



CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: HALRB
FROM: Rebecca Ballo
DATE: May 14, 2012
SUBJECT: Case 12-14, Lots 4A & 5A Adjacent to 5151 14th Street North, future Broadview Historic District

The house located at 5151 14th Street North, known as “Broadview” and “The Old Lacey House”, is a Queen Anne Victorian country house, one of the best preserved in the County. Constructed circa 1873, it possesses a high level of integrity, and has not been added to or altered substantially since the 1940s. It possess many of the typical Queen Anne features such as a full-width, asymmetrical front porch, spindlework ornamentation on the porch balusters and porch frieze, and a square corner tower with wrought iron crenellation. The Queen Anne style was the dominant building style from about 1880-1900. Broadview is an early and remarkably intact example in the County, with well preserved decorative details on both the interior and the exterior. Staff is also investigating whether portions of the house pre-date the Queen Anne period. The owners have requested that this property be considered for designation as a local historic district. Staff is preparing the designation report, and the HALRB will hear the case in the fall of 2012.

The lots in question, 4A and 5A, are adjacent to the east side of the Broadview lot (Lot 3A). Currently, the area is all open lawn with trees, and all 3 lots (the two vacant ones and the Broadview Lot 3A) have been owned by the same individual for many years. The Lot 3A containing Broadview is not the subject of this URD, but the development of Lots 4A and 5A will have an immediate impact on the setting of this historic property. The HALRB has been asked to comment on this case due to the pending designation of Broadview, and due to the particular nature of the URD request.

The HALRB was last asked to comment on the URD of the 1600 North Lexington Street house. That case resulted in the subdivision of the lot, the construction of a new house, and the designation of the farmhouse at 1600 North Lexington Street. The property was designated in 2010 as the Washington/Torreyson Farm House.

The contract purchaser of lots 4A & 5A, Sunnyside Development, are applying for a Unified Residential Development approval (URD) to allow for resubdivision of the lots. Section 31 Subsection 13 of the Zoning Ordinance details the provisions for URDs.
http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/planning/zoning/pdfs/Ordinance_Section31.pdf

The subsection states that:

The purpose of this subsection is to provide for flexible, site-specific solutions for the development of one-family detached dwellings in certain zoning districts, to implement the purposes of the General Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance; promote the compatibility of one-family residential developments with surrounding neighborhoods by coordinating building forms, the bulk, scale and placement of new buildings, and the relationship between buildings and structures within the development and surrounding properties; and to preserve natural land forms, irreplaceable historical features, and significant trees and foliage.

The setting of Broadview and the house itself are irreplaceable historic features, and the purpose of the URD would be to protect them to the greatest extent possible. The proposed URD subdivision removes the existing pipe-stem Lot 4A, and proposes two lots with houses facing 14th Street. The two existing Lots 4A and 5A are buildable lots as is. However, construction on these lots as platted would be detrimental to the setting of Broadview and the larger setting of the streetscape. It would create an undesirable house on the pipestem, and allow for a very large house on the street.

The developer is proposing two new lots, 4B and 5B, with houses oriented towards 14th Street North, with front porches and rear, detached garages. The garages would be accessed via a shared driveway that will run between the new houses. The developer is also planning to convey Outlot A to the owners of Broadview to assist with the construction of a new driveway and to provide a buffer between the houses. A landscape buffer will also be provided on Outlot B to the rear of the subject properties.

The DRC members have had three opportunities to review the drawings and give comments to the developer and his architect. The details of the suggestions are encompassed in the DRC Reports. The designs for the houses have improved measurably since the original submission. Broadly, these changes include:

- The creation of one, shared garage for the two properties, instead of the original proposal which showed one freestanding garage for each new house.
- The removal of a basement stairway and egress on the elevation of 5B immediately adjacent to Broadview.
- A reconsideration of the design of the house on the proposed Lot 5B to make it more compatible with Broadview in terms of its massing, design, and overall orientation to both the historic house and the street.

These changes will require the developer to seek modifications from the required setback. One corner of the house on 5B and the rear porch are located within the required sideyard setback. However, both staff and the DRC feel that this modification is warranted as part of the URD process given the improvement to the overall design.

While the construction of these houses will have a negative impact on the open setting of Broadview, the lots are buildable as platted, and they are able to be developed. The issue is the design of this development, and whether it can be improved as part of this URD review. Staff and the DRC, working with the developer, have endeavored to mitigate the impacts the new houses will have on Broadview through better design, massing, and a more sensitive consideration of the relationship all three houses have to each other and to the landscape.