

Docket Item #21
CITY CHARTER, SECTION 9.06; CASE #2005-0001
2600 BUSINESS CENTER DRIVE

Planning Commission Meeting
June 7, 2005

ISSUE: Consideration of a proposal by the City of Alexandria to acquire the property at 2600 Business Center Drive for use as an outdoor recreational facility, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9.06 of the City Charter.

LOCATION: 2600 Business Center Drive

ZONE: I/Industrial

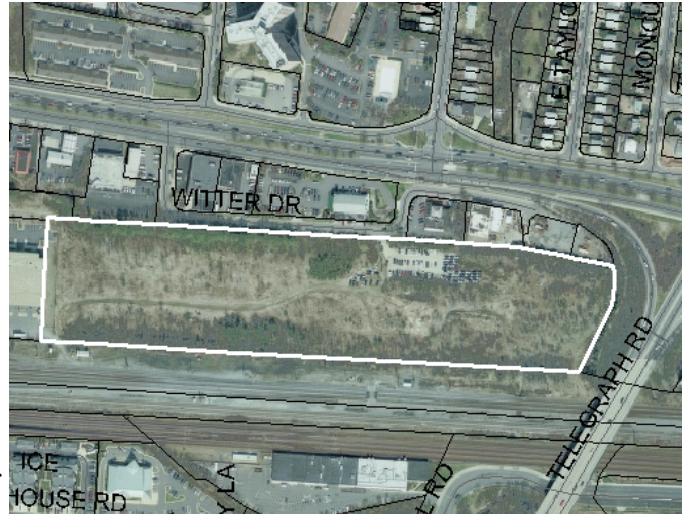
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve this request, finding that the proposal is consistent with Section 9.06 of the City Charter of Alexandria, Virginia, for the acquisition or sale of public land and any change in streets, squares, parks, public buildings or spaces. The acquisition is consistent with the Master Plan, including specifically the Alexandria Open Space chapter.

CITY CHARTER SECTION 9.06; CASE #2005-0001
2600 BUSINESS CENTER DRIVE

Site Graphic
Available in the Planning and Zoning Office

DISCUSSION

The City proposes to purchase the property located at 2600 Business Center Drive, for use as outdoor recreational fields. The site is adjacent to and north of the CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railroad rights-of-way, south of Witter Drive and several commercial properties fronting on Duke Street, east of a City-owned industrial building at 2900 Business Center Drive, and west of and adjacent to the Telegraph Road right-of-way. Funds for the purchase will come from the mitigation package established by the Woodrow Wilson Bridge settlement agreement. Acquisition and development of this facility will augment the City's limited resources for accommodating outdoor recreational activity.



Section 9.06 of the City Charter

Section 9.06 of the City Charter requires that the Planning Commission review and approve any acquisition or sale of public land and any change in streets, squares, parks, public buildings or spaces in order to ensure that any such acquisition, sale or change is consistent with the City's Master Plan.

Description of Property and Proposed Use

The subject property comprises 13.7 acres of vacant industrial land that was formerly occupied by a United Fruit Growers rail refrigerator car manufacturing and maintenance facility and is now owned by CSX Transportation. The site slopes gently from north to south, towards the railroad, and contains a number of soil mounds that apparently derived from clearing and regrading after demolition of the United Fruit Growers structures. The site will require soil remediation.

The site will be developed with a recreational facility containing athletic fields, restrooms, a park office/concession stand and maintenance equipment, parking and access, storm water management, and a protective buffer around a small, inactive 19th Century cemetery. Prior to development of the facility, a SUP will be required as well as a traffic and parking impact analysis and off-site improvement of streets providing access to the site.

Zoning and Master Plan

The subject property is zoned I/Industrial. The small area plan identified the site as appropriate for industrial uses. The Alexandria Open Space Plan, adopted in 2003, identified the vacant parcel as a priority site for future protection for open space. The current Industrial zoning permits park use.

In the future there is the opportunity to rezone this and other sites to POS, Parks and Open Space for protection.

History and Significance of the Property

In the 18th and 19th Centuries, this site was occupied by portions of several farmsteads with frontage on Duke Street. Archaeological investigations have identified a family cemetery, near the eastern extent of the site, that contains eleven known graves. The proposed development of the site will include an enclosure around the grave locations and a buffer zone to insure that these graves are not disturbed either during or after construction.

In addition, the site contains a prehistoric archaeological element characterized as “probably dating from the Early Woodland period.” Although a number of artifacts have been recovered, the site is considered to have limited significance due to prior disturbance, poor integrity and lack of diagnostic materials. No further investigation is required at this site.

Proposed Acquisition of the Site for Recreational Fields

The proposed recreational facility is part of a package of amenities that will be provided to the City as settlement of the City’s suit against the U. S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. The suit challenged the decision process for selecting the alignment and location of the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge, on the grounds that impacts on the social fabric and cultural resources of Alexandria were inadequately weighed. In 2002, the City negotiated a letter modification to the Settlement Agreement with the Federal Highway Administration, approved by City Council, that provides funds for the acquisition of this property and for the design and construction of the recreational facility. Of the total of \$35.4 million allocated in the letter modification, \$19.8 million is budgeted for development of this recreational facility, including \$10.0 million for purchase of the site. Use of these funds by the City is subject to limitations and regulation similar to those for expending Federal Aid Highway allocations.

Plan for Creating the Recreational Facility

The City has initiated the acquisition process including retention of a consultant to prepare a title search and appraisals. Also, preliminary work to retain the services of a design consultant with expertise in the development of athletic fields and outdoor recreational facilities is underway. Following acquisition of the property, the selected design consultant will develop a conceptual design with oversight by City staff, and participate in public hearings and presentations to City Commissions. Construction of the facility is anticipated to occur in 2007 with completion by 2008.

CITY CHARTER SECTION 9.06; CASE #2005-0001
2600 BUSINESS CENTER DRIVE

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the 9.06 case to purchase the subject property as consistent with the Master Plan.

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
Valerie Peterson, Department of Planning and Zoning
Pamela Cressey, City Archaeologist, Office of Historic Alexandria
Reed Winslow, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Emily Baker, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
Aimee Vosper, Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities