

Docket Item #8
SUBDIVISION #2005-0008

Planning Commission Meeting
December 6, 2005

ISSUE: Consideration of a request to subdivide the subject property into two lots.

APPLICANT: Loni Czekalski

LOCATION: 30 Sunset Drive

ZONE: RA/Multifamily Residential

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, NOVEMBER 1, 2005: The Planning Commission noted the deferral.

Reason: The applicant requested the deferral.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, OCTOBER 4, 2005: Without objection, the Planning Commission deferred the request to the November 1, 2005, Planning Commission hearing, as agreed to by the applicant.

Reason: The Planning Commission deferred the request to allow the applicant more time to work with staff on the proposed parking and curb cut design, and to discuss the proposal with the neighborhood.

Speakers:

Duncan Blair, applicant's attorney, spoke in support of the application stating that it meets zoning requirements.

Loni Czekalski, spoke in support of the application, expressing her preference not to defer the application.

Anne Giese, resident at 4 West Cedar Street, stated she was not necessarily opposed to the proposal, but had not heard about the case until recently.

Clay Greenway, resident at 20 Sunset Drive, discussed his concerns about parking and safety, stating that parking is already tight along Sunset, and a curb cut would remove street parking.

Martha Challenor, resident at 27 Sunset Drive, had not heard of the proposal until recently, and referred to a letter from the Rosemont Civic Association that stated that its meeting to discuss this case was not until Thursday, October 6, 2005.

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

SITE GRAPHIC
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case presents a difficult planning question for the City. It involves the redevelopment of a large lot with a small house on a narrow street with design, traffic safety, and parking challenges.

The applicant requests approval of a subdivision at 30 Sunset Drive to divide one lot into two lots. The lot is currently developed with a single family home without parking. The applicant proposes to develop the two new lots with semi-detached dwellings, with off-street parking. The proposed lots comply with zoning requirements for lot size and frontage in the RA zone. Houses in the RA zone also require two parking spaces. In order to access parking on the proposed lots, a curb cut will need to be installed, which requires that the applicant submit an application to the Directors of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services. Criteria for review of a curb cut include safety and compatibility with the developed block face. At staff's request, the applicant submitted two conceptual plans for parking and curb cuts.



On October 4, 2005, the Planning Commission deferred the application in order to allow the applicant more time to work with staff on the proposed parking and curb cut design, and to discuss the proposal with the neighborhood. Staff hired an architect to explore design options to satisfy both safety and compatibility concerns, and met with T&ES to review these various design options. Staff met with the applicant and community members to discuss the proposal. After consideration of a number of potential design options, staff found that either a full parking reduction or a reduction of a single space for each proposed lot is the solution that would address both safety and compatibility concerns (see Plan E on page 8 of this report). Based on the plans that staff has considered, an application for curb cut will be denied unless in conjunction with a parking reduction special use permit application. The special use permit application will have to be filed in order to develop the lots. The applicant may appeal the determination on the curb cut application to City Council. The fact that a parking reduction will likely accompany the development of houses on the site does not prevent staff from approving the subdivision. Staff recommends approval of the subdivision with conditions.

II. DISCUSSION:

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Loni Czekalski, requests approval for a subdivision of one lot at 30 Sunset Drive, into two lots. The subject property is one lot of record with 70 feet of frontage on Sunset Drive and a total lot area of 5,563 square feet. The property is occupied by a one-story, single-family residence, with no driveway or parking. The owner intends to construct a new semi-detached structure on the properties, with associated off-street parking.

At staff’s request, the applicant provided two conceptual plans of the proposed development which includes the building area, area of disturbance, and curb cut and on-site parking (See Plan A and Plan B on pages 5 and 6). Staff requested proposed elevations, however, the applicant chose not to provide architectural drawings prior to the approval of the subdivision.

COMPLIANCE WITH RA ZONE REGULATIONS

The proposed lots will be 3,036 and 2,527 square feet in area, exceeding the minimum lot area of 1,980 square feet. The houses will be limited to a floor area ratio of 0.75 (resulting in maximum floor areas of 2,277 square feet for Lot 500 and 1,895 square feet for Lot 501). The proposed subdivision, and conceptual development plan, comply with the RA zoning requirements as follows:

RA MINIMUM LOT STANDARDS			
	Required	Lot 500	Lot 501
Lot Size	<u>1,980 square feet</u>	<u>3,036 square feet</u>	<u>2,527 square feet</u>
Lot Width/Frontage	<u>25 feet</u>	<u>40 feet</u>	<u>30 feet</u>
Front Yard	<u>20 feet</u>	<u>20 feet</u>	<u>21.5 feet</u>
Side Yard	<u>1:3; minimum 7 feet</u>	<u>8 feet</u>	<u>8 feet</u>
Rear Yard	<u>1:1; minimum 8 feet</u>	<u>27 feet</u>	<u>20 feet</u>

*Note: The zoning analysis is based on Plan A. Plan B is essentially the same, except that the front yard of Lot 501 is deeper.

The proposed subdivision, and schematic development plan, complies with the RA zone regulations regarding lot requirements and bulk and open space regulations. A variance would be required for the proposed parking area on Lot 501 on Plan A for having more than 50% of the front yard occupied by parking.

SUBDIVISION STANDARDS

Section 11-1710(B) of the Zoning Ordinance requires a subdivision to meet the following standard:

No lot shall be resubdivided in such a manner as to detract from the value of the adjacent property. Lots covered by a resubdivision shall be of substantially the same character as to suitability for residential use, areas, street frontage, alignment to streets and restrictions as other land within the subdivision, particularly with respect to similarly situated lots within the adjoining portions of the original subdivision.

CURB CUT REGULATIONS

Section 8-200(A)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance requires two parking spaces for a two-family dwelling, which would be two spaces for each proposed dwelling on the two new lots. Section 8-200(C)(5)(d) of the Zoning Ordinance requires that within the Rosemont Historic District, access to all parking shall be from an alley or interior court, except that upon finding by the Director of Planning and Zoning that such access is clearly not feasible, an application for a curb cut to provide access may be filed with the Directors of Transportation and Environmental Services and Planning and Zoning.

In this case, the subject property is located in the Rosemont Historic District, and access to the property from an alley or interior court is not feasible. An application for a curb cut to provide access may be filed with the Director of T&ES for review by the Directors of P&Z and T&ES. According to the zoning ordinance:

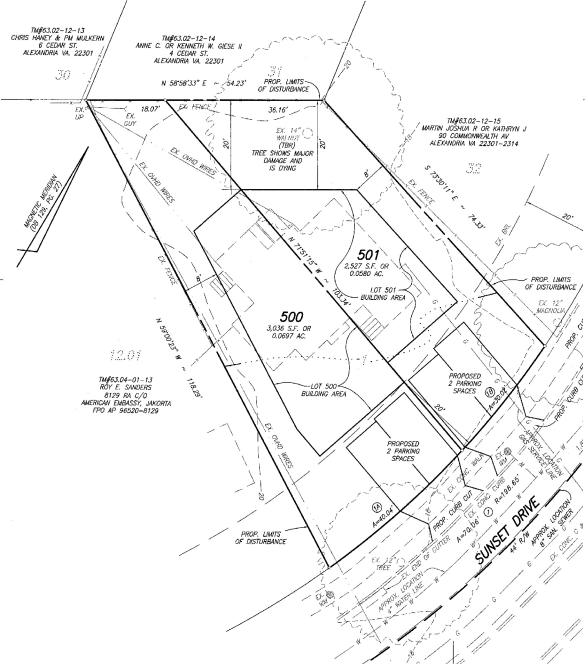
“The directors shall review the application for compliance with the criteria of section 5-2-14(c) of the city code, and for the compatibility of the location and nature of the proposed curb cut and associated parking facility with the character and architectural style of the developed block face.”

The zoning ordinance considers the impact of curb cuts on urban design, and outlines specific criteria for each of the historic districts. Proposed curb cuts in the Parker-Gray District have a similar review criteria as outlined above, and are not permitted in the Old and Historic District.

