

Docket Item #12-B  
SUBDIVISION #2004-0009

Planning Commission Meeting  
September 9, 2004

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for subdivision to adjust the lotlines common to three parcels.

**APPLICANT:** Seminary Forest Associates Limited Partnership  
by Michael Caruthers

**LOCATION:** 4615 Seminary Road, 4617 Seminary Road and 4500 W. Braddock Road

**ZONE:** RB and R-8/Residential

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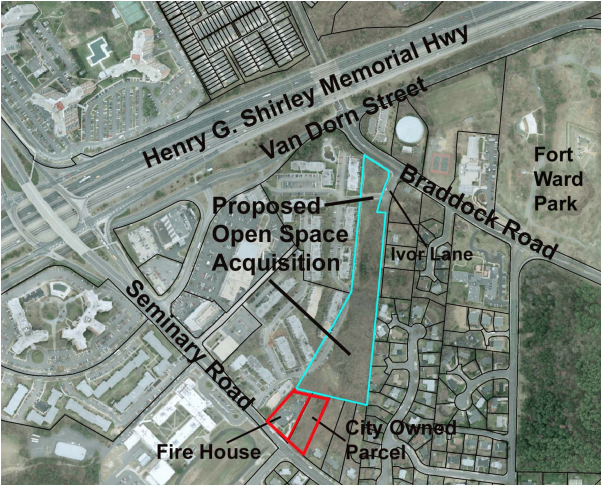
SITE GRAPHIC  
(AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE)

**I. OVERVIEW:**

The proposed subdivision, creates two contiguous parcels containing a total of approximately 5 acres that in addition to the accompanying Section 9.06 (Case #2004-0002) application will enable the City to proceed with acquisition of this property for public open space. The proposed lot is adjacent to West Braddock Road to the north, Ivor Lane to the east and Seminary Road to the south. The two lots on the southern portion of the site are currently owned by the City; one lot is vacant and the other is occupied by an Alexandria Fire Department fire station. Fort Ward Park is located adjacent to the northern portion of the site. This property was recommended by the Open Space Committee for acquisition and in June 2004, City Council authorized the purchase of this property for \$750,000 pending a subsequent subdivision and Section 9.06 application.

The future design and facilities for this public park has not yet been determined, although this process will involve considerable public participation and future site plan approval by the Planning Commission for the construction of the parkland improvements. However, it is anticipated that the improvements will consist of passive recreational areas, paths and trails, all to take advantage of the mature trees and natural topography of the site.

The proposed lot will be subject to deed restrictions ensuring that the uses of the property be retained as public open space and passive recreational uses. The lot consists of numerous mature trees, vegetation and topography, which will provide a large natural area of contiguous open space within the City.



*Aerial View*



*Views Looking Into Proposed Open Space*

The proposed lot is currently a portion of the Seminary Forest apartment complex, and will also contain two zoning categories, the RB, residential multifamily and R-8, single-family residential. With the subdivision of the lot the adjoining apartment complex will continue to comply with all floor area ratio, open space and parking requirements within the zone as discussed in more detail below.

## **II. BACKGROUND - HISTORY:**

In 1966, the Seminary Forest apartments were built pursuant to Site Plan #65-094. The development is currently comprised of three legal lots, two lots of which (consisting of 34 apartment buildings, resident pool, maintenance building, parking areas, and internal streets) are zoned RB, residential; the third lot (a vacant and wooded parcel directly east of the apartments) is zoned R-8, residential. In 1965, a rezoning of the property from R-8 to RB, was approved without the eastern parcel. The eastern parcel remained zoned R-8 which was to act as a buffer for the single-family residences located along Stonebridge Road and Ivor Lane. In 1966, a variance for density was approved (BZA Case#863) to permit construction of 469 garden apartments (36 apartment units over the allowable 433 units). The variance was required when the applicant proffered the land to the City for the construction of the Burke Library; the reduction in land required a density adjustment.

In 1967, a subdivision of the property was approved which listed three legal lots for the development and it confirmed that density, lot area and open space required and provided for the development did not require the vacant third lot. In 1980, the City completed a 9.06 report recommending the acquisition of the vacant third parcel for parkland. Planning Commission approved the 9.06 which listed eleven properties, including the Seminary Forest vacant parcel as #5 on the list for acquisition. However, the acquisition of the vacant woodland parcel was not completed due to a lack of funding.

