Res 03-20

ANC 3F RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING REJECTION OF THE REVISED PLANS SUBMITTED BY THE WASHINGTON HOME IN BZA APPLICATION NO. 16836, OR IN THE ALTERNATIVE A NEW HEARING

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3F
North Cleveland Park, Forest Hills, and Tenleytown
4401-A Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Box 244
Washington, D.C. 20008-2322

WHEREAS, at a special meeting on December 17, 2002, the Board of Zoning Adjustment (the Board) approved a 4-bed addition to The Washington Home (The Home) and an increase in parking spaces to 130, conditioned on approval of the following:

- a parking management plan to control access to the lot from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm with designated spaces for employees and visitors, but with the option of leaving a few spaces open near the door for visitors (Dec. 17 Tr. at 45, 49-50);
- an employee transit plan that encourages personnel to use alternative means of transportation such as carpools, transit subsidies, and shuttle service (Dec. 17 Tr. at 45-46, 48);
- a site plan showing the location of the parking spaces and a "landscaping plan that is comprehensive, screens the lot adequately and tries to address some of the concerns that were raised in the testimony" (Dec. 17 Tr. at 58)

and gave guidance on how the site plan should be redesigned:

- Preserve the berm along Upton Street (Dec. 17 Tr. at 27-28, 44)
- Preserve the area around the cupola (Dec. 17 Tr. at 44)
- Reduce the amount of paved or impervious surfaces (Dec. 17 Tr. at 42)
- Utilize the space more efficiently (Dec. 17 Tr. at 47)
- "Preserve most if not all of the park-like setting" (Dec. 17 Tr. at 21, passim)
- Minimize the impact on the large trees on the site (Dec. 17 Tr. at 28, 45)
- Utilize techniques like scrim screening and berms to screen vehicles on the lot adequately (Dec. 17 Tr. at 28); and

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D.C.

WHEREAS, on September 23, 2003, The Home submitted a revised site plan, a parking layout plan, a landscaping plan, and a parking policy plan; and

WHEREAS, the revised site plan meets the Board's criteria in some respects – such as separation of the lot from the Upton Street berm, gated access, and designated spaces for visitors and employees – it fails in others and, indeed, runs diametrically counter to the Board's guidance in several respects (see Comparison Sheet, Attachment A):

BZA
Case No. 16836
Exhibit No. 131

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16836
EXHIBIT NO.131

- The area of the revised lot would be virtually the same as the original proposal, despite the 25% reduction in the number of parking spaces;
- It raises from 373 to 472 square feet the amount of impervious surface per vehicle parking space, an almost one third increase in the amount of impervious surface per parking space (for 130 vehicles) as compared to the original plan (for 173 vehicles) that the BZA rejected;
- The parking layout has extra-wide aisles, all full-size parking spaces (no compact spaces), and parking at a 90 degree angle, a plan that seems designed less for efficiency than the possibility that The Home will restripe the lot later to add more spaces as it has done in the past;
- According to Jim Urban, see Attachment B, the islands in the parking lot are still too small to support large trees;
- It is unclear whether The Home intends to limit the number of spaces to 130, as indicated on the parking layout, C-05, or to stripe 138 spaces as shown on the Landscape Plan, which has an additional 8 parallel spaces along the 37th Street driveway. Residents who attended the ANC meeting said they would prefer that these 8 spaces along the driveway be part of the 130 total (and possibly move the gate to the 37th Street driveway) in order to allow The Home to move the eastern edge of the parking lot further away from 37th Street; and

WHEREAS, the revised plan creates new problems or increases flaws in the original plan (see Impact on 37th Street, Attachment C):

- The eastern edge of the parking lot would be 8 feet closer to 37th Street than the original proposal, or only 50 feet from the curb, an even greater intrusion into the neighborhood and on this busy pedestrian corridor;
- The lot would be elevated substantially above 37th Street, and thus be more noticeable;
- Bringing the lot this much closer to the grove of large white pines and the black locust near 37th Street would almost assuredly endanger some of them; in fact, the closest large pine no longer appears on the landscaping plan; and

WHEREAS, the landscaping plan is meager and continues to have the same flaws as the original plan (see e-mail from Jim Urban, Attachment B):

- Planting dogwoods, azaleas, and crape myrtles in the critical root zone of the large poplar on the Upton Street berm could damage the tree, as Jim Urban and ANC 3F testified on Oct. 15, 2002;
- Although more of the crape myrtles would remain, several would have to be moved simply to give room for a berm to shore up the parking lot; transplanting them would still be difficult (testimony and e-mail of Jim Urban);
- The effect of the crape myrtles as a memorial grove would still be lost because so many would be scattered throughout the site;
- Some plants chosen, like dogwood and azaleas (rhododendron), have not done well on this site, while others that have thrived, like viburnums and hollies, have been ignored; and

WHEREAS, this plan cannot be approved because it does not meet the screening requirements of 11 DMCR Section 2303.2, which provides that

> A parking lot in an R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, or R-5A District . . . shall be screened from all contiguous residential property located in the R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, or R-5A District by a solid brick or stone wall at least twelve inches (12 in.) thick and forty-two inches (42 in.) high or by evergreen hedges or evergreen trees that are thickly planted and maintained and at least forty-two inches (42 in.) high when planted.

- The 37th Street side of the parking lot would be left without screening because at least 21 trees would be removed, along with hedges and shrubs, but no new trees, hedges, or significant plantings would replace them. The only plantings planned for this edge of the parking lot would be English ivy, a ground cover of about 6 inches, and isolated clumps of shrubs;
- Screening around the cupola also would be limited: the steep bank of the parking lot would be planted with English ivy and cotoneaster, a low spreading shrub, not high enough to screen more than the bank;
- The only attempt at scrim screening is the red maples at the far end of the parking islands, over 100 feet from each other. The Home claims that it cannot plant trees in the center of the long island because of the bioretention area. Including a bioretention area in this plan is commendable, but The Home is mistaken that trees or large shrubs cannot be planted here. Trees are a standard feature of bioretention areas in the Washington region, see Attachment D. The Prince George's County Bioretention Manual lists 37 species of trees suitable for bioretention areas. Not only would scrim screening be possible by planting trees throughout the long island, the trees would help shade the parking lot, reduce the urban heat island effect, and may reduce maintenance of the bioretention cell;
- Of the trees to be planted, none are evergreen, and therefore would provide almost no screening in winter. The shrubs and ground cover are evergreen but too low to provide effective screening.
- The plants to be installed are much smaller than the 42 inches required, and many will not attain that height when mature; and

WHEREAS, the Board's May 27, 1994, order in BZA Application No. 15831, The Methodist Home, is instructive both on the process and amount of screening necessary to soften the visual impact of a parking lot and shield nearby residents from noise and light. In that case The Methodist Home, residents, and representatives of ANC 3F met approximately 20 times over the course of a year to come to agreements on landscaping and other issues. The Methodist Home agreed to build and landscape a high berm along Fessenden Street. A detailed landscaping plan, approved by residents and ANC 3F, was submitted with the application and its implementation was made a condition of the order. In contrast, The Washington Home has promised to devise a final landscaping plan after the application is approved, but the ANC and residents have no confidence that it will be adequate or that their views will be taken into consideration. Changes have not been made to address the concerns raised at the hearings. To date, The Washington Home has

been unwilling to enter into a dialog with residents and the ANC on landscaping and other issues pertaining to this application. Although residents approached The Home this summer to collaborate on the revised plans, the first time anyone from the community or ANC 3F saw the plans was at a meeting on September 18, 2003, just days before filing. The plans were presented as a fait accompli;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT ANC 3F recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustment reject the revised site plan and landscaping plan or reopen the hearing under 11 DCMR Section 3124.3 on the issues of the parking lot layout, screening, and landscaping plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, Commissioner Kessler and Commissioner Wiss are authorized to represent ANC 3F in any further proceedings.

Adopted by ANC 3F at a duly noticed public meeting on September 29, 2003, by a vote of 6-0-0 with a quorum present (a quorum being 4).

Cathy Wiss
Cathy Wiss, Chair

David J. Bardin, Secretary

Attachment A: Comparison Sheet
Attachment B: E-mail from Jim Urban
Attachment C: Impact on 37th Street
Attachment D: Examples of Bioretention Areas with Trees

Attachment A

COMPARISON SHEET

I. The Parking Lot

Number of Parking Spaces
Existing lot: 75 permitted, 89 striped
Application: 173 total
Revised Plan: 130 total + 8 shown along 37th Street driveway in landscaping plan

Area of Parking Lot
Existing lot: 46,096 sq. ft.
Application: 64,506 sq. ft. = 40% increase. Efficiency: 373 sq. ft./ vehicle.
Revised Plan: 63,916 sq. ft. = 39% increase. Efficiency: 492 sq. ft./ vehicle.

Orientation and Size of Parking Spaces
Existing lot: 90 degree and parallel parking. Size not available.
Application: 51 at 90 degrees; 122 angled. Some compact spaces?; 6 HC spaces.
Revised Plan: 25 at 90 degrees; 5 + 8 parallel. All full size, no compact; 5 HC spaces.

Distance of Lot from Upton Street
Existing lot: 90 ft. near driveway (6/25/02 Tr. at 46); 145 ft. near cupola
Application: 90 ft. near driveway and cupola
Revised Plan: 90 ft. near driveway; 120 ft. near cupola.

Distance of Lot from 37th Street
Existing lot: varies from 58 feet near driveway (6/25/02 Tr. at 46) to approximately 112 ft. near cupola
Application: uniformly 58 feet (6/25/02 Tr. at 46-47)
Revised Plan: uniformly 50 feet.

Distance of Lot from the Cupola
Existing lot: approximately 75 ft. at the closest point
Application: approximately 11 ft. on Upton St. side; 20 ft. on 37th St. side
Revised Plan: approximately 31 ft. at the closest point

Difference in Elevation between the Lot and the Cupola (Cupola = 339 ft.)
Existing lot: 7.5 feet higher (10% slope)
Application: approx. 2 feet higher (lot = 340-342 ft.) (18% slope)
Revised Plan: 7 feet higher (lot = 346 ft.) (23% slope)

Attachment B

From: James Urban <urbantree@toad.net>
To: Barbara Beelar <BBEELAR@aol.com>
Date: Mon, 29 Sep 2003 08:52:55 -0400
Subject: Re: Home Update

Barbara

I reviewed the Washington Home Plans and the following are my comments. The tree number locations are the same as my September 27, 2002 Testimony outline and the sketch prepared for that hearing:

Tree Assessment:

In general the trees along Upton should all survive the construction with little to no impact, although tree health is always changing and several of these trees were in poor condition a year ago. The summer long rain undoubtedly increased internal trunk rots and the the storm likely further degrade the condition of these trees. The design moves the zone of impact closer to the trees along 37th Street so the impact on the tree on the east side of the property will be incrementally larger. Two trees a White Pine # 22 and the Black locust #18 may now be significantly impacted by the construction and all available arborcultural remediation tools should be employed to help these trees survive.

Planting and transplanting and planting:

My concerns about the difficulties of transplanting the crepe myrtles and planting within the critical root zone of large trees remains.

Plan Impact:

The copula feature is still compromised but to a lesser degree and there is now room to possibly make the design work without moving most of the crepe myrtles.

The over all impact on plant massing is about the same degree of compromise as the situation is better on Upton but worse on 37th Street.

There is still some loss of soil resources but incrementally better with the slightly smaller foot print.

The tree planting islands are still way too small and construction techniques that provide for tree rooting under the pavement need to be employed to permit large tree growth.

Berm on 37nd Street:

I assume that this has been eliminated.

Storm Water Management:

The new scheme is improved over the last but opportunities remain for more retention and bio filtration. The proposed Bay Savers need lots of maintenance, If this maintenance is not done, the water still moves through the system and the land owner has no problems that he sees. Only the filtration portion of the system is lost and that becomes a down stream problem that might be difficult to trace back to this site. If a better bio filtration system was designed, then less maintenance would be needed and the land owner would get visual clues when maintenance is needed. The project should employ a consultant skilled in bio engineering of storm water. I think that the land owner would find that a bio filtration system that eliminates the Bay Savers would cost either equal or less money and would become an important landscape feature both for the community to look at and be a positive role model for development.

One point that needs clarification. When the applicant states that they are holding the 50 yr storm do they mean the entire 50 year storm (which is a lot of water and a real offering) or only that portion of the 50 yr storm which is the difference between the existing conditions and the new design. This second option is not very much water retention, is already required by the District and should not be looked upon as any real offering.

Sincerely;

James Urban, FASLA
Landscape Architect

IMPACT OF THE PARKING LOT ON 37TH STREET



The site slopes down to 37th Street (looking south).



The lot would be 50 feet from 37th Street. Many trees would have to be removed.



The edge of the lot would be where the people are standing and about as high as the top of the sheets.

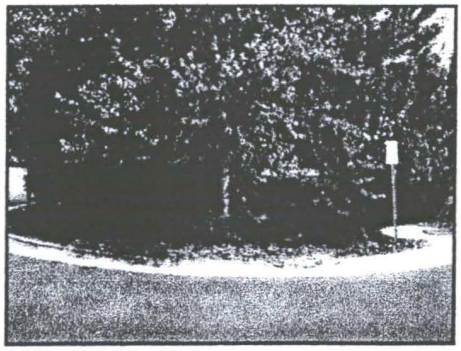


The lot would be very close to the pines. Construction and berming would affect half their roots.

BIORETENTION AREAS WITH TREES

From Krista Thompson, *Bioretention Tour*, Friends of the Rappahannock, March 2002

Bioretention Areas in the City of Alexandria, Virginia

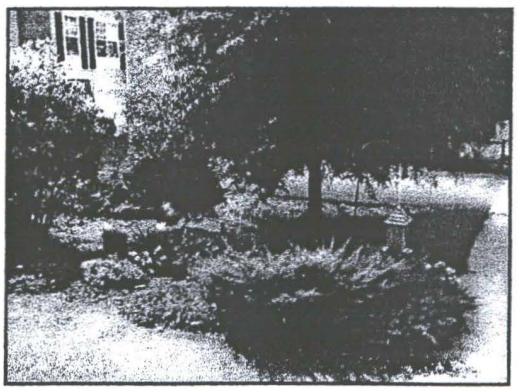


St. Stephen's and St. Agnes Middle School – Completed in 1994

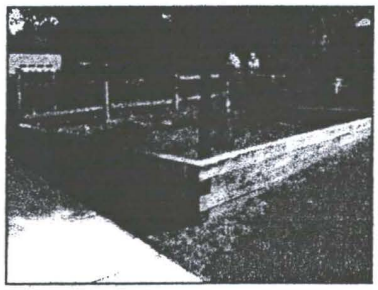
This was the first bioretention project for the City of Alexandria and is the oldest identified bioretention area in the State of Virginia. It is located within an island at the center of a roundabout in front of the school. Stormwater runoff is directed by grading and conveyance systems from the travel lanes and sidewalks into curb cuts, which allow the water into the bioretention cell. This bioretention, which is larger than required by current design standards, is 0.0381 acres in size and treats a 0.89-acre drainage area. It contains a 1.0-foot deep ponding area with mulch, underlain by 3.5 feet of planting soil mix, which has a sandy loam texture. Underneath the soil mix is a 6 inch sand bed on top of 6 inches of pea gravel. An underdrain carries away any of the excess water that does not infiltrate into the surrounding soils. Any overflow drops down an inlet that is also connected to the stormwater sewer system. (Gavan 2001)

DIRECTIONS from I-95: *Take I-95 to I-395 N. Take the SEMINARY RD exit (Number 4). Turn right onto Seminary Rd/VA-420 E. Turn right onto Kenmore Ave. Turn right onto N Van Dorn St/VA-401. Turn right onto W Braddock Rd. The school is on the left side at 100 St. Stephen's Drive, before you get to Fort Ward Park.*

Amie-Leigh – Completed in 1996



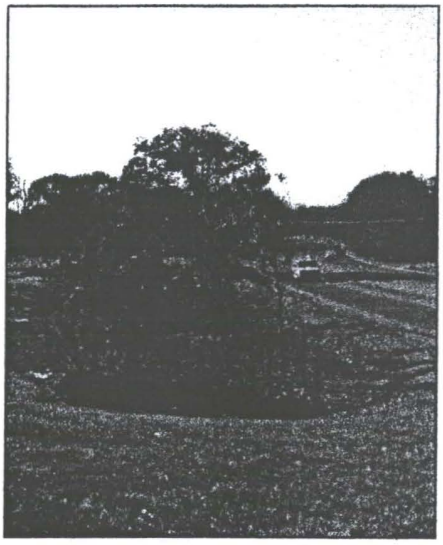
This residential area consists of 6 townhomes and has 4 rain gardens (residential bioretention areas) placed in the front yards. Two of the rain gardens are placed entirely on one lot while the other two are shared between two lots. Each rain garden is approximately 225 ft^2 and the four gardens treat a combined drainage area of 0.5 acres. One of the gardens is only partially functioning because the owner has boxed a portion of it in with wooden rails. Normally partially disabling one of the gardens would be a problem, but in this situation they were built larger than necessary so the three remaining gardens can effectively serve the entire area. Each rain garden allows the water to pond to a depth of 1 foot. The planting soil mix is 4 feet deep and is composed of loamy sand that is underlain by a 6-inch sand bed. Below the sand bed is 6-inch pea gravel layer. Running through the gravel layer are two 4-inch perforated pipes that are connected to a header pipe that convey the filtered water to the stormwater system. (Gavan 2001 and Fields 1996)



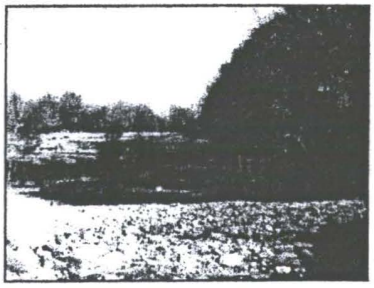
DIRECTIONS from I-95: *Take I-95 to I-395 N. Take the VA-236 E/DUKE ST exit (Number 3A). Take a Right onto South Gordon Street. The homes are on the left-hand side of the street at 14, 16, 18 & 20 S. Gordon St.*

Bioretention Areas in and around the City of Richmond, Virginia

Grove Avenue Baptist Church – Completed in 1998



There are two bioretention areas at this site. One of the bioretention areas is located on the western side of the parking lot, along Parham Road. It is 0.044 acres in size and treats a drainage area of 0.62 acres. Runoff from the parking lot and rooftop is diverted to the bioretention area and enters via a 15-inch pipe. Water is allowed to pond up to approximately 5 inches and then the excess volume will drain into a drop inlet connected to the stormwater conveyance system. The other bioretention area, which is located on the southern end of the parking lot, is 0.06 acres in size and treats a runoff drainage area of 0.81 acres. Stormwater runoff that travels as sheet flow across the parking lot enters the bioretention through three different curb cuts. Water is also allowed to pool up to 5 inches in this area, but when excess water enters the cell it spills over a weir, travels down a short rip-rap channel and then drops down an inlet to the stormwater conveyance system. Both

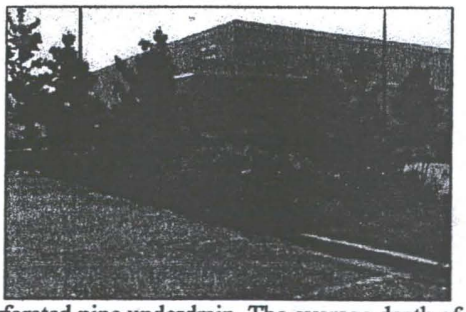


bioretention areas consist of a 3-inch mulch layer over top a 4-foot planting soil layer composed of a sandy loam with no more than 10-25% clay content. Underneath the planting soil layer is a 1-foot sand layer on top of a 6-inch gravel layer. Running through the gravel layer are 4-inch perforated pipes, which transport the filtered water that does not infiltrate into the ground to the stormwater conveyance system. Bioretention was chosen for this site because there was not enough room for ponds and because it fulfilled some the landscaping requirements for the site. (AA 1998)

DIRECTIONS from I-95: *From I-95 take the VA-73/PARHAM RD exit (Number 83B). Merge onto East Parham Rd. (follow it for 8.3 miles) Turn Left onto Ridge Rd. The Church is at 8701 Ridge Road*

Bioretention Areas in and around Prince George's County, MD

Beltway Plaza Center – Completed in 1997



There are 6 different bioretention areas located in the parking lot on the northern side of the site, at the rear of the buildings. They treat stormwater runoff from a total area of 2.87 acres of impervious surface. The cells are very well vegetated which augments the aesthetics of the site. Water is allowed to pond approximately 1 foot before dropping down an inlet to the stormwater conveyance system. The runoff that has filtered through the cells also enters the stormwater system via a 4-inch perforated pipe underdrain. The average depth of the bioretention cells is approximately 42 inches (GLW 1997).

DIRECTIONS from I-95: *Take I-95 N to the exit for the Capitol Beltway/I-495 N exit towards BALTIMORE/COLLEGE PARK. Take the MD-201/KENILWORTH AVE exit (Number 23), towards BLADENSBURG/GREENBELT. Turn left onto Kenilworth Ave. Take the MD-193 ramp towards GREENBELT RD. The mall is at 6100 Greenbelt Rd., on the right hand side.*