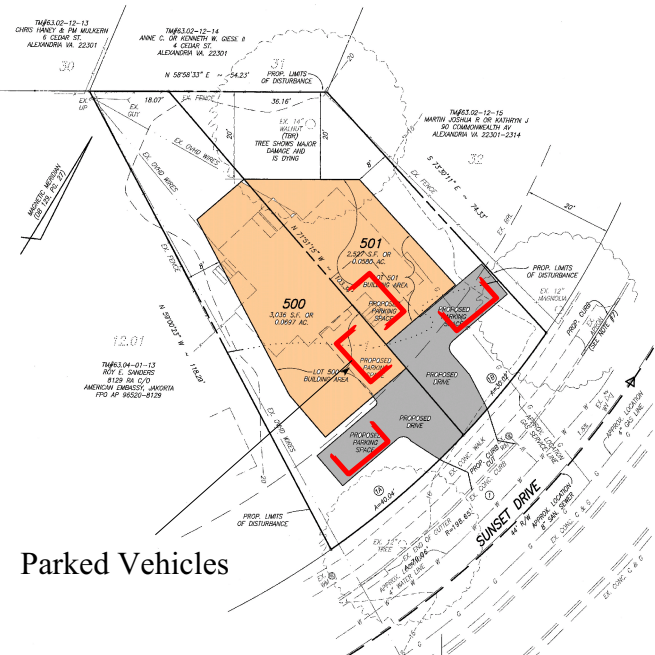
In this case, the subject property is located on a narrow one-way street, at a curve where sight lines are difficult, and in close proximity to the intersection with Commonwealth Avenue, making safety an important consideration and difficult to address. From a design perspective, most of the properties with curb cuts on the developed block face are located along the side property line, with parking either in tandem or at the back of the property. Only one property has parking and curb cuts in the front lawn, which was developed in the 1980's and is inconsistent with the block face and with what staff would support today (28 and 28A Sunset Drive). The remaining dwellings in the block face have open front lawns.

ALTERNATIVE PARKING AND CURB CUT PLANS

At staff's request, the applicant provided a conceptual parking and curb cut scheme as part of the subdivision application (shown here as Plan A). After reviewing the plan, staff found that it was not acceptable, both from a safety and design perspective. The location and configuration of the two driveways on the inside portion of a curve located in close proximity to the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue has poor sight distance which results in a hazardous condition for vehicles backing out onto the street. Staff found that the location and nature of the proposed curb cut and associated parking did not conform with the character and architectural style of the developed block face. Staff met with the applicant to discuss its concerns.



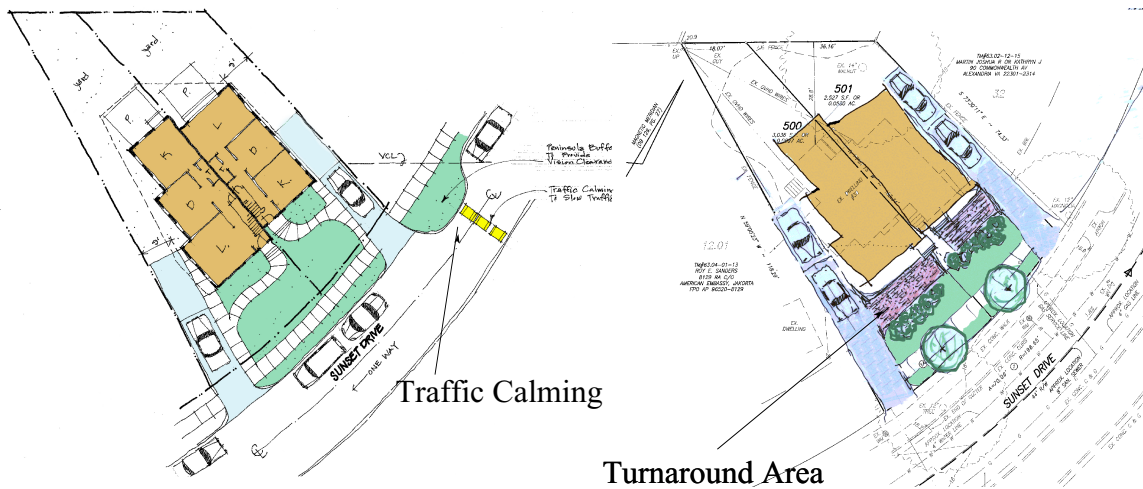
Plan A



Plan B

The applicant provided a subsequent scheme (pictured here as Plan B). The proposal included a single 16-foot wide curb cut for both properties, and front loaded garages and surface parking in the front yard, resulting in a great deal of paving in the front yards of the proposed semi-detached dwellings. The plan depicted the T&ES recommendation that, "The proposed subdivided properties shall be served by joint access with a single driveway entrance not to exceed 16 feet in width. Provision for an on-site turnaround shall be provided to the satisfaction of the Director of T&ES." Although the plan creates a safe condition for this difficult road segment, it is one that is drastically out of character with the street and neighborhood.

