

Docket Item #8
SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2006-0058

Planning Commission Meeting
September 7, 2006

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for a special use permit to expand an existing outdoor garden center.

APPLICANT: Carla Thomas and Randee Wilson d/b/a Nature By Design

LOCATION: 300 Calvert Avenue

ZONE: I/Industrial

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

SITE GRAPHIC
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE

I. DISCUSSION

REQUEST

The applicants, Carla Thomas and Randee Wilson d/b/a Nature By Design, requests special use permit approval to expand an existing outdoor garden center located at 300 Calvert Street.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property is one lot of record with approximately 57 feet of frontage on Calvert Avenue, 98 feet of depth and a total lot area of 12,140 square feet. The site is developed with a two-story converted house in the front and a carriage house and subject garden center in the rear of the lot. The western portion of the lot has been occupied by a storage lot, but is currently vacant. Access to the property is from Calvert Avenue.



The surrounding area is occupied by a mix of residential and commercial uses. Immediately to the north is a residential neighborhood. To the south and east are commercial uses. To the west is the Mount Jefferson Park and Greenway parkland, formerly the W&OD.

BACKGROUND

On September 20, 2005, City Council granted Special Use Permit #2005-0076 for the operation of an outdoor garden center. Staff has since visited the subject property to determine if the business was in compliance with the conditions of its special use permit. Staff found no violations of the special use permit. Staff has received no complaints regarding the existing operation.



PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to expand the area of the outdoor garden center to occupy the western portion of the lot that was most recently used for a storage yard. The area of the expansion is covered with gravel, and no new construction is planned. The expanded area will allow for additional retail display and parking spaces. No changes to the nature of the operation are proposed. The existing operation includes the retail sale of trees, shrubs,

perennials, vines and annuals, as well as a limited number of bagged organic soils, fertilizers and amendments.

Patrons: The applicant anticipates a gradual increase in the number of patrons from current levels (about ten per day on peak days, which are Saturdays and Sundays in April, May, September and October, and four to five patrons per day on all other days) to about twenty per day on peak days, and five to ten per day on all other days.

PARKING

For purposes of calculating the parking requirement, the retail ratio was applied to the square footage of the structure. According to Section 8-200 (A)(16) of the Zoning Ordinance, a retail use requires 1.1 parking spaces for every 200 square feet. An outdoor garden center with 400 square feet of indoor space will be required to provide 2.2 off-street parking spaces. According to the applicant, only half of the 400 square feet will be used for retail, and the other half for an office, which results in a lower parking requirement. Three parking spaces are provided on site.

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The subject property is located in the Industrial zone. Section 4-1203 of the Zoning Ordinance allows an outdoor garden center in the Industrial zone only with a special use permit.

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

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff supports the applicant's plan to expand the existing outdoor garden center. The proposed expansion will improve the property by occupying an area that has been used as a storage yard for several years. The use has very little impact on the area as it has few patrons, has limited hours of operation, and consists of outdoor displays of plant material. There have been no complaints regarding the existing operation.

Staff recommends approval of the special use permit.

III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

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

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
2. The hours of operation of the outdoor garden center shall be limited to 7:00 a.m to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
3. The applicant shall post the hours of operation at the entrance of the business. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
4. The applicant shall encourage its employees to use mass transit or to carpool when traveling to and from work, by posting information regarding DASH and METRO routes, the location where fare passes for transit are sold, and advertising of carpooling opportunities. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
5. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
6. The applicant shall provide a screening fence and landscaping to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning & Zoning. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
7. Any lighting shall be shielded to avoid glare and excessive spillover lighting onto adjacent properties. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
8. Storage of materials shall be kept in a neat and orderly fashion within the property lines. Storage materials shall not be visible from right-of-way or adjacent properties. No storage shall be permitted in the public right-of-way. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)
9. The applicant shall provide documentation from the adjacent property owner at 300 Swann Avenue to allow public access to the parking area through the paved portion of the adjacent property and to allow the placement of “No Parking” signs to ensure the area remains clear during business hours. This documentation shall be submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning and “No Parking” signs shall be installed to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning prior to approval of the business license. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)

10. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building, and no amplified sound shall be audible at the property line. (T&ES)-(SUP#2005-0076)
11. All waste products including, but not limited to organic compounds shall be disposed of in accordance with all local, state and federal ordinances or regulations and not be discharged to the sanitary or storm sewers, or be discharged onto the ground. (T&ES) (SUP#2005-0076)
12. The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security survey for the business and a robbery awareness program for all employees. (Police) (SUP#2005-0076)
13. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit after it has been operational for one year, and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community; (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review, or (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z) (SUP#2005-0076)

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Richard Josephson, Deputy Director;
Valerie Peterson, Urban Planner.

Staff Note: In accordance with section 11-506(c) of the zoning ordinance, construction or operation shall be commenced and diligently and substantially pursued within 18 months of the date of granting of a special use permit by City Council or the special use permit shall become void.

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- C-1 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.
- R-1 Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building, and no amplified sounds shall be audible at the property line.

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 No comment.

Health Department:

- F-1 No comment.

Police Department:

- F-1 The Police Department has no objections to the business expansion.

SUP #2006-0058
300 Calvert Avenue

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