

Docket Item #10
CITY CHARTER, SECTION 9.06
CASE #2007-0002

Planning Commission Meeting
April 3, 2007

ISSUE: Consideration of a proposal by the City of Alexandria to acquire the property at 48 South Early Street, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9.06 of the City Charter.

LOCATION: 48 South Early Street

ZONE: R-8/Single Family Residential

DISCUSSION:

The City has entered into an agreement to purchase the property at 48 South Early Street, listed on the City's Open Space Pocket Park list approved by Council on February 24, 2007. Section 9.06 of the City's Charter requires that the Planning Commission approve any acquisition or sale of public land. The Planning Commission is charged with ensuring that any such acquisition, sale or change is consistent with the City's Master Plan.

When acquired, this will be the ninth parcel purchased by the City since 2006 with open space funds as part of its Open Space Master Plan. The eight other parcels were subject to 9.06 actions in 2006. Three of the previously approved parcels are located on Strand Street, four parcels along Four Mile Run on Mount Vernon Avenue and one parcel on Raleigh Avenue. The Planning Commission voted to approve each of those acquisitions, finding such acquisitions consistent with the City's Master Plan.

Property Description:

The property under consideration is located at 48 South Early Street, south of Duke Street. The 17,424 square foot property is zoned R-8 and is occupied by a single-family dwelling constructed in 1923. The building was most recently used as a home based office.



A small perennial stream with an engineered channel bisects the parcel, extending from the northwest to the southwest corners of the property. The entire property is within a Resource Protection Area (RPA) and a flood plan.

Alexandria Master Plan:

The City's Open Space Plan, adopted in 2003 as a chapter of the City's Master Plan, defined fifteen goals as the framework for open space protection and preservation. One such goal identified stream valleys and other environmentally sensitive areas as significant open space, and charged the newly appointed Open Space Steering Committee (OSSC) with identifying and recommending such sites for protection. In furtherance of the Plan, City Council approved the incorporation of a Pocket Park program in March, 2005. A pocket park is defined as follows:

Pocket (block) parks are intended to meet the needs of residents or workers within about a tenth of a mile. Pocket parks are less than 20,000 square feet, with no minimum size. No parking is needed. Pocket parks may include such elements as small scale play equipment, public gardens, seating areas, passive open space, landscaped areas, important natural features, or trees.

On February 24, 2007, Council approved a list of potential pocket park sites reviewed by the OSSC. The property at 48 South Early Street was identified as an environmentally sensitive area and listed as a potential pocket park site for immediate discussion. Acquisition of this property for use as a pocket park will thus enhance the City's ability to meet the goals of the Open Space Plan.

Analysis:

The proposed purchase of this pocket park property represents a significant commitment by the City to the implementation of the Open Space Plan, and to Council's Strategic Plan, which envisions serious efforts to ensure a quality of life for all its citizens. This property will also be the first pocket park acquisition since approval of the Pocket Park program. The City will be financing the acquisition of the property with funds derived from City Council's dedication of one percent of the City's real estate tax rate for open space acquisition. As part of the Pocket Park Program, City Council approved a goal of using a minimum of 20% of the Open Space Fund for the acquisition of pocket park sites.

Future Use of the Property:

After the City purchases the property, Staff will initiate the park planning and design process. The public will be invited to participate in this design process, with review from the Park and Recreation Commission. Demolition and removal of the existing building will be a component of this plan.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the acquisition of the subject property as consistent with the Master Plan, under section 9.06 of the Charter.

STAFF: Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Rich Josephson, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning
Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator