

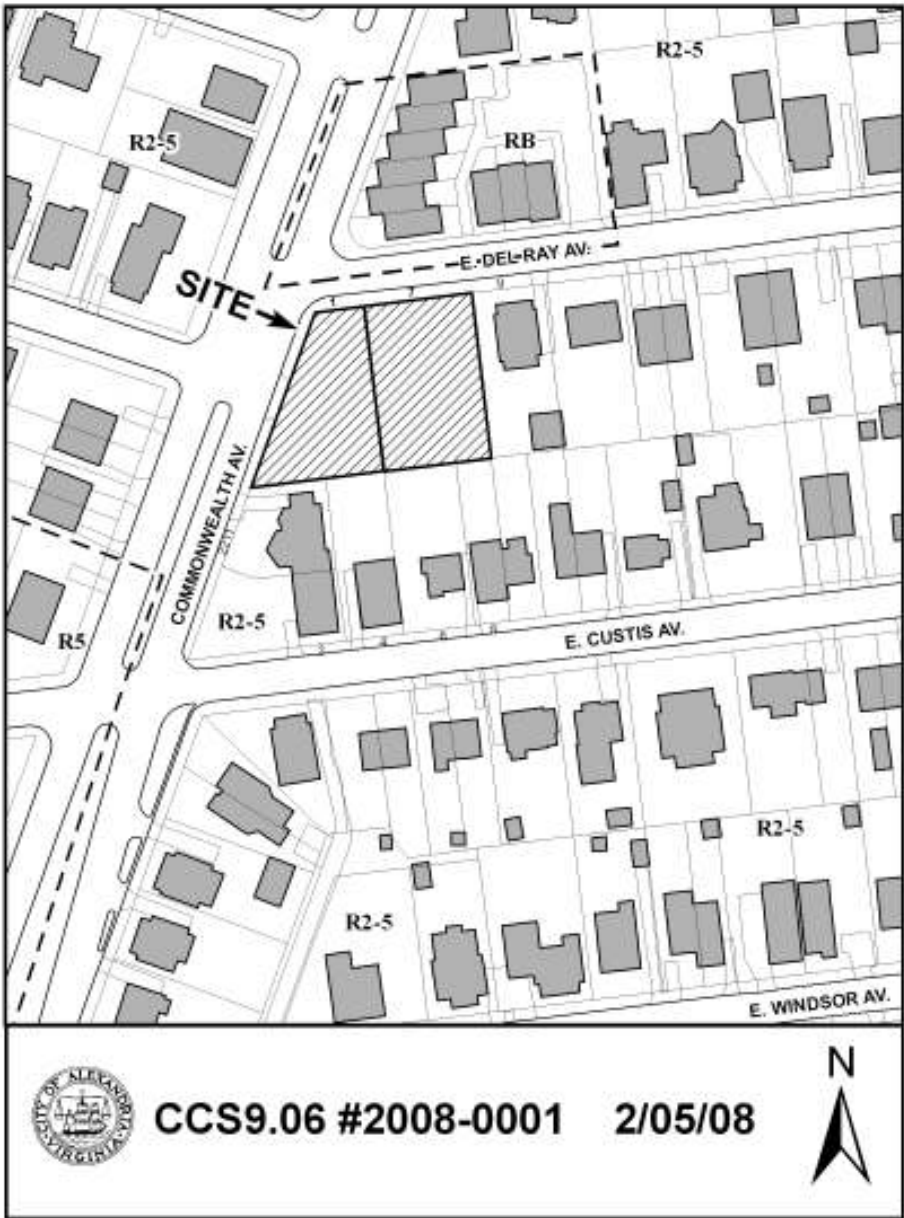
Docket Item #6
CITY CHARTER, SECTION 9.06
CASE# 2008-0001

Planning Commission Meeting
February 5, 2008

ISSUE: Consideration of a proposal by the City of Alexandria to acquire the properties at 1 and 7 East Del Ray Avenue, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9.06 of the City Charter.

LOCATION: 1 and 7 East Del Ray Avenue
Tax Parcels 034.01-10-01 and 034.01-10-02

ZONE: R-2-5/Single and Two-Family Zone



The City has entered into an agreement to purchase the property at 1&7 East Del Ray Avenue, listed on the City's Open Space Pocket Park list approved by Council on February 24, 2007. Section 9.06 of the City's Charter requires that the Planning Commission approve any acquisition or sale of public land. The Planning Commission is charged with ensuring that any such acquisition, sale or change is consistent with the City's Master Plan.

When acquired, this will be the tenth parcel purchased by the City with open space funds as part of its Open Space Master Plan. All nine other parcels were subject to 9.06 actions in 2006 and 2007. Three of the previously approved parcels are located on Strand Street, four parcels along Four Mile Run on Mount Vernon Avenue, one parcel on Raleigh Avenue, and another pocket park parcel on South Early Street. The Planning Commission voted to approve each of those acquisitions, finding such acquisitions consistent with the City's Master Plan.

Property Description:

The property under consideration is located at 1&7 East Del Ray Avenue, just east and at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue. The 16,021 square foot property is zoned R-2-5 and is currently vacant. The property contains two parcels at the corner of East Del Ray and Commonwealth Avenues. While privately owned, the corner lot property had been valued by the nearby community as open space since the 1990's.



As late as 1987, the property was developed with a furniture stripping business. The buildings on site were demolished, and the owner (at that time) was permitted by the Virginia Department of Health to bury paint remover and other residue from the business on-site as part of the demolition process. The current property owner has provided an environmental assessment of the site's soil with the contract documents. The City will comply with any environmental regulations involved in the development of this site as a park.

Alexandria Master Plan:

The City's Open Space Plan, adopted in 2003 as a chapter of the City's Master Plan, defined fifteen goals as the framework for open space protection and preservation. One such goal called for the creation of public open space from currently vacant, and charged the newly appointed Open Space Steering Committee (OSSC) with identifying and recommending such sites for protection. In furtherance of the Plan, City Council approved the incorporation of a Pocket Park program in March, 2005. A pocket park is defined as follows:

Pocket (block) parks are intended to meet the needs of residents or workers within about a tenth of a mile. Pocket parks are less than 20,000 square feet, with no minimum size. No parking is needed. Pocket parks may include such elements as small scale play equipment, public gardens, seating areas, passive open space, landscaped areas, important natural features, or trees.

On February 24, 2007 Council approved a list of potential pocket park sites, reviewed by the OSSC. The property at 1&7 East Del Ray Avenue was identified as a currently vacant parcel, ideally suited for public open space and listed as one of the highest priority potential pocket park sites. Acquisition of this property for use as a pocket park will thus enhance the City's ability to meet the goals of the Open Space Plan.

Analysis:

The proposed purchase of this pocket park property represents a significant continued commitment by the City to the implementation of the Open Space Plan, and to Council's Strategic Plan, which envisions serious efforts to ensure a quality of life for all its citizens. This property will be the second parcel acquired for use as a pocket park since approval of the Pocket Park program. The City will be financing the acquisition of the property with funds derived from City Council's dedication of one percent of the City's real estate tax rate for open space acquisition. As part of the Pocket Park Program, City Council approved a goal of using a minimum of 20% of the Open Space Fund for the acquisition of pocket park sites.

Future Use of the Property:

After the City purchases the property, Staff will initiate the park planning and design process. The public will be invited to participate in this design process, with review from the Park and Recreation Commission. Any required future environmental studies and work will be a component of this plan.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the acquisition of the subject property as consistent with the Master Plan, under section 9.06 of the Charter.

STAFF: Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Rich Josephson, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning
Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator