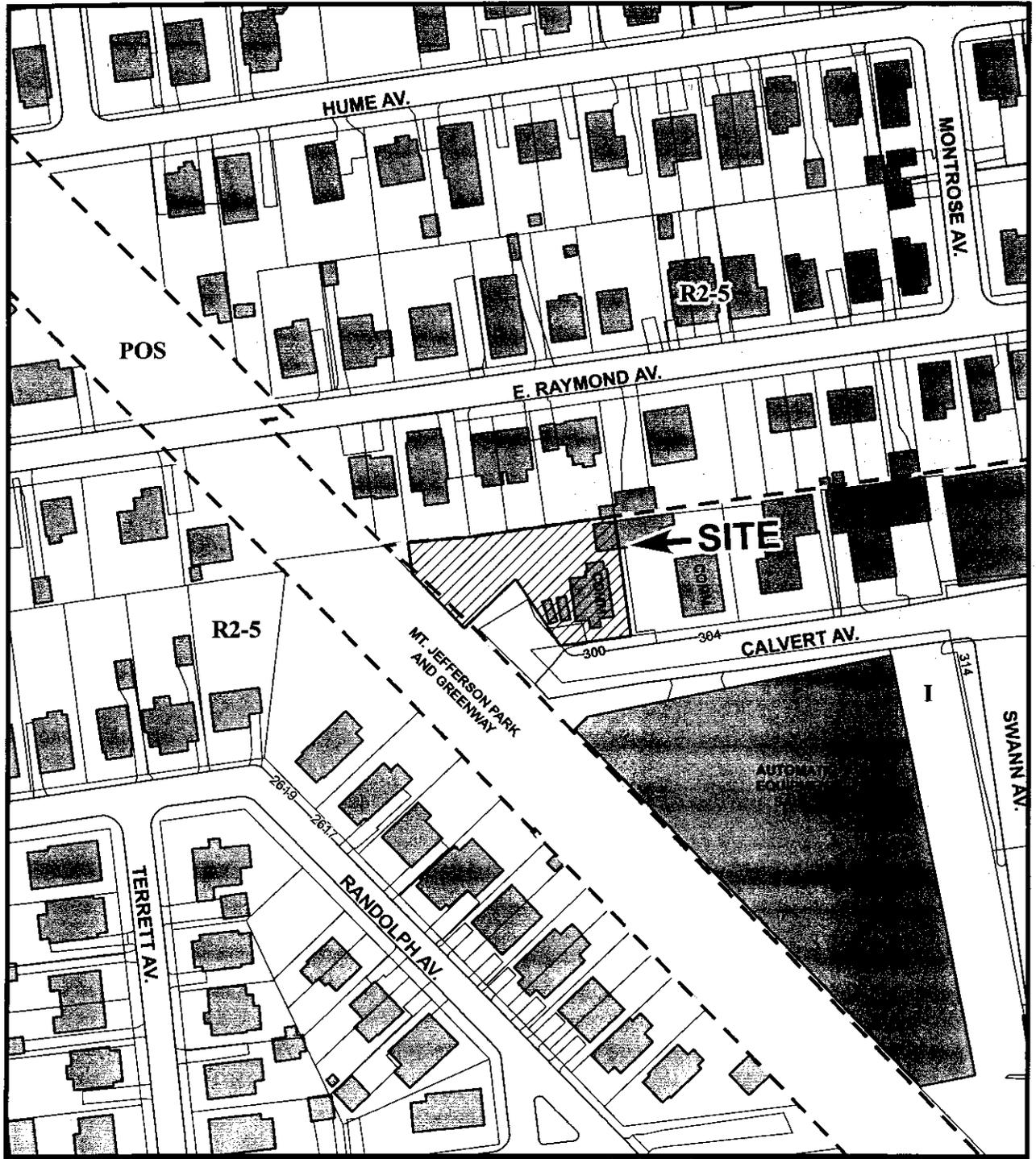
LOCATION: 300 Calvert Avenue

ZONE: I/Industrial

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, SEPTEMBER 7, 2006: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the recommended permit conditions found in Section III of this report.



SUP #2006-0058

09/07/06



I. DISCUSSION

REQUEST

The applicants, Carla Thomas and Randee Wilson d/b/a Nature By Design, requests special use permit approval to expand an existing outdoor garden center located at 300 Calvert Street.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property is one lot of record with approximately 57 feet of frontage on Calvert Avenue, 98 feet of depth and a total lot area of 12,140 square feet. The site is developed with a two-story converted house in the front and a carriage house and subject garden center in the rear of the lot. The western portion of the lot has been occupied by a storage lot, but is currently vacant. Access to the property is from Calvert Avenue.



The surrounding area is occupied by a mix of residential and commercial uses. Immediately to the north is a residential neighborhood. To the south and east are commercial uses. To the west is the Mount Jefferson Park and Greenway parkland, formerly the W&OD.

BACKGROUND

On September 20, 2005, City Council granted Special Use Permit #2005-0076 for the operation of an outdoor garden center. Staff has since visited the subject property to determine if the business was in compliance with the conditions of its special use permit. Staff found no violations of the special use permit. Staff has received no complaints regarding the existing operation.



PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to expand the area of the outdoor garden center to occupy the western portion of the lot that was most recently used for a storage yard. The area of the expansion is covered with gravel, and no new construction is planned. The expanded area will allow for additional retail display and parking spaces. No changes to the nature of the operation are proposed. The existing operation includes the retail sale of trees, shrubs,

perennials, vines and annuals, as well as a limited number of bagged organic soils, fertilizers and amendments.

Patrons: The applicant anticipates a gradual increase in the number of patrons from current levels (about ten per day on peak days, which are Saturdays and Sundays in April, May, September and October, and four to five patrons per day on all other days) to about twenty per day on peak days, and five to ten per day on all other days.

PARKING

For purposes of calculating the parking requirement, the retail ratio was applied to the square footage of the structure. According to Section 8-200 (A)(16) of the Zoning Ordinance, a retail use requires 1.1 parking spaces for every 200 square feet. An outdoor garden center with 400 square feet of indoor space will be required to provide 2.2 off-street parking spaces. According to the applicant, only half of the 400 square feet will be used for retail, and the other half for an office, which results in a lower parking requirement. Three parking spaces are provided on site.

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The subject property is located in the Industrial zone. Section 4-1203 of the Zoning Ordinance allows an outdoor garden center in the Industrial zone only with a special use permit.

The proposed use is consistent with the Potomac West Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan which designates the property for industrial use.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff supports the applicant's plan to expand the existing outdoor garden center. The proposed expansion will improve the property by occupying an area that has been used as a storage yard for several years. The use has very little impact on the area as it has few patrons, has limited hours of operation, and consists of outdoor displays of plant material. There have been no complaints regarding the existing operation.

Staff recommends approval of the special use permit.

III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
2. The hours of operation of the outdoor garden center shall be limited to 7:00 a.m to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
3. The applicant shall post the hours of operation at the entrance of the business. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
4. The applicant shall encourage its employees to use mass transit or to carpool when traveling to and from work, by posting information regarding DASH and METRO routes, the location where fare passes for transit are sold, and advertising of carpooling opportunities. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
5. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
6. The applicant shall provide a screening fence and landscaping to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning & Zoning. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
7. Any lighting shall be shielded to avoid glare and excessive spillover lighting onto adjacent properties. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
8. Storage of materials shall be kept in a neat and orderly fashion within the property lines. Storage materials shall not be visible from right-of-way or adjacent properties. No storage shall be permitted in the public right-of-way. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
9. The applicant shall provide documentation from the adjacent property owner at 300 Swann Avenue to allow public access to the parking area through the paved portion of the adjacent property and to allow the placement of "No Parking" signs to ensure the area remains clear during business hours. This documentation shall be submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning and "No Parking" signs shall be installed to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning prior to approval of the business license. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)

10. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building, and no amplified sound shall be audible at the property line. (T&ES) ~~(SUP#2005-0076)~~
11. All waste products including, but not limited to organic compounds shall be disposed of in accordance with all local, state and federal ordinances or regulations and not be discharged to the sanitary or storm sewers, or be discharged onto the ground. (T&ES) (SUP#2005-0076)
12. The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security survey for the business and a robbery awareness program for all employees. (Police) (SUP#2005-0076)
13. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit after it has been operational for one year, and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community; (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review, or (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Richard Josephson, Deputy Director;
Valerie Peterson, Urban Planner.

Staff Note: In accordance with section 11-506(c) of the zoning ordinance, construction or operation shall be commenced and diligently and substantially pursued within 18 months of the date of granting of a special use permit by City Council or the special use permit shall become void.

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line.
- R-1 Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building, and no amplified sounds shall be audible at the property line.

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 No comment.

Health Department:

- F-1 No comment.

Police Department:

- F-1 The Police Department has no objections to the business expansion.



APPLICATION

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

SPECIAL USE PERMIT # 2006-0058

PROPERTY LOCATION: 300 Calvert Avenue, Alexandria, VA

TAX MAP REFERENCE: 25.03-02-02 ZONE: I

APPLICANT

Name: Carla Thomas and Randee Wilson d/b/a Nature By Design

Address: 401 Yeonas Drive SW, Vienna, Virginia 22180

PROPERTY OWNER

Name: 300 Calvert Street LLC

Address: 6602 Madison McLean Drive, McLean, Virginia 22101

PROPOSED USE: Expansion of retail plant nursery into the remainder of the back lot

THE UNDERSIGNED hereby applies for a Special Use Permit in accordance with the provisions of Article XI, Section 4-11-500 of the 1992 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

THE UNDERSIGNED, having obtained permission from the property owner, hereby grants permission to the City of Alexandria to post placard notice on the property for which this application is requested, pursuant to Article IV, Section 4-1404(D)(7) of the 1992 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

THE UNDERSIGNED hereby attests that all of the information herein provided and specifically including all surveys, drawings, etc., required to be furnished by the applicant are true, correct and accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief. The applicant is hereby notified that any written materials, drawings or illustrations submitted in support of this application and any specific oral representations made to the Director of Planning and Zoning on this application will be binding on the applicant unless those materials or representations are clearly stated to be non-binding or illustrative of general plans and intentions, subject to substantial revision, pursuant to Article XI, Section 11-207(A)(10), of the 1992 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

Carla Allison Thomas
Print Name of Applicant or Agent
401 Yeonas Drive SW
Mailing/Street Address
Vienna, Virginia 22180
City and State Zip Code

Signature
703-683-4769 703-519-4769
Telephone # Fax #
carla@nature-by-design.com
Email address

Date

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE - OFFICE USE ONLY
Application Received: _____ Date & Fee Paid: \$ _____
ACTION - PLANNING COMMISSION: _____
ACTION - CITY COUNCIL: _____

8



APPLICATION

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

All applicants must complete this form. Supplemental signs are required for child care facilities, restaurants, automobile-oriented uses and freestanding signs requiring special use permit approval.

1. The applicant is the (check one):
- Owner
 - Contract Purchaser
 - Lessee or
 - Other: _____ of the subject property.

State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent.

Randee Keith Wilson, 401 Yeonas Drive, SW, Vienna, Virginia 22180 - Partner - 49%

Carla Allison Thomas, 401 Yeonas Drive SW, Vienna, Virginia 22180 - Partner - 51%

If property owner or applicant is being represented by an authorized agent such as an attorney, realtor, or other person for which there is some form of compensation, does this agent or the business in which the agent is employed have a business license to operate in the City of Alexandria, Virginia?

- Yes. Provide proof of current City business license
- No. The agent shall obtain a business license prior to filing application, if required by the City Code.

2. Submit a floor plan and a plot plan with parking layout of the proposed use. One copy of the plan is required for plans that are 11" x 17" or smaller. Twenty-four copies are required for plans larger than 11" x 17" if the plans cannot be easily reproduced. The planning director may waive requirements for plan submission upon receipt of a written request which adequately justifies a waiver. This requirement does not apply if a Site Plan Package is required.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

3. The applicant shall describe below the nature of the request in detail so that the Planning Commission and City Council can understand the nature of the operation and the use. The description should include such items as the nature of the activity, the number and type of patrons, the number of employees, the hours, how parking is to be provided for employees and patrons, and whether the use will generate any noise. (Attach additional sheets if necessary.)

The applicant proposes to expand its existing retail nursery operation into the rest of the lot, currently being used as a storage yard by another company. No changes in the nature of the activity (retail sale of trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, and annuals, as well as a limited number of bagged organic soils, fertilizers, and amendments) are planned. No changes in the store hours (currently Wednesday - Thursday: 9:00 - 6:00; Friday: 9:00 - 7:00; Saturday: 8:00 - 7:00; and Sunday: 9:00 - 6:00) are planned in the immediate future. The applicant expects to be open Monday from 9:00 - 6:00 beginning in April 2007. Currently, in addition to the two partners, the applicant has one full-time employee and two part-time employees; no changes are anticipated. It is not anticipated that the expansion will generate any significant noise. The applicant expects a gradual increase in the number of patrons from current levels (about ten per day on peak days, which are Saturdays and Sundays in April, May, September, and October, and four-five per day on all other days) to about twenty per day on peak days, and five-ten per day on all other days. Patrons will be native plant enthusiasts and some landscape contractors. The site is covered with gravel; no new construction or significant changes are planned. No increase in retail floor space (originally stated as 400 square feet, but actually configured as 200 square feet) are planned. Trees and shrubs for sale will be on the ground; perennials, vines, and annuals will be on Structural Plastics Benchmaster nursery benches. Invasive exotic vines will be replaced with natives. The stockade fence that bisects the lot will be removed. Invasive exotic plants will be removed.

USE CHARACTERISTICS

4. The proposed special use permit request is for (check one):

- a new use requiring a special use permit,
- a development special use permit,
- an expansion or change to an existing use without a special use permit,
- expansion or change to an existing use with a special use permit,
- other. Please describe: _____

5. Please describe the capacity of the proposed use:

A. How many patrons, clients, pupils and other such users do you expect?

Specify time period (i.e., day, hour, or shift).

Applicant expect approximately 20 patrons a week April thru October, two-thirds of which will be on weekends, and approximately 5-10 patrons a week in November thru February.

B. How many employees, staff and other personnel do you expect?

Specify time period (i.e., day, hour, or shift).

During peak season (April thru October), we expect 2 employees and 1 or 2 owners on Saturday from 7:00 to 7:00 p.m. and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. At all other times we expect one employee and 1 or 2 owners from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. daily and 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Sunday.

6. Please describe the proposed hours and days of operation of the proposed use: *Hours below are our current hours of operation. We request that the permissible hours in the original SUP remain unchanged.*

Day:	Hours:
<u>March-October: Tuesday thru Friday</u>	<u>9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.</u>
Friday	9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Saturday	8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Sunday	9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
<u>November-February: Tuesday thru Saturday</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.</u>
Sunday	9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

7. Please describe any potential noise emanating from the proposed use.

A. Describe the noise levels anticipated from all mechanical equipment and patrons.

Occasional weed whacking and trimming. No other noise in excess of normal conversation or vehicle motors is anticipated.

B. How will the noise from patrons be controlled?

We anticipate that the nursery will continue to generate significantly less noise than the surrounding business. If necessary, we will encourage patrons to be considerate of neighbors through use of signage.

8. Describe any potential odors emanating from the proposed use and plans to control them:

Odors will continue to be limited to flower fragrances and conservative applications of mulch and soil amendments (consistent with what would be expected from a single family residence).

9. Please provide information regarding trash and litter generated by the use.

A. What type of trash and garbage will be generated by the use?

Waste paper will be recycled; typical office refuse and janitorial waste, plastic bags from planting mix ingredients; unusable nursery containers will be recycled or discarded.

B. How much trash and garbage will be generated by the use?

Initially a large amount of brush will be produced as we must remove invasive exotic plants (e.g., Ampelopsis brevipedunculata, porcelainberry vine, and Lonicera japonica, Japanese honeysuckle). Afterward, we expect 5-6 bags/week.

C. How often will trash be collected?

Three times per week.

D. How will you prevent littering on the property, streets and nearby properties?

While we have witnessed, and anticipate, none of our patrons littering, we will continue to provide trash cans, police the area, and pick up litter from the adjacent public area. If necessary, we will post signage asking patrons to use trash cans.

10. Will any hazardous materials, as defined by the state or federal government, be handled, stored, or generated on the property?

[] Yes. [X] No.

If yes, provide the name, monthly quantity, and specific disposal method below:

11. Will any organic compounds, for example paint, ink, lacquer thinner, or cleaning or degreasing solvent, be handled, stored, or generated on the property?

Yes. No.

If yes, provide the name, monthly quantity, and specific disposal method below:

12. What methods are proposed to ensure the safety of residents, employees and patrons?

Lines of vision will be preserved between the carriage house and all areas of the nursery.

Staff will walk the property and be stationed by the entrance. Hours of operation will be

restricted largely to daylight. Signage will tell customers that nursery has very little cash.

ALCOHOL SALES

13. Will the proposed use include the sale of beer, wine, or mixed drinks?

Yes. No.

