

Docket Item #9
DEVELOPMENT SITE PLAN#2007-0030
BEVERLEY HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH

Planning Commission Meeting
December 4, 2007

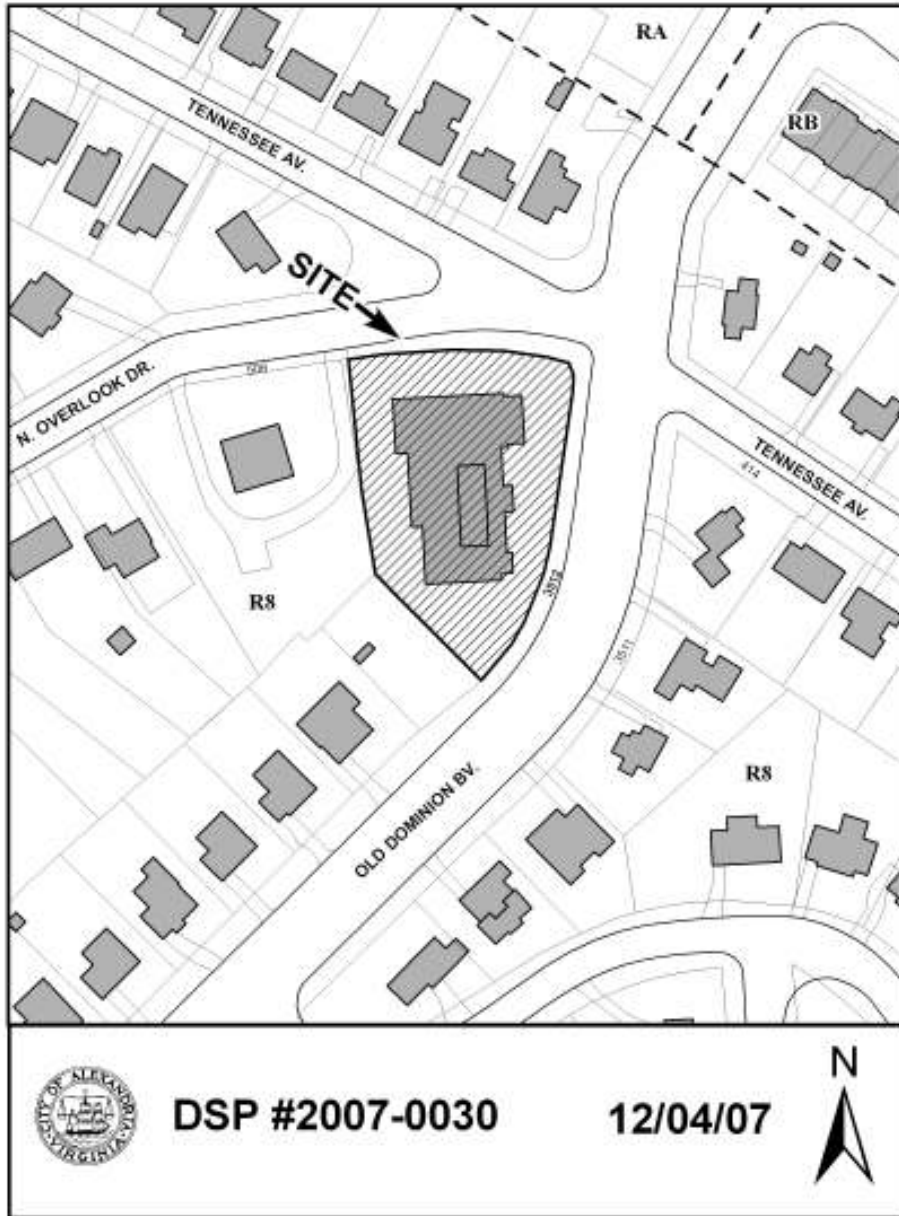
REQUEST: Consideration of a request for a development site plan to construct a four space parking lot.

APPLICANT: Trustees of Beverley Hills Community United Methodist Church, by Robert S. Larson, Larson Koenig Architects

LOCATION: 3512 Old Dominion Boulevard

ZONE: R-8/Residential

3512 Old Dominion Boulevard
Beverly Hills Church Parking



I. SUMMARY

A. Overview:

The Beverly Hills Community Methodist Church is requesting development site plan approval to construct a church parking lot for handicapped and disabled congregants, visitors, and guests. The proposed surface parking lot will accommodate four parking spaces (one handicapped space and three spaces for the disabled) and require a new driveway curb cut off North Overlook Drive. The proposed parking lot will remove a portion of the lawn, two trees and bushes located along the north side of the church's sanctuary which fronts North Overlook Drive. The lawn area consists of several mature trees and bushes including a concrete walk that provides access to the rear of the church sanctuary. The lawn area in question has been associated with the church's landscape setting since 1954. The lawn and landscape frames the pastoral setting of the sanctuary when viewed from the public streets.

A posted handicapped parking sign now erected on North Overlook Drive facing the lawn area designates three on-street parking spaces for use by church parishioners. A concrete sidewalk near these on-street parking spaces connects to a church sidewalk that leads to church sanctuary's rear entrance. Parishioners state the sidewalk is at an incline and difficult to navigate particularly for a person in a wheelchair. An existing handicapped incline is located near the sidewalk, however, it is steep and narrow to navigate.

The approvals requested by the church consist of the following:

- site plan approval for four (4) surface parking spaces for the handicapped and disabled.
- administrative approval from Transportation and Environmental Services to construct a curb cut from North Overlook Drive to serve the proposed parking lot.

II. BACKGROUND:

A. Site and Historic Context

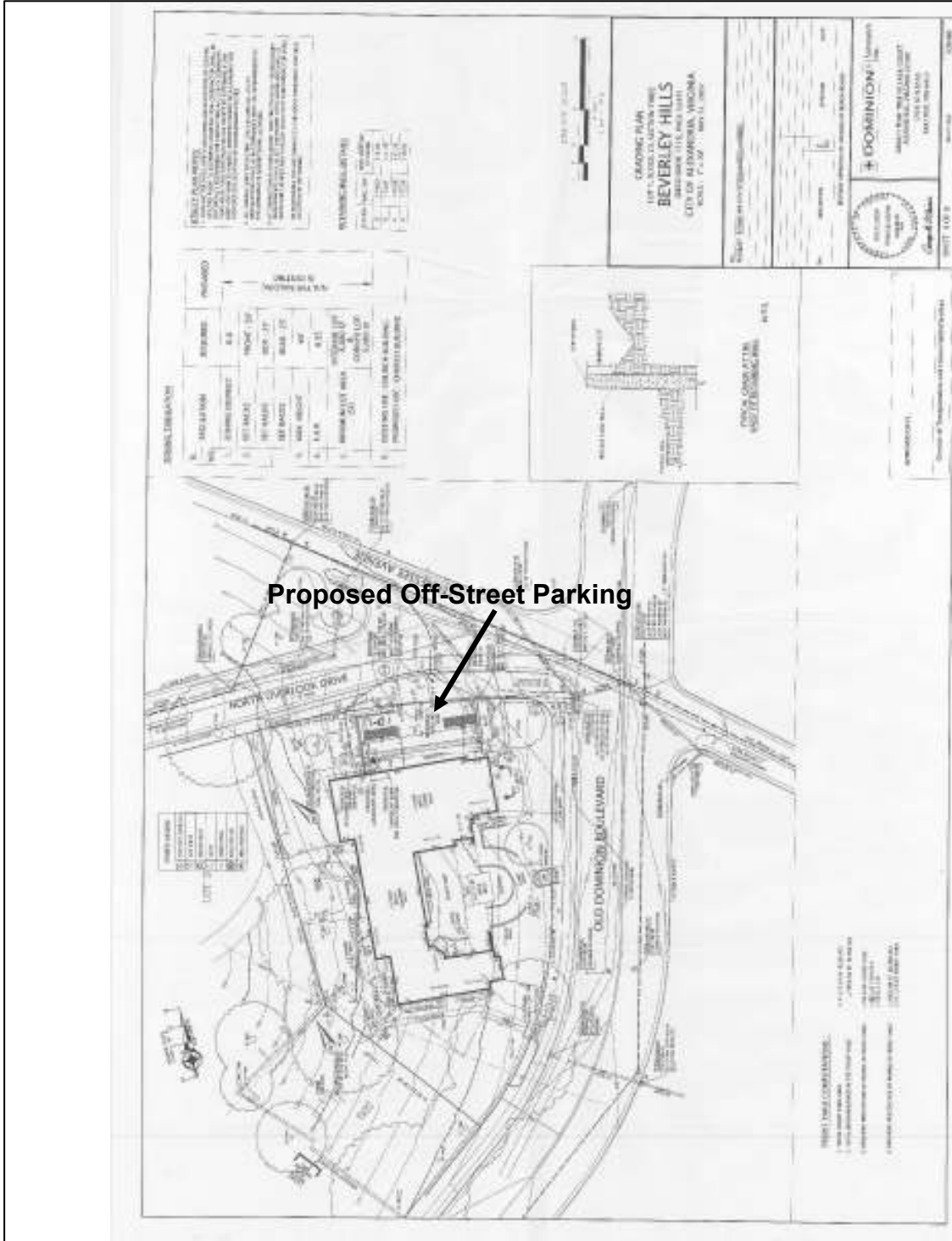
The Beverly Hills Community Methodist church was built in 1938 and the present sanctuary added later in 1954. The church occupies a slightly irregular shaped corner



lot comprised of two legal lots totaling .67 acres (29,310 square feet) which fronts Old Dominion Boulevard to the east and North Overlook Drive and Tennessee Avenue to the north. The lot to the south of the church is used as a playground for the Beverley Hills Preschool. The church and preschool are separate entities and not affiliated with the other.

The main entrance to the church sanctuary faces Old Dominion Boulevard. The church building, primarily the sanctuary, sits prominently on a slight hill near the corner of the lot that faces Old Dominion Boulevard, North Overlook Drive and Tennessee Avenue. The church's location at this intersection establishes a significant architectural presence when traveling on Old Dominion Boulevard and entering the Beverley Hills and North Ridge neighborhoods. The existing lawn area along the sanctuary contributes to church's presence.

3512 Old Dominion Boulevard
Beverly Hills Church Parking



Church Parking Plan

In August 2006, the church received City approval to construct new exterior stairs at the main entrance of the church, along with ramps and walkways (BLD#2006-01734). The work has been completed. As part of the original building permit the applicant included plans to construct the off-street parking area now before the Planning

Commission. As part of the approval process the church also filed an application for a driveway apron on North Overlook Drive to serve the proposed parking lot. Upon receiving the curb cut application, City staff determined that the church required an administrative plot plan (or grading plan) because less than 2,500 square feet of ground area was being disturbed. The church subsequently filed a plot plan depicting the proposed parking area facing North Overlook Drive.

When the plot plan was reviewed by staff it was found that the proposed surface parking lot would alter the existing grade on the subject lawn area above three feet. While only a small portion of the northeast corner of the surface parking lot alters grade in excess of three feet, any alteration of grade above three feet triggers a site plan requiring a Planning Commission hearing.

III. MASTER PLAN - ZONING

The church is zoned R-8, residential and is identified in the North Ridge Small Area Plan for residential low land use. A church is a permitted use in a single family residential zoning district.

IV. CHURCH PARKING PLAN

The church proposes to remove approximately 35 feet by 67 feet of lawn area (2,345 square feet) on the north side of the church to construct four off-street parking spaces for the handicapped and disabled. A new driveway and curb cut is proposed facing North Overlook Drive. The new driveway is approximately 17 feet wide and descends gradually to the level parking lot. A new planter will be built along the sanctuary's north wall to compensate for the proposed change in grade. A sidewalk combined with a small handicapped ramp totaling 100 feet in length connects the proposed parking lot to the main entrance of the church chapel. The existing rear entrance to the sanctuary can also be served by the proposed parking lot.

Under the proposed plan, two existing crab apple trees will be removed. The church plans to replace the two crab apple trees with three flowering cherry trees, low screening shrubs along the length of the parking lot facing North Overlook Drive as well as a variety of plants in the new planter. Two lights will be installed at the driveway entrance, including a small freestanding sign labeled private parking for church guests with mobility impairments. The parking lot will be secured when not in use by a chain across the proposed driveway. The new parking lot entrance curb cut will result in the loss of two on-street parking spaces on North Overlook Drive, including spaces now designated handicapped and disabled parking. The church has indicated they plan to either stain or color the concrete parking surface to minimize the visual impact from the street.

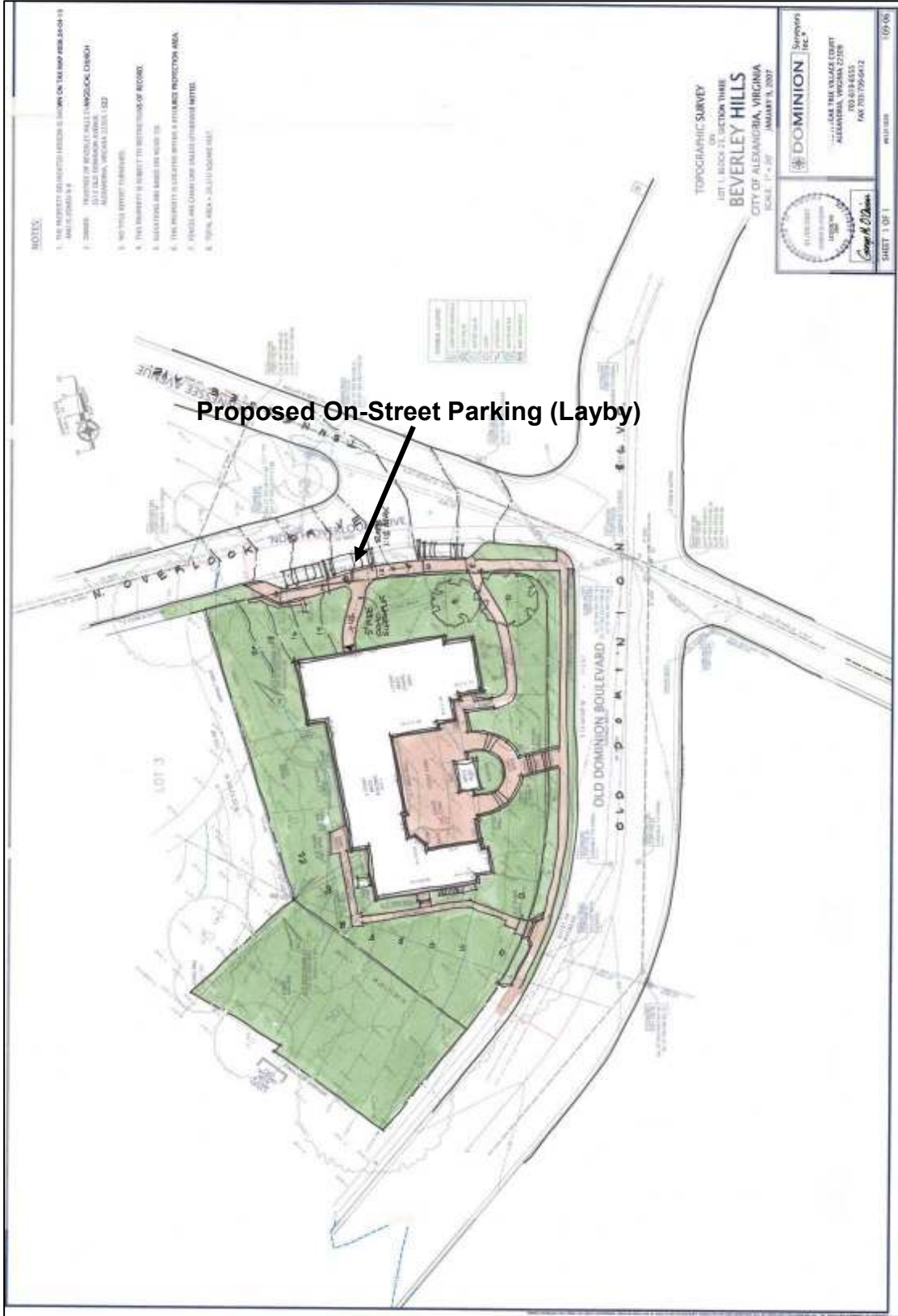
V. ALTERNATIVE PARKING PLANS

City staff has prepared two alternative parking plans that address the need for parking for disabled and handicapped congregants without removing the lawn area on the north east side of the church facing North Overlook Drive. The two alternatives consist of: (1) a street layby along North Overlook Drive and, (2) designated parking for handicapped and disabled congregants at grade on Old Dominion Boulevard near the main church entrance.

Alternative #1 North Overlook Drive Parking Layby. The proposed street layby consists of excavating the portion of City right-of-way along North Overlook Drive and removal of a small strip of church lawn to accommodate four street parking spaces to serve the handicapped and disabled. A new wider sidewalk parallel to the street spaces would be built. The grade of the new sidewalk is at the minimum grade necessary (1:12) to accommodate wheel chair access. The new City sidewalk would connect to the church sidewalk that provides access to the church sanctuary. The parking spaces comply with the dimensions required for a handicapped or disabled parking space.

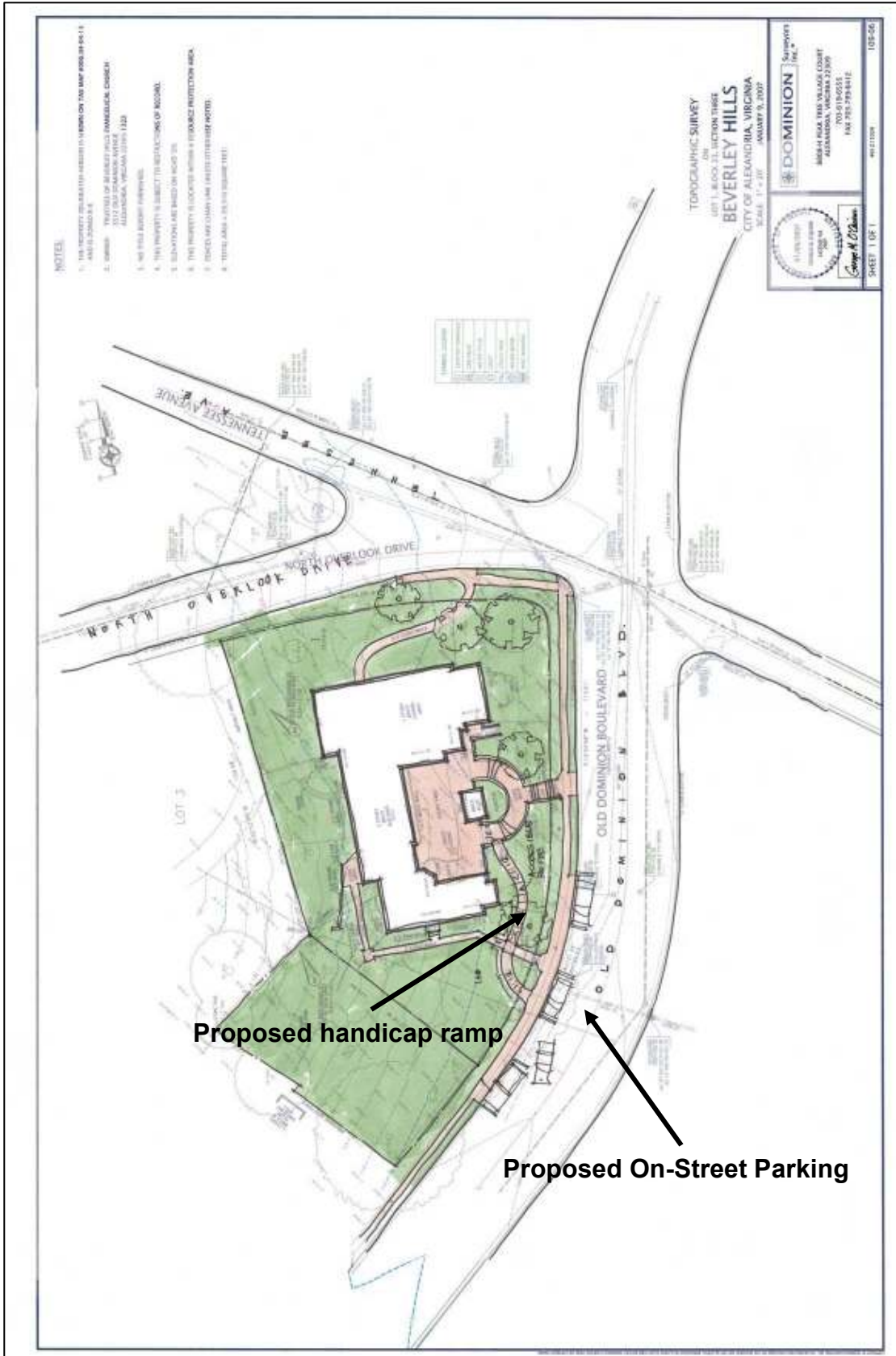
Alternative #2: Old Dominion Boulevard Handicapped/Disabled Parking Spaces and Handicapped Ramp. This proposed alternative consists of designating four on-street parking spaces at grade near the Beverley Hills Preschool Entrance. A handicapped ramp with a modest incline would be constructed that connects to the main landing in front of the church's main entrance. No trees would be removed. This proposal requires the existing Beverly Hills Preschool front gate, fence and stairs to be redesigned with a minimal loss of play ground space. Approximately 35 feet by 15 feet of the playground area would be removed to accommodate the new handicapped ramp, relocated preschool gate and fence. The play area removed to accommodate the ramp totals 525 square feet. The new preschool entrance will enable a child with disabilities to more easily access the playground. The proposed ramp has been designed with a modest incline and three landings along its path to reach the main church entrance. The proposed handicapped ramp is approximately 75 feet long as measured from the new preschool entrance to the main church entrance.

3512 Old Dominion Boulevard
Beverly Hills Church Parking



Parking Alternative # 1

3512 Old Dominion Boulevard
Beverly Hills Church Parking



Parking Alternative # 2

VI. COMMUNITY

In early September 2007, City staff and church representatives, including parishioners and neighbors, met at Beverley Hills Church to walk the area of the proposed parking lot and to provide comments. Shortly thereafter, Church officials attended the North Ridge Citizens Association's (NRCA) monthly meeting to present their plan as well as the City's alternative street layby plan. On October 8, 2007, the NRCA unanimously passed a motion expressing support for the Church's parking plan. The NRCA explained the board's decision was based on "schematically and with oral conditions to ensure the safety and security of citizens in connection with the proposed lot".

On November 17, 2007, a meeting was held at the church with City staff, church officials, North Ridge Citizens Association members, local residents and Planning Commissioner John Komoroske to discuss the church parking proposal and the City's two alternative proposals as well as to walk the church property to discuss pros and cons of each proposal.

A. Community Issues

Some neighborhood residents have expressed the following issues in regards to the proposed church parking lot.

Issue: North Overlook Drive, up hill from the proposed parking lot driveway, is a "blind" curve. A vehicle exiting from the proposed parking lot onto North Overlook will not be visible to downhill traffic until beyond the curve.

City Response: The City's Traffic Division has evaluated the proposed location of the driveway apron in the context of Tennessee Avenue and North Overlook Drive and determined the selected location will not hinder the existing traffic pattern. City staff based its analysis in part on the limited use of the parking lot (mainly on Sundays and other church events).

Issue: Drivers exiting from the proposed parking lot will exit directly into an intersection where three streets converge (North Overlook Drive, Tennessee Avenue and Old Dominion Boulevard).

City Response: The City believes that the proposed parking lot location will not interfere with traffic converging from North Overlook Drive, Tennessee Avenue and Old Dominion Boulevard. The City will evaluate if traffic calming improvements are warranted where North Overlook Drive and Tennessee Avenue converge. Such improvements may include traffic islands, speed bumps and additional traffic signs.

Issue: The proposed parking lot will have a negative affect on the value of nearby homes.

City Response: There is no evidence that a small, limited use church parking lot has a negative impact on nearby property values.

Issue: The proposed parking lot will have an affect on the Chesapeake Bay water shed.

City Response: The church is required and has submitted plans that address water run-off from the parking lot in conformance with the Chesapeake Bay regulations.

Issue: The proposed parking lot will destroy green space at a prominent location and gateway to the community.

City Response: The City agrees that the existing lawn area contributes to the character and pastoral setting of the church and its landscaped presence when entering the neighborhood.

Issue: The parking lot may be used by persons to congregate resulting in an increase in noise and litter and disturbance to nearby properties.

City Response: The church plans to secure the lot when not in use and post “no trespassing” signs.

B. Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities

Staff forwarded the church’s parking plan as well as the City’s two alternative on-street parking plans to the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) for their comments.

On October 10, 2007, the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) voted unanimously to support the accessibility parking plan submitted by the Beverley Hills Methodist Church.

Staff forwarded copies of the City’s two alternative plans for comments by ACPD. Both alternatives rely on the provision of on-street parking. The first alternative, providing on-street parking on North Overlook Drive, was believed to be too challenging for wheel chair access and transferring to vehicles due to the street rise and parking space length. The second alternative, with on-street parking on Old Dominion Boulevard, was viewed as having slightly less slope to negotiate the proposed ramp but was also believed to be too steep to gain access to the church itself.

(Refer to Memorandum from Amanda Babcock, Chair of Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities).

VII. STAFF ANALYSIS

The challenge with this request is to balance the needs of the church for parking for its handicapped and disabled congregants with the impact that a church parking lot may have on the larger community. The Beverley Hills Church has been a major community landmark for nearly 70 years. The community recognizes the church's architectural presence and significance as a landmark structure, partly due to its location and views from the adjacent streets. The church is situated to take advantage of the topography and views from three major streets. Although the main entrance of the church sanctuary faces Old Dominion Boulevard, the church chapel sits prominently on a slight hill near the corner of the lot that faces Old Dominion Boulevard, North Overlook Drive and Tennessee Avenue.

The existing lawn area along the sanctuary side contributes to the church's pastoral setting. Without the side lawn area, the sanctuary and church will lose a significant characteristic that has been long associated with the church and recognized by the community for years. The proposed parking lot will result in a loss of nearly 2,350 square feet of open space and impervious area to gain four parking spaces. The loss of significant open space coupled with the loss of on-street parking spaces for a new curb does not appear to staff as an ideal trade off in return for the provision of four off-street parking spaces. In order to minimize the loss of landscape and historic open space, staff offered two alternative approaches that will meet the church's need for handicapped and disabled parking.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Staff supports the provision of parking for handicapped and disabled congregants for the Beverley Hills Church. However, staff believes the appropriate and least detrimental impact on the church is to designate on Old Dominion Boulevard four parking spaces for the handicapped and disabled near the preschool entrance and construct a handicapped ramp to the main entrance of church.

Alternatively, staff recommends construction of a street layby on North Overlook Drive reworking the sidewalk on the public right-of-way to connect with the church's existing sidewalk and ramp to the main sanctuary.

Alternatively, if the Planning Commission wishes to approve the proposed church parking area facing North Overlook Drive, staff would recommend approval subject to the following conditions.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION/CONDITIONS

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

1. The church will secure the parking lot when not in use to prevent trespassing. (P&Z)
2. The parking lot surface shall either be colored or stained concrete to minimize its visibility from the street and neighboring homes to the satisfaction of the Department of Planning and Zoning. (P&Z)
3. Pursuant to the submitted landscape plan that replaces two existing trees and new shrubs along the parking lot facing North Overlook Drive, the church will maintain these trees and shrubs in good condition at all times or replace them. (P&Z)
4. The church will limit the size of any sign on the parking lot to 18 inches by 24 inches and place only sign at the entrance of the driveway. (P&Z)
5. The applicant shall attach a copy of the final released site plan to each building permit document application and be responsible for insuring that the building permit drawings are consistent and in compliance with the final released site plan prior to review and approval of the building permit by the Departments of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services. (P&Z)
6. Extend the existing sidewalk on North Overlook Drive up to Old Dominion Boulevard. (T&ES)
7. Per City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines, provide a MAC-ISA species rating inventory for vegetation to be removed. (RP&CA)
8. On demolition, sediment and erosion control and site plan, provide tree protection in compliance with City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines, for existing vegetation to remain. (RP&CA)
9. Retaining wall finish and materials shall be constructed and specified to the satisfaction of the Directors of Planning & Zoning, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities and Transportation & Environmental Services. An ornamental metal safety barrier shall be used atop the wall and placed a location of all handrails required by code. (RP&CA)
10. Provide visual triangle at entrance apron of proposed parking area. Demonstrate that proposed sign is not in conflict. (RP&CA)

11. Provide a landscape plan that is prepared and sealed by a Landscape Architect certified to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia. (RP&CA)
12. Provide a landscape plan in compliance with City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines-as amended in April, 2007. The plan shall be developed to the satisfaction of the Directors of Planning & Zoning, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities and Transportation & Environmental Services and include the following modifications to the submitted information. (RP&CA)
 - A. Provide Crown Area Coverage calculations for existing and proposed conditions.
 - B. Provide required planting notes in compliance with City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines.
 - C. Provide planting symbols that are graphically consistent with City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines.
 - D. Provide size and height specification for all proposed plantings.
 - E. Provide appropriate plant specifications for designated species.
For example, Edward Goucher Glossy Abelia is a shrub, and is not specified as 6-7 foot Balled and Burlapped. Clematis is a vine, and is not specified as 3-3.5 inches in caliper.
 - F. All disturbed or grass areas shall be sodded.
 - G. Provide an evergreen parking screen hedge continuous along the perimeter of the proposed parking area in compliance with City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines.
 - H. Reconcile planting notes to ensure coordination with planting details.
 - I. Substitute Prunus species with large shade tree.
 - J. Indicate all planting bed lines.
13. Provide a site lighting plan to the satisfaction of the Directors of Planning & Zoning, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities and Transportation & Environmental Services that includes photometric (fc) calculations for all existing and proposed lights, building mounted lights and street lights. (RP&CA)
14. Provide details of all proposed light fixtures. (RP&CA)
15. All light pole footings and foundations shall be concealed from view. (RP&CA)
16. Provide details for any site graphics/signs/logos that will be illuminated. (RP&CA)

STAFF: Faroll Hammer, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Rich Josephson, Deputy Director,
Rich Baier, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services,
Peter Leiberg, Zoning Manager

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.

CITY DEPARTMENT CODE COMMENTS

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

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- F-1 The Plan was previously being reviewed as a Plot Plan; however, it is currently being reviewed as a Site Plan. (Engineering)
- F-2 The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) has reviewed the current plan as a Concept. (Engineering)
- F-3 If the Church accepts the recommendations of the T&ES department as described below to provide four handicap parking on North Overlook Drive then resubmit the plan for additional improvements and further review. (Engineering)

Alexandria Sanitation

- F-1 No comments.

Code Enforcement:

No comments.

Health Department:

No comments.

Historic Alexandria (Archaeology):

- F-1 There is low potential for significant archaeological resources to be disturbed by this project. No archaeological action is required.

Parks & Recreation (Arborist):

- F-1 It appears that the parking proposal can be accommodated by restriping and minor reconfiguration of on-street parking, thereby avoiding unnecessary expense and reduction of pervious area.
- F-2 It appears that a majority of the proposed plantings are not associated with the proposed parking area or building access.

3512 Old Dominion Boulevard
Beverly Hills Church Parking

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