

Docket Item #11
CITY CHARTER, SECTION 9.06; CASE #2005-0002

Planning Commission Meeting
December 6, 2005

ISSUE: Consideration of a proposal by the City of Alexandria to acquire the property at 105-107 South Fairfax Street for use as a museum, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9.06 of the City Charter.

LOCATION: 105-107 South Fairfax Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial Downtown

RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission approve the request to acquire as a gift to the City, the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, which will be used as a museum.

SITE GRAPHIC
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE

DISCUSSION

The City proposes to acquire the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum at 105-107 South Fairfax Street for use as a museum. Acquisition and development of this facility will augment the City's resources for tourism and promotion of our City's role in national history.

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 is located at 105-107 South Fairfax Street, near the intersection of King and Fairfax Streets. It is a three-story brick building that was built in 1792 and used as an apothecary shop for 141 years. The Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in March 1981 "because of its cultural significance to the people of the United States." It has been open as a museum since 1934 and closed in February 2004 for renovations.

Zoning and Master Plan

The subject property is located in the CD/Commercial Downtown Zone, and in the King Street Retail Strategy area.

History and Significance of the Property

In 1792, Alexandria was a bustling Potomac port city of about 300 homes. It was in that year that Edward Stabler, a young Quaker pharmacist, rented a three-story brick building on Fairfax Street and started a family business, which operated continuously for 141 years. The Apothecary Shop was a center of daily life in Alexandria. Patrons included the George Washington family, James Monroe and Colonel Robert E. Lee. When the Depression forced the Shop's closing in 1933, the doors were simply locked. The Museum possesses an original collection in its original setting. The site was operated as a museum by the Landmarks' Society since 1934 and has been under renovation for more than 18 months.

Plan for Operating the Museum

The Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, one of the oldest pharmacies in the nation, exists today to promote a greater understanding of historic public health issues, inspire people with the values of Quaker founder Edward Stabler, and engage the visitor in an appreciation of our local and national history by sharing the story of his business and family's profound effect on the community in such diverse areas as education and the abolition of slavery. The hours for operation will be Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Sunday, 1 - 4 p.m. These hours are consistent with those used by the Museum in the past, and are consistent with hours of operation for other historical sites within Old Town.

Staff Recommendation

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

STAFF: Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
 Jean Taylor Federico, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria