

Docket Item #2  
SUBDIVISION #2008-0002

Planning Commission Meeting  
July 1, 2008

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for subdivision.

**APPLICANT:** Sophie Development, LLC

**STAFF:** Richard W. Bray  
Richard.bray@alexandriava.gov

**LOCATION:** 714 Wythe Street

**ZONE:** OC/Office Commercial

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**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.



**SUB #2008-0002**

**07/01/08**



**I. DISCUSSION**

REQUEST

The applicant, Sophie Development, LLC, requests approval to resubdivide two lots at 714 Wythe Street with variations to lot width and side yard setbacks for both properties and minimum lot size for proposed lot #1.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The existing lots have a total frontage of 43 feet on Wythe Street, a maximum depth of 136 feet and 4,902 square feet of lot area. The site is developed with a surface parking lot. A ten foot public alley surrounds the property. The property is located in the Alexandria Old & Historic District.

BACKGROUND

The applicant has been investigating with staff the various options for developing this property for a number of years. The development options have included an office building, a multi unit condominium development and the current proposal of two semi detached single family residences. Staff encouraged the applicant to choose a development that would make the best use of the subject property with the least impact on the community.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to resubdivide the existing lots to provide equal frontage on Wythe Street for the purpose of constructing two semi detached dwellings on the newly created lots. The resulting lots would be unequal in size, with lot #1 having 2,240 square feet and lot #2 having 2,662 square feet. The new houses will be compliant with the OC zoning regulations with respect to rear yard setback, parking, floor area ratio and height. The houses will be built on the front property line, in keeping with the development in the neighborhood and therefore the houses would meet the prevailing setback. The open space requirement for the lots will be met with a combination of ground level open space and improved rooftops. Lot #1 will have 549 square feet of open space at ground level and lot #2 will have 1,065 square feet of open space at ground level. Lot #2 is compliant with regard to lot size. The applicant seeks variations to the zoning ordinance for the following requirements:

	Lot #1	Lot #2
Minimum Lot Size	<b>Req. 2,500 s.f. / Prop. 2,240 s.f.</b>	Req. 2,500 s.f. / Prop. 2,662 s.f.
Minimum Lot Width	<b>Req. 37.5 ft / Prop. 21.71 ft</b>	<b>Req. 37.5 ft / Prop. 21.71 ft</b>
Side Yard Setback	<b>Req. 12.1 ft / Prop. 0 ft</b>	<b>Req. 12.1 ft / Prop. 0 ft</b>

Parking

The parking requirements for semi-detached houses are two cars per dwelling. The applicant proposes to meet these requirements. The parking requirements for the alternative developments considered for this site are shown below:

<u>Proposed uses:</u>	Floor Area	# of Units	Required Parking
Office Building	7,300 square feet (max.)	N/A	15 spaces
6 Unit Condominium	4,800 square feet	6	9 spaces
Current proposal-2 Semi-detached houses	5,530 square feet (total)	2	4 spaces
<u>Possible uses:</u>			
Retail (ground floor only)	4,000 square feet	N/A	19 spaces
Personal service (ground floor only)	4,000 square feet	N/A	10 spaces

In developing this property the applicant will be removing 20 existing leased parking spaces from the neighborhood. Given this fact, staff encouraged development that would not add to the neighborhood parking burden. Staff felt that this proposal would have the least impact on parking in the community. The community has expressed concerns over the loss of the surface parking lot as well as the impact on the remaining parking behind the businesses on North Washington Street and the residences on North Columbus. Business owners are concerned that they will not be able to utilize the parking behind their shops due to the narrow ten foot width of the alley.

SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS

There are several nearby residential and office developments similar to the applicant’s proposal with respect to lot size. All are surrounded by public right of ways.

ADDRESS	ZONE	USE	LOT SIZE	LOT WIDTH	SIDE YARD SETBACK
709 Oronoco St.	OC	Residential	1,950 square feet	19 feet	Non complying
711 Oronoco St.	OC	Residential	1,950 square feet	19 feet	Non complying
907 Pendleton St.	RB	Residential	1,760 square feet	20 feet	Non complying
909 Pendleton St.	RB	Residential	1,760 square feet	20 feet	Non complying
115 S. Columbus St.	CD	Office	2,420 square feet	22 feet	Complying
117 S. Columbus St.	CD	Office	2,486 square feet	22 feet	Complying
119 S. Columbus St.	CD	Residential	2,486 square feet	22 feet	Non complying

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.

Master Plan/Zoning: The subject property is zoned OC/Office Commercial, and is located in the Old Town North Small Area Plan.

## II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff supports this application for subdivision. The applicant has explored a variety of alternatives for developing the property. The proposed subdivision will have the least impact on the surrounding neighborhood and be more consistent with other similar development in the area.

As illustrated with the parcels above, developments such as the one proposed occur in other commercial zones in the area. The variations requested have precedence in the Old and Historic area of the City. The properties listed above are all non-complying with respect to frontage, lot size and side yard setback.

Although supportive, staff has heard from community members concerned with the impact this development would have on the parking off of the alley. Neighbors have also expressed concern with the impact on the quality of light in the alley. Staff feels that these impacts can be mitigated through careful design. The applicant has indicated that although the technical request is for a variation to allow a zero side yard setback, at ground level there will be a three foot setback. The building wall at ground level is set back three feet from the property, at a height of 7'6" there will be bay windows that project three feet from the building wall to the property line, necessitating the variation to allow no setback. Staff feels that this ground level setback of three feet will help to alleviate parking concerns by allowing a greater tolerance for turning movements for the cars parked on opposite sides of the alley. Staff understands these concerns, but feels that it is important to note that the proposed subdivision and development impacts the affected neighbors less than by right scenarios. The applicant would be within their rights to install fencing or landscaping around the lot which could be placed on the property line and restrict turning movements more than the proposed development.

Therefore, with the following conditions, staff recommends approval.

STAFF: Richard Josephson, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;  
Richard Bray, Urban Planner.

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

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

1. Locations of all easements and reservations such as the ingress/egress easement for the alley and all other easements and reservations shall be depicted on the final subdivision plan. (P&Z)
2. The final plat shall include the Surveyors Certification and plat title to indicate resubdivision of the existing lots. (P&Z)
3. The final subdivision plat shall comply with the provisions of Section 11-1709 of the City's Zoning Ordinance. (T&ES) (P&Z)
4. A GRADING PLAN is required showing all improvements and alterations to the site which must be approved by T&ES prior to issuance of a building permit. (T&ES)
5. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
6. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
7. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet. An erosion and sediment control bond shall be posted prior to release of the grading plan. (T&ES)
8. 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. (T&ES)
9. The ownership status of the alleys (public or private) should be noted on the plat prior to approval. (T&ES)
10. Place an ingress/egress easement on the proposed parking spaces for Lot 1 as it appears that vehicles will be required to cross the proposed property line in order to exit the spaces. (T&ES)
11. Close the existing curb cut that will be located in front of the proposed buildings. (T&ES)
12. Include surveyor's certificate and approval block on mylar. (T&ES)

13. A note shall be added to the plans indicating that the rooftop open space is provided to meet the open space requirement and will be usable by the residents of the units.  
(RP&CA)
14. A landscape plan for each lot shall be submitted to RP&CA for review. (RP&CA)
15. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements: (Archeology)
  - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
  - b. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
  - c. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

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Staff Note: This plat will expire 18 months from the date of approval, or on January 3, 2010, unless recorded sooner.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- F-1 Provide turning movements for design vehicles to enter and exit proposed parking spaces at Grading Plan submission. (T&ES)
- F-2 The existing condition for this area is an asphalt parking lot and several vehicles appear to use it during the daytime hours. Where will these vehicles park as a result of this development? (T&ES)
- R-1 The final subdivision plat shall comply with the provisions of Section 11-1709 of the City's Zoning Ordinance. (T&ES)
- R-2 A GRADING PLAN is required showing all improvements and alterations to the site which must be approved by T&ES prior to issuance of a building permit. (T&ES)
- R-3 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-4 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R-5 An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet. An erosion and sediment control bond shall be posted prior to release of the grading plan. (T&ES)
- R-6 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. (T&ES)
- R-7 The ownership status of the alleys (public or private) should be noted on the plat prior to approval. (T&ES)
- R-8 Place an ingress/egress easement on the proposed parking spaces for Lot 1 as it appears that vehicles will be required to cross the proposed property line in order to exit the spaces. (T&ES)



- R-9 Close the existing curb cut that will be located in front of the proposed buildings. (T&ES)
- R-10 Include surveyor's certificate and approval block on mylar. (T&ES)
- C-1 Roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. 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. (Sec.8-1-22)
- C-2 All utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3)
- C-3 Pay sanitary sewer tap fee prior to release of Grading Plan. (Sec. 5-6-25.1)
- C-4 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides of the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.
- C-2 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

- C-7 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.
- C-8 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Police Department:

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

Real Estate:

No comment

Historic Alexandria Commission (Archaeology):

- R-1 The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
  - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
  - b. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
  - c. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
- F-1 Tax records indicate that a small house owned by Captain James Campbell stood on 1/4-acre of this city block facing Columbus Street in 1810. The property was valued at \$250.00 at that time. The exact address of the house is not known, and the structure appears to have been gone by 1830. Subsequent historical documents indicate that the current development property is located on the site of the stables of the Washington Street Corral built by the Union Army during the Civil War. By 1896, a house was present on this lot. Construction and

demolition of the 1890's house would have caused some disturbance to the previous resources, which were fairly ephemeral. Given the scale of this project and the post-Civil War disturbance, the property has limited potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into residential life in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Alexandria, and into military activities during the Civil War. The applicant must fulfill the above requirements to insure that significant information about the past is not lost as a result of this development.

Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (Arborist):

- R-1 A note shall be added to the plans indicating that the rooftop open space is provided to meet the open space requirement and will be usable by the residents of the units.
- R-2 A landscape plan for each lot shall be submitted to RP&CA for review.

Board Of Architectural Review

- F-1 The subject property is located in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and is under the jurisdiction of the Old and Historic Alexandria Board of Review (BAR). Requests for approvals of new construction must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Architectural Review. The applicant is reminded that any future exterior changes, including new fencing or garden walls, new or replacement signage, lighting, window replacement, kitchen exhaust and/or new HVAC vents or fixtures, or other alterations visible from a public right-of-way would need to be submitted for review and approval by the BAR Staff and the Board of Architectural Review. It is the applicant's responsibility to inform BAR Staff when new signage, lighting, or other external alterations are proposed which require BAR review and approval.