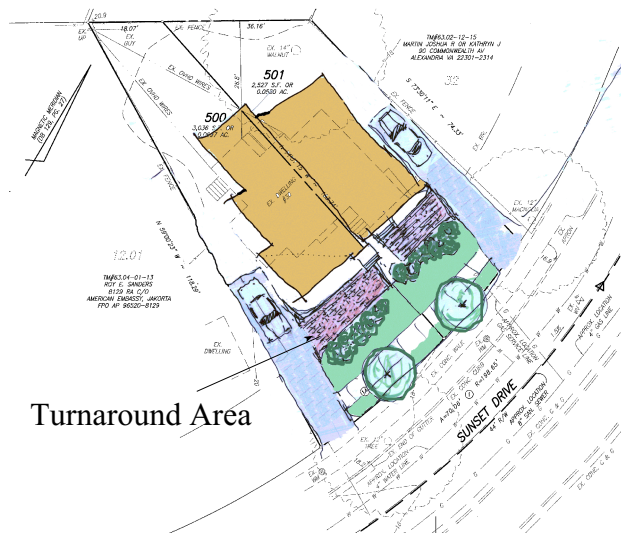
On October 4, 2005, the Planning Commission deferred the case to allow more time to find a parking and access solution. Staff hired an architect to prepare a curb cut and parking plan that would satisfy both the safety and design criteria. The resulting plan included tandem parking, which would require a special use permit, two back out curb cuts, and traffic calming devices to slow traffic and improve sight lines. The plan is pictured here as Plan C. The Plan, while greatly improving the compatibility and design, was not sufficient to meet the safety concerns at this difficult location.



Plan C

Plan D

Staff proposed another plan, labeled here as Plan D, which proposed two curb cuts and tandem parking, which would require a special use permit (for tandem parking), but with an on-site turnaround to prevent backing out on to the street. The turnaround area would be in the form of a pad at the front of each dwelling covered in pavers and screened with landscaping to look like a front patio when not being used as a turnaround. A modification would have to be included in the special use permit to allow for more than 50% of the side yard to be used for parking. This design is closer to addressing design concerns, but from a safety perspective, T&ES found that the turnaround area would likely not be utilized for its intended purpose with two vehicles on the property, making safety still an issue.



While there does not appear to be a solution that satisfies both the safety and compatibility criteria for a curb cut that complies with the zoning requirements for parking, both P&Z and T&ES agree that a full parking reduction at this location would be an acceptable solution. P&Z and T&ES also agree that a modified version of Plan D, depicted here as Plan E, with a parking reduction of a single space for each lot, would be acceptable. Staff expects that a parking reduction Special Use Permit application will be filed in order to proceed with development.

Plan E (acceptable)

ROSEMONT CITIZEN'S ASSOCIATION

On October 6, staff met with the Rosemont Citizen's Association to discuss the case. There were no immediate neighbors at the meeting that staff is aware of. There were several questions including: the age of the existing house, whether the applicant was a long-time resident, what was the design and size of the proposed dwellings, and if the immediate neighbors knew about the case. Staff has had conversations with other area residents on the proposed subdivision who have expressed general concerns about development along Sunset Drive.

CHARACTER OF NEIGHBORHOOD

The subject property is located in the Rosemont Historic District. The District includes homes built in the era between 1908 until World War II, and ranges stylistically from the Arts and Crafts style to Colonial Revival. Contributing dwellings include detached, semi-detached, townhouse, and garden apartment buildings. Brick is the dominant building material, although stucco and face-brick finishes over brick, wood frame, or hollow tile are common. Houses are mostly one and two stories in height, with or without half-story attics. No houses of the contributing period are taller than 2-2.5 stores. Sunset Drive is a mix of buildings, including detached, semi-detached, and garden apartments. The four contributing semi-detached structures on Sunset are two stories, made of brick, have front porches, and are of either Vernacular or Colonial Revival style.

RECENT CURB CUT APPLICATION

On November 17, 2005, Planning and Zoning staff received an application for a curb cut at 30 Sunset Drive. The curb cut is proposed at the center of the lot, with two surface parking spaces side by side in the front yard, to serve the existing residence. Because the curb cut application conflicts with the subdivision application, staff will not process the curb cut request until there has been an action on the subdivision.

MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

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

III. STAFF ANALYSIS:

The proposed subdivision and redevelopment of this infill site, while complying with zoning, poses a challenge for accommodating required parking for the two new lots. The lot currently does not have parking, and to provide parking on the lots, new curb cuts would have to be installed. Because the subject lot is located in the Rosemont Historic District, an application for curb cut must be considered by both P&Z and T&ES, and the review criteria includes both safety and compatibility. Staff considered several plans to address the criteria outlined in the ordinance. The only solution that complies with the zoning ordinance criteria would be a parking reduction, which requires a special use permit, and which staff will support if it is a full reduction or if consistent with Plan E in this report.

The fact that a parking reduction will likely accompany the development of houses on this site does not prevent staff from approving the subdivision. The proposed lot sizes and frontage complies with the RA zoning, as do the setbacks as depicted on the applicant's conceptual plans (Plans A and B). The subdivision complies with the subdivision criteria as outlined in Section 11-1710 (B) of the zoning ordinance.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the subdivision. It has included standard subdivision conditions, and has included a condition requiring the applicant to submit a curb cut application and a special use permit for a parking reduction. In addition, staff has included a condition that the design of the proposed dwellings include elements compatible with the character of the neighborhood, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning.

With these conditions, staff recommends approval.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. The final subdivision plat shall comply with the requirements of Section 11-1700 of the Zoning Ordinance. (P&Z)
2. A PLOT PLAN showing all improvements and alterations to the site must be approved by T&ES prior to issuance of a building permit. The applicant is advised that the following is required for the plot plan approval:
 - a. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity.
 - b. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design.
 - c. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet. The applicant shall post an erosion and sediment control bond prior to release of the plot plan.
 - d. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan.
 - e. City Code Section 8-1-22 requires that roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (T&ES)
3. In its design of any proposed dwellings on the newly created lots, the applicant shall include elements compatible with the character of the neighborhood, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning. (P&Z)
4. The applicant shall submit an application for any proposed curb cut for approval by the Directors of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services, and/or an application for Special Use Permit for a parking reduction. (P&Z)

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director;
Richard Josephson, Deputy Director;
Valerie Peterson, Urban Planner.

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

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- F-1 T&ES does not support separate driveways for each of the properties as illustrated on the plan [*Plan A*] because the location and configuration of two driveways on the inside portion of a curve located in close proximity to the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue has poor sight distance which results in a hazardous condition for vehicles backing out onto the street.
- R-1 A PLOT PLAN showing all improvements and alterations to the site must be approved by T&ES prior to issuance of a building permit. The applicant is advised that the following is required for the plot plan approval:
- a. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity.
 - b. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design.
 - c. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet. The applicant shall post an erosion and sediment control bond prior to release of the plot plan.
 - d. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan.
 - e. City Code Section 8-1-22 requires that roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (T&ES)
- C-1 All utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3)
- C-2 Pay sanitary sewer tap fee prior to issuance of a building permit (or with release of the approved plot plan). (Sec. 5-6-25.1)
- C-3 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)

- C-4 Roof drains and sub-surface drains shall be connected to the city storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. (Sec. 8-1-22)
- C-5 Per City Ordinance No. 3176, requests for new driveway aprons, unless approved at public hearing as part of a related item, must be accompanied by an adjacent **Property Owners Acknowledgment** form.
- C-6 Change in point of attachment or removal of existing overhead utility services will require undergrounding or a variance. (Sec. 5-3-3)
- C-7 All drainage facilities must be designed to the satisfaction of T&ES. Drainage divide maps and computations must be provided for approval.
- C-8 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.
- C-9 The applicant must comply with the Article XIII of the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance, which includes requirements for storm water pollutant load reduction, treatment of the water quality volume default, and storm water quantity management.
- C-10 The applicant must comply with the City of Alexandria, Erosion and Sediment Control Code, Section 5, Chapter 4. This includes naming a Responsible Land Disturber on the Erosion and Sediment Control sheets prior to engaging in land disturbing activities in accordance with Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law.
- C-11 All required permits from Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, Virginia Marine Resources must be in place for all project construction and mitigation work prior to release of the final site plan. This includes the state requirement for a VSMP permit for land disturbing activities greater than 2500 SF.

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 Subdivision of this property shall occur after demolition of the existing property, otherwise, the applicant shall modify the existing structure to comply with the USBC as a result of the new interior lot line.

Police Department:

F-1 The Police Department has no objections to the subdivision of the land for the purpose of subdividing the property into two regulation conforming lots.

Historic Alexandria Commission (Archaeology):

F-1 No comments.

Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (Arborist):

F-1 No comments.

SUB #2005-0008
30 Sunset Drive

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