If yes, describe alcohol sales below, including if the ABC license will include on-premises and/or off-premises sales. Existing uses must describe their existing alcohol sales and/or service and identify any proposed changes in that aspect of the operation.

PARKING AND ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

14. Please provide information regarding the availability of off-street parking.

A. How many parking spaces are required for the proposed use pursuant to section 8-200 (A) of the zoning ordinance?

Two, since retail floor space is actually 200 sq. ft., not 400 as stated in original SUP application.

B. How many parking spaces of each type are provided for the proposed use:

- 4 Standard spaces
- ~~0~~ Compact spaces
- _____ Handicapped accessible spaces.
- _____ Other.

C. Where is required parking located? (check one)

- on-site
- off-site

If the required parking will be located off-site, where will it be located?

Pursuant to section 8-200 (C) of the zoning ordinance, commercial and industrial uses may provide off-site parking within 500 feet of the proposed use, provided that the off-site parking is located on land zoned for commercial or industrial uses. All other uses must provide parking on-site, except that off-street parking may be provided within 300 feet of the use with a special use permit.

D. If a reduction in the required parking is requested, pursuant to section 8-100 (A) (4) or (5) of the zoning ordinance, complete the PARKING REDUCTION SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION.

15. Please provide information regarding loading and unloading facilities for the use:

A. How many loading spaces are required for the use, per section 8-200 (B) of the zoning ordinance?

None

B. How many loading spaces are available for the use? One

C. Where are off-street loading facilities located? In proposed parking area just inside gate.

D. During what hours of the day do you expect loading/unloading operations to occur?

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

E. How frequently are loading/unloading operations expected to occur, per day or per week, as appropriate?

From March 1st thru May 31st, we expect 4 or fewer trucks per month. We also expect 2-3 such trucks in August. Tractor trailer deliveries will be received at our Vienna location.

M

16. Is street access to the subject property adequate or are any street improvements, such as a new turning lane, necessary to minimize impacts on traffic flow?

No improvements are needed.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

17. Will the proposed uses be located in an existing building? Yes No

Do you propose to construct an addition to the building? Yes No

How large will the addition be? _____ square feet.

18. What will the total area occupied by the proposed use be?

400 sq. ft. (existing) + _____ sq. ft. (addition if any) = _____ sq. ft. (total)

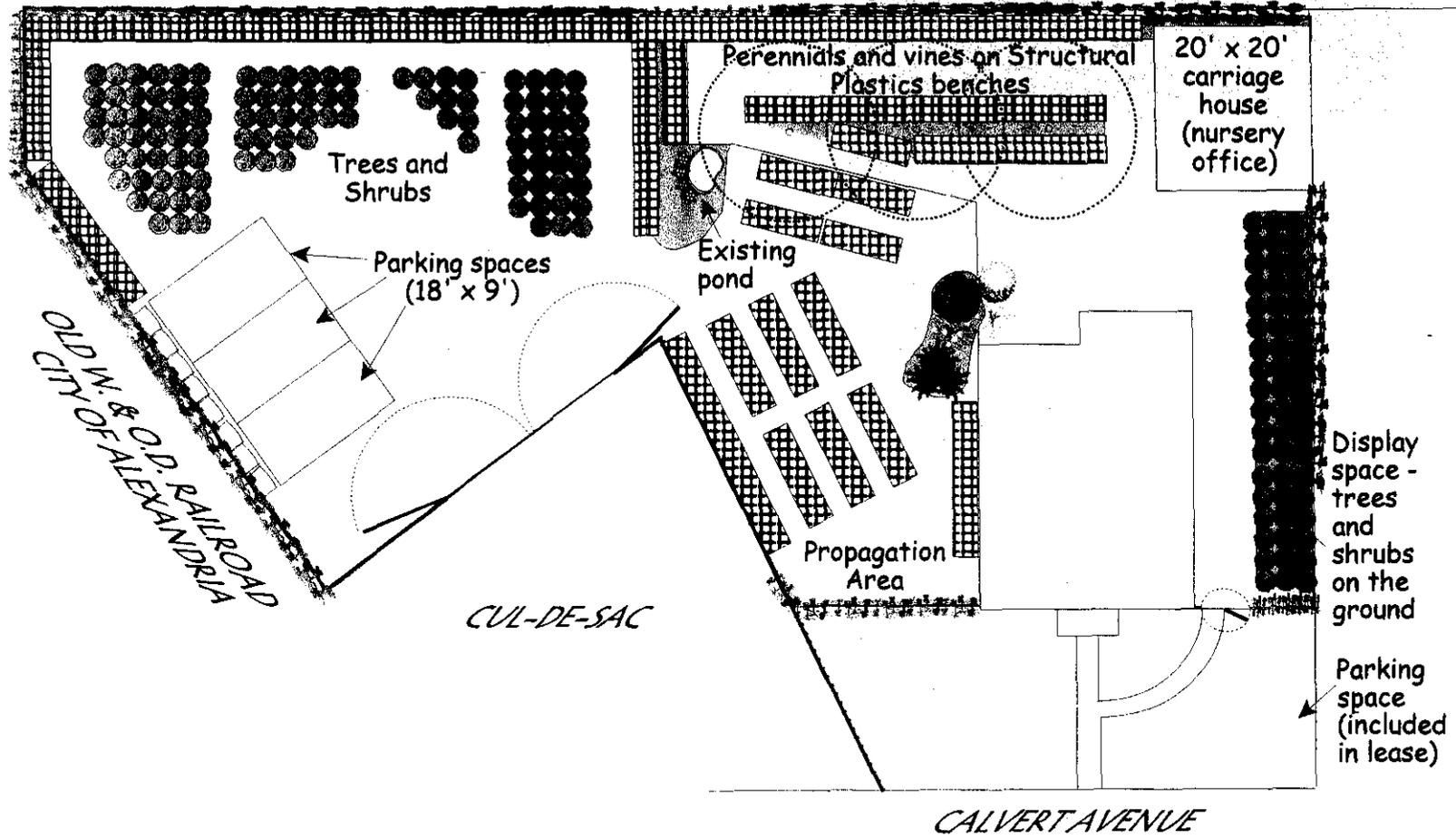
19. The proposed use is located in: (check one)

a stand alone building a house located in a residential zone a warehouse

a shopping center. Please provide name of the center: _____

an office building. Please provide name of the building: _____

other. Please describe: _____



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Summary of changes:

- Stockade fence that currently bisects lot will be removed.
- Main entrance will be relocated to double gate in new section.
- Parking will be relocated to new section.
- Invasive exotic vines will be removed from fence and replaced with native vines to improve screening.

SITE PLAN FOR NURSERY EXPANSION 300 Calvert Avenue, Alexandria, VA	
25 June 2005 1" = 20'	NATURE BY DESIGN 401 Yeonas Drive, S.W. Vienna, VA 22180
1022	

SUP2006-0052

Del Ray Citizens Association

Established 1954
delraycitizens@yahoo.com

P.O. Box 2233, Alexandria, VA 22301
<http://www.delraycitizen.org>

September 6, 2006

PC Docket Item # 8
Case Number(s) 2006-0058

Mayor William Euille
City Hall
Alexandria, VA 22314

Subject: SUP# 2006-0058, Nature By Design at 300 Calvert Avenue.
Planning Commission Docket item # 8,

Dear Mayor Euille,

I am pleased to inform you that the Land Use committee and Executive Board will recommend support for the application to the Del Ray Citizens Association membership at our meeting on September 11.

Nature By Design is a welcome addition to the retail mix of Del Ray. We are pleased and encouraged by news of their expansion and we wish them much success.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Slack
Co-Chair
Land Use Committee

cc:
City Council
Director of Planning and Zoning
Planning Commission

~~Enclosures~~

*Celebrating 100 years of the Town of Potomac
1908 - 2008*



APPLICATION

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

SPECIAL USE PERMIT # 2006-0058

PROPERTY LOCATION: 300 Calvert Avenue, Alexandria, VA
TAX MAP REFERENCE: 25.03-02-02 ZONE: I

APPLICANT

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Carla Allison Thomas
Print Name of Applicant or Agent
401 Yeonas Drive SW
Mailing/Street Address
Vienna, Virginia 22180
City and State Zip Code

Signature
703-683-4769 703-519-4769
Telephone # Fax #
carla@nature-by-design.com
Email address
Date

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE - OFFICE USE ONLY
Application Received: _____ Date & Fee Paid: \$ _____
ACTION - PLANNING COMMISSION: Unanimous consent, recommended approval 9/7/06
ACTION - CITY COUNCIL: 9/16/06 - City Council approved the PC recommendation 7-0

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Del Ray Citizens Association

6
9-16-06

Established 1954
delraycitizens@yahoo.com

P.O. Box 2233, Alexandria, VA 22301
<http://www.delraycitizen.org>

September 15, 2006

Mayor William Euille
City Hall
Alexandria, VA 22314

Subject: SUP# 2006-0058, Nature By Design at 300 Calvert Avenue.
Docket item # 6

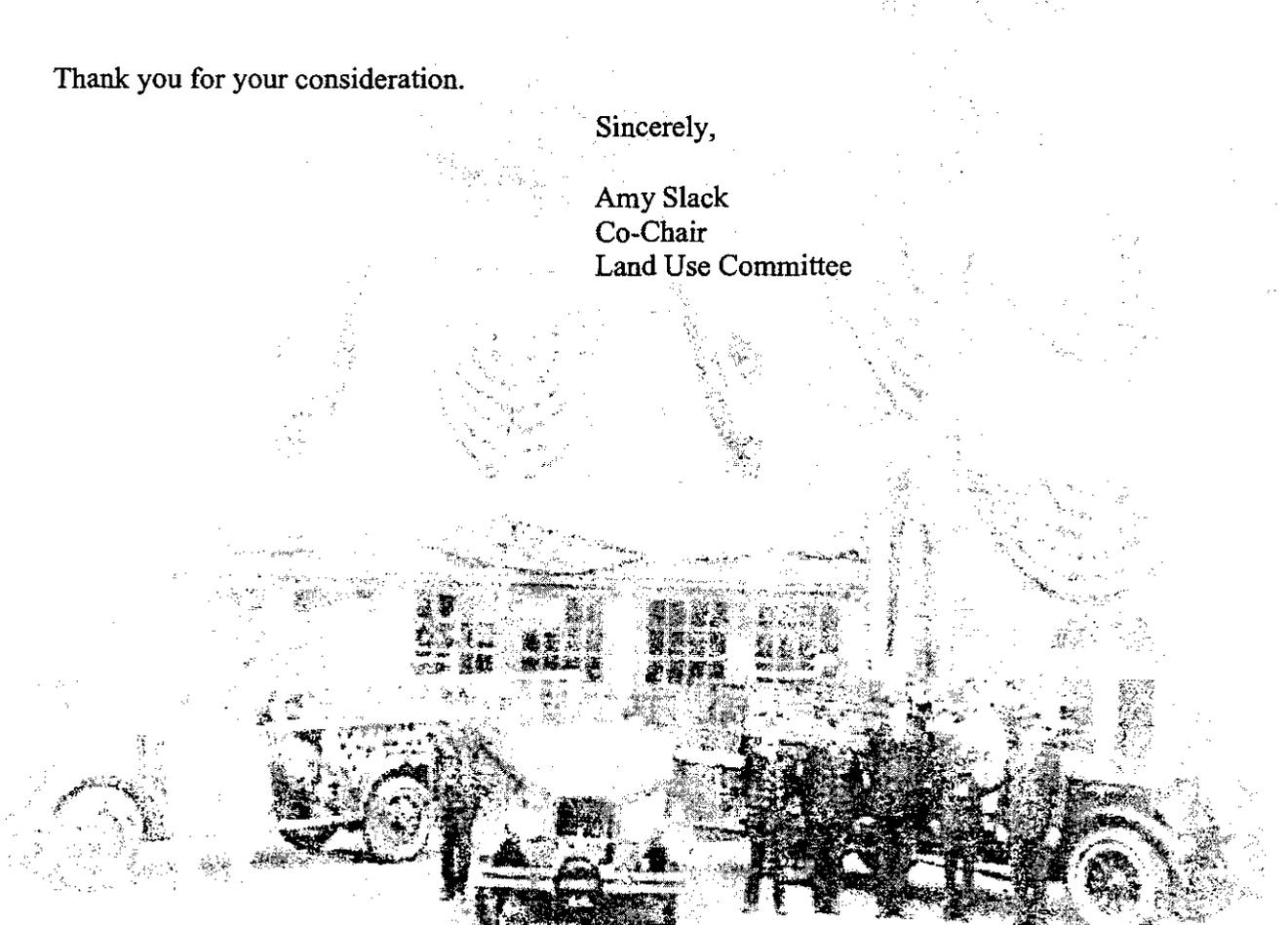
Dear Mayor Euille,

I am pleased to inform you that the Del Ray Citizens Association voted to support the application. Nature By Design is a welcome addition to the retail mix of Del Ray. We are pleased and encouraged by news of their expansion and we wish them much success.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Slack
Co-Chair
Land Use Committee



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1908 - 2008*

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September 6, 2006

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City Hall
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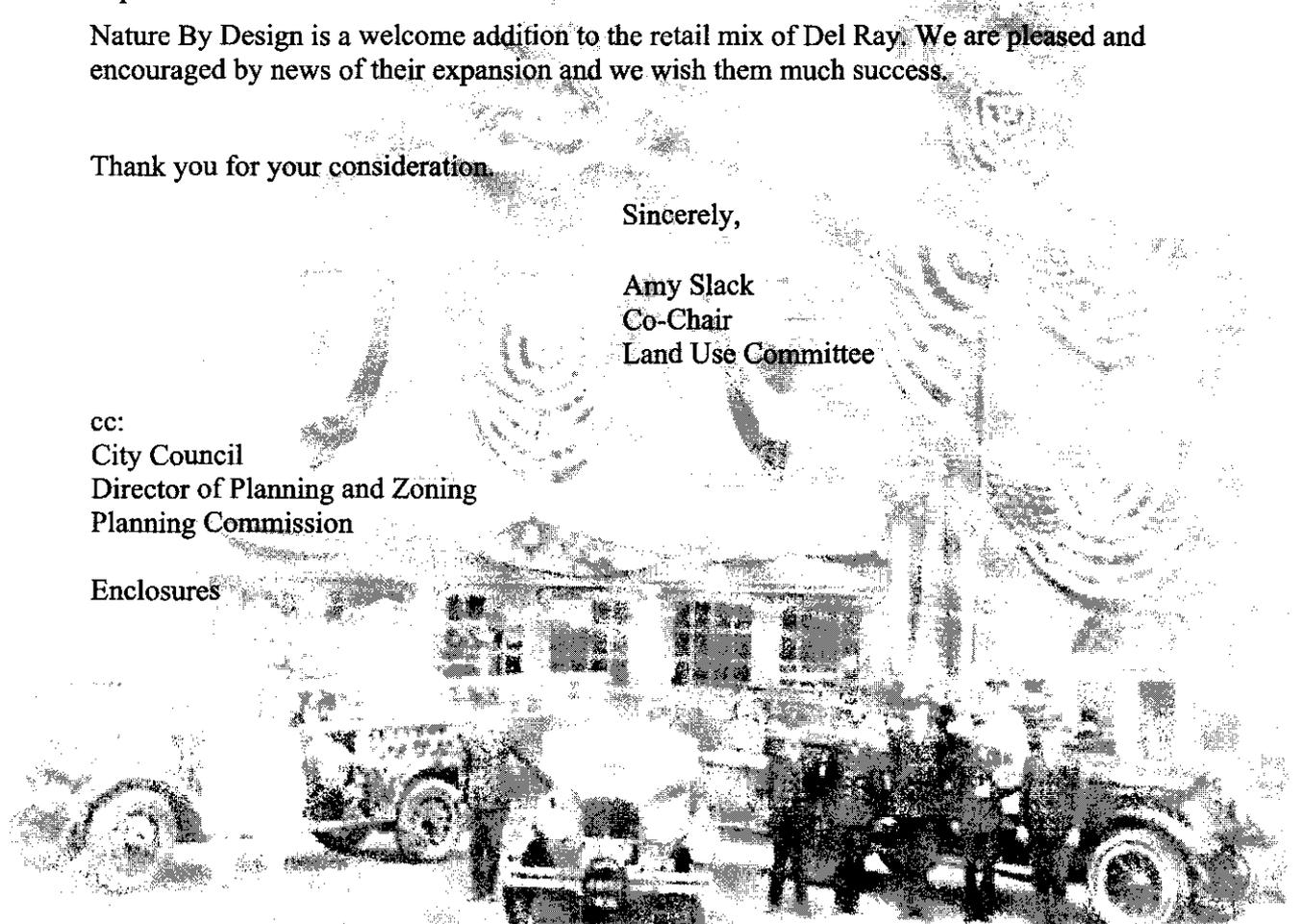
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Amy Slack
Co-Chair
Land Use Committee

cc:
City Council
Director of Planning and Zoning
Planning Commission

Enclosures



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