With regard to compliance with zoning, under today's zoning, the RB zone no longer permits multi-family dwellings. However, the existing apartments are classified as grandfathered uses and structures pursuant to Section 3-707(A) of the zoning ordinance which states land that was zoned and used for multifamily prior to 1978 may continue to be used for multifamily dwellings.

The proposed resubdivision will consolidate and resubdivide the three existing parcels to create four new parcels. Two of the newly created parcels will be acquired by the City for open space in accordance with the Alexandria Open Space Plan. The remaining two parcels will contain the apartment complex. The proposed resubdivision consolidates the existing three parcels of record and resubdivides them into four parcels as follows:

<u>Existing Seminary Forest Lots</u>		
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-01	341,029 s.f. or	7.8289 ac.
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-02	345,987 s.f. or	7.9428 ac
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-03	280,431 s.f. or	6.4378 ac
Total	967,447 s.f. or	22.2095 ac.
<u>Proposed Seminary Forest Lots</u>		
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-01	383,819 s.f. or	8.8113 ac.
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-02	360,334 s.f. or	8.2721 ac
Total	744,153 s.f. or	17.0830 ac
<u>Proposed Lots for Open Space Acquisition</u>		
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-03.1	201,618 s.f. or	4.6285 ac.
Parcel 3982-01-01-01-03.2	21,676 s.f. or	0.4976 ac.
Total	223,294 s.f. or	5.1261 ac.

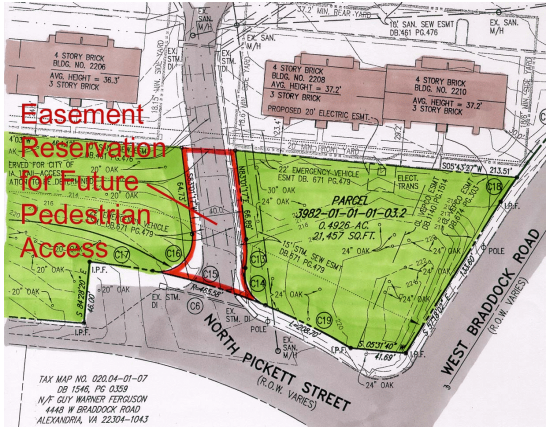
**III. STAFF ANALYSIS:**

There are three issues with the proposed subdivision, which staff believes have been addressed by the current subdivision that include:

- Proposed access road on the eastern portion of the site;
- Configuration of the lot on the southern portion of the site; and
- Existing utilities and easements.

*A. Proposed Access Road on the Eastern Portion of the Site*

The proposed subdivision creates two parcels instead of one because the owner of Seminary Forest apartment complex proposes to maintain ownership of the driveway and access to the property on the northern portion of the proposed lot. Initially, staff was concerned that the elimination of this area would limit the connectivity and open space for this lot. However, the applicant has agreed to provide a reservation for this area that will enable the City to provide a future trail connection along any point in this roadway as is determined necessary by a future plan. Therefore, although the location of a future trail connection is not

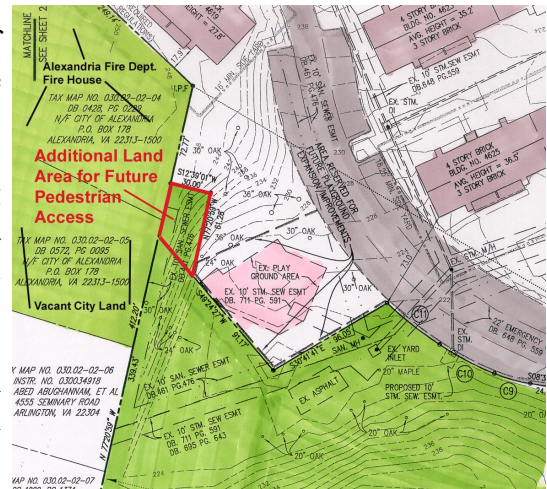


**Easement Reservation for Future Pedestrian Access**

known at this time, the reservation area allows the City to have the flexibility to locate a possible trail connection while accommodating the mature trees and topography on the site.

**B. Configuration of the lot on the southern portion of the site**

One of the initial issues for the applicant was retention of the existing recreational equipment and an area for future expansion of the area on the southwestern portion of the lot that serves as an amenity for the residents of the complex. However, staff is concerned about maintaining a maximum amount of flexibility for future plans for a trail to connect the two lots owned by the City on Seminary Road. The applicant has revised the subdivision plat to provide an approximately 30 ft. x 80 ft. connection to each of the City lots. This revision will enable numerous options in locating a trail connection on the southern portion of the site.



***Additional Land Area for Future Pedestrian Access***

**C. Existing Utilities and Easements**

There are several existing underground utilities and easements on the property, which are located on the western and southern portion of the site. The utilities on the western portion of the site consist of several small inlets for the existing surface parking lots and buildings. There is also an existing emergency vehicle easement on the northwestern portion of the proposed lot. Staff would normally recommend that these emergency vehicle easements and inlet areas be excluded from the subdivision of a lot. However, in this case staff has recommended that these areas be permitted to be included within the proposed lot, contingent upon maintenance easements and that these structures that serve the apartments be maintained by the adjoining property Seminary Forest property owner. Staff is recommending that these areas be included in the lot because the western portion of the site has the least amount of topography and therefore, retention of these areas allow flexibility in locating a possible future trail connection may be located on the western portion of the site. There is also a large underground storm sewer line and easement on the southern portion of the lot which serves the adjoining apartment complex. The presence of a sewer line and easement is a typical condition and will not impact the use of the lot for open space.

**IV. CONCLUSION:**

The applicant has worked with staff to address all of the concerns that have been raised, which results in the proposed subdivision that will enable the purchase of a large, valuable open space area within the City. The acquisition of this 5.126 acre area will enable the permanent retention of the forested and natural characteristics of the site and will provide a valuable addition to the existing open space inventory in the City.

Staff recommends approval of the subdivision.

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;  
Jeffrey Farnier, Chief, Development;  
Gregory Tate, Urban Planner.

**V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

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

1. The reservation area as depicted on the subdivision plat dated August 25, 2004, between lot 3982-01-01-01-03 and lot 3982-01-01-01-03.2 shall provide for a minimum twenty-foot wide public access easement for pedestrians. The easement language shall be reviewed and approved by the City Attorney prior to the approval of the subdivision. (P&Z)
2. The final subdivision plat shall comply with the requirements of Section 11-1700 of the Zoning Ordinance. (P&Z) (T&ES)
3. The location of all easements and reservations such as the ingress/egress easement for the private driveway and all other easements and reservations shall be depicted on the final subdivision plan. (P&Z)
4. Revise the language under General Note #10 to reflect that the entire area over the private access driveway is to be reserved for a future twenty-foot wide public access easement for pedestrians. (P&Z)
5. Correct street name of North Pickett Street to Ivor Lane. (T&ES)

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Staff Note: This plat will expire 18 months from the date of approval.



CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Transportation and Environmental Services:

F-1 If there is an existing drainage channel, stream, or other body of water on or adjacent the property there may be a Resource Protection Area (RPA) and buffer in existence and associated with this site thereby limiting development of this property by this subdivision. If this is the case a qualified firm shall investigate this prior to any proposed development.(T&ES)

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 Existing 22' Emergency Vehicle Easements are shown on proposed preliminary plat. Provide new deed book references after consolidation and re-subdivision.
- F-2 Existing multifamily dwellings appear to be type 5A construction under 1993 BOCA.
- F-3 Existing 3 and 4 story multifamily dwellings are classified Group R-2 under the 2000 IBC.
- F-4 Minimum separation distance of 3 and 4 story brick structures from proposed property lines shown on preliminary plat appears to be 16.35'.
- C-1 Submit information to confirm that the Fire Resistance Rating of exterior walls complies with 2000 IBC table 602 and that opening comply with 2000 IBC sec. 704 based on separation distance of proposed new property lines.

Historic Alexandria Commission (Archaeology):

F-1 Low potential, no archaeological action required.

Police Department:

No objections

SUB #2004-0009  
Seminary Forest

**STAFF ATTACHMENTS  
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE**