

Docket Item #29
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #97-0003
REZONING #97-0003
323 N WASHINGTON ST

Planning Commission Meeting
September 2, 1997

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for an amendment to the Old Town Small Area Plan Chapter of the 1992 Master Plan to change the land use designation and to change the zoning designation of the subject property from RM/Residential to CL/Commercial Low.

APPLICANT: Morgan D. Delaney

LOCATION: 323 North Washington Street

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, SEPTEMBER 13, 1997: Approved the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, SEPTEMBER 2, 1997: On a motion by Ms. Fossum, seconded by Mr. Komoroske, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendation. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0 to 1, with Mr. Dunn abstaining.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis.

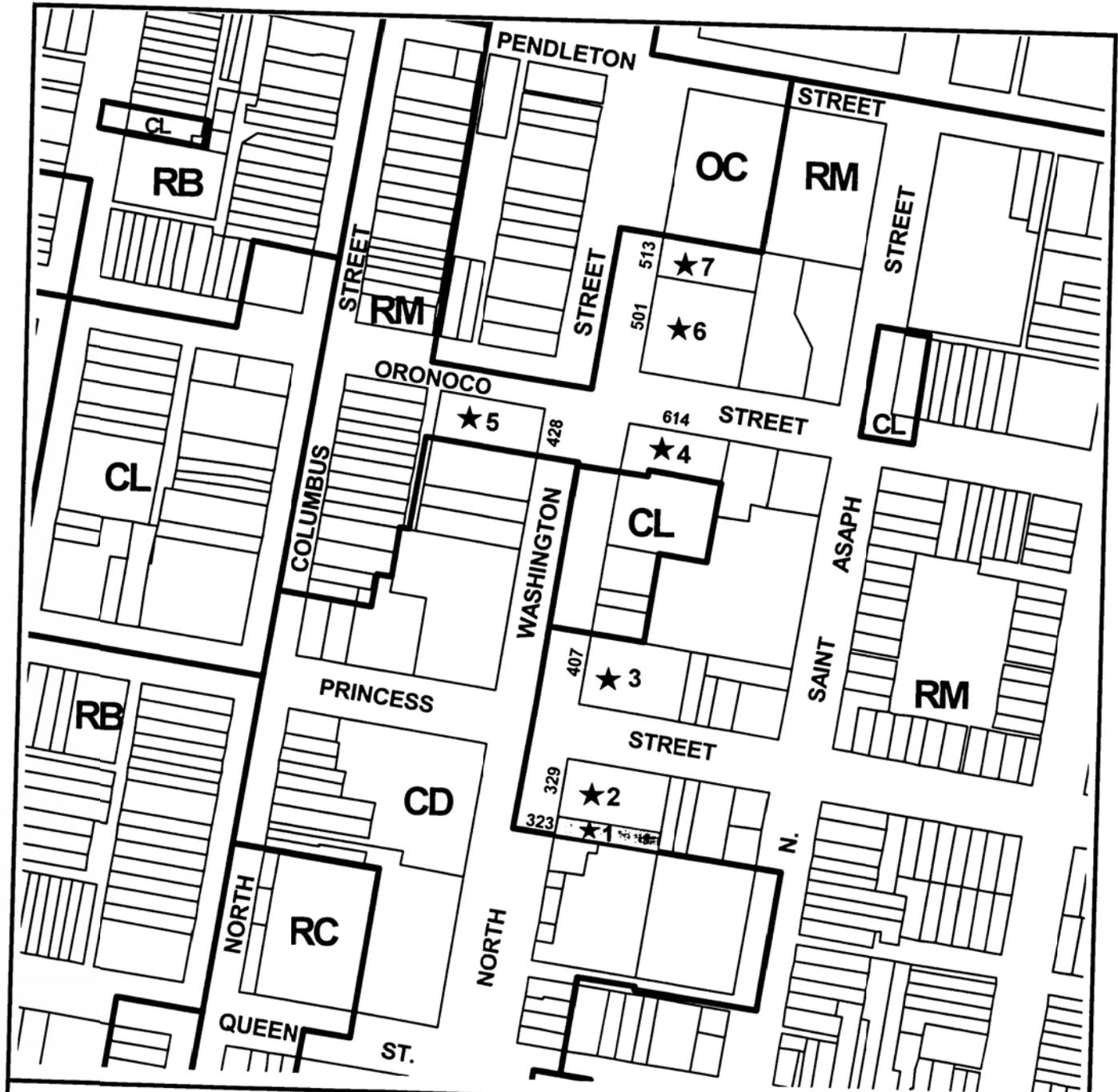
Speakers:

Morgan Delaney, the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends **approval** of the following changes for the property at 323 N. Washington Street, subject to all applicable codes and ordinances.

1. A change to the master plan designation for the property from Residential Medium to Commercial Downtown; and
2. A change to the zoning from RM/Residential Townhouse to CD/Commercial Downtown.



MPA #97-0003
 REZ #97-0003

9/2/97



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DISCUSSION

The applicant, Morgan Delaney, proposes to change the master plan designation and zoning of his property located at 323 N. Washington Street from RM/Residential Medium-Townhouse to CL/Commercial Low.

The subject property contains 3,127 square feet of land area, with 25.5 feet of frontage on North Washington Street and contains a freestanding dwelling unit. The applicant has indicated that the building has been vacant since January 1997, despite active marketing for residential uses, but that several small firms have indicated an interest in utilizing the space for office uses.

The parcel is located within the boundaries of the Old Town Small Area Plan. The plan designated most of the property along Washington Street for commercial use. The CD/Commercial Downtown designation predominates, although the properties north of Princess Street on Washington have a variety of commercial zones, including CL/Commercial Low, OC/Office Commercial, CRMU-X/Commercial-Residential Mixed Use-Old Town North and CDX/Commercial Downtown-Old Town North. The subject property is one of three adjacent properties located on Washington Street near the Princess Street intersection which were designated residential and zoned RM/Residential townhouse, rather than commercial. There are only four other residentially zoned properties along Washington Street north of King Street and all are located between Queen and Pendleton Street. In summary, the seven residentially zoned properties along this section of Washington Street are:

<u>Address</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Use</u>
1. 323 N. Washington Street	Morgan Delaney	Vacant
2. 329 N. Washington Street	Morgan Delaney	Residential-Multiple Units
3. 407 N. Washington Street	Catherine Garber	Residential-Multiple Units
4. 614 Oronoco Street	Virginia Trust	For Historic Museum: Lee-Fendall House
5. 428 N. Washington Street	Charles Eng	Residential

6. 501 N. Washington Street The Bryant Foundation Museum:
Boyhood Home of Robert E. Lee
7. 513 N. Washington Street International Association
Parking Lot for
adjoining
of Chiefs of Police office
building

The residentially zoned properties, including the subject property at 323 N. Washington Street, were designated and zoned residential in 1992 because, as a general principle, properties utilized for residential purposes were so zoned. This principle is one of the goals of the Old Town Small Area Plan. On the other hand, it is clear that the plan envisioned Washington Street as a primarily commercial corridor, including goals in the plan recognizing the more intense nature of commercial development on Washington Street north of King Street and the importance of retaining retail uses along Washington Street.

This application requests a change to the master plan and the zoning for a single property. As a general principle, staff believes the City should not rezone a single property, unless there is something about the property which distinguishes it from its similarly situated neighbors. Staff believes that rezoning should not occur without a comprehensive evaluation of the larger area to determine what zoning changes are necessary and desirable. Staff, therefore, has evaluated North Washington Street between Queen and Pendleton Streets to determine whether the proposed change is desirable and whether other properties should also be changed.

Comprehensive Amendment/Rezoning

All but one of the seven residentially zoned lots contain structures which are historically significant. The protection afforded by the BAR review process should serve to save the integrity of these structures, regardless of whether they are used for residential or commercial purposes. Three of the lots contain uses which are unlikely to change, regardless of zoning: 1) the parcel used for a parking lot for the Police Chief's association, 2) the Lee boyhood home and, 3) the Lee-Fendall Home Museum. The Police Chief's Association parking lot could be rezoned to OC, the same as the adjacent building. The two museums are probably most appropriately

zoned RM/Residential.

While the small area plan established that commercial uses may generally be appropriate along Washington, there are specific issues which would be raised by the conversion of the four remaining properties to commercial use, including parking impact, loss of open space, and the impact of commercial uses on adjoining homes.

Parking

Because all of the parcels are outside of the central business district, any use of the properties for commercial would require the provision of parking spaces to serve the commercial uses. As an example, the subject property, with approximately 2,700 square feet of space, would be required to provide five parking spaces for an office use. In the case of the subject property, it would not be possible to provide the parking on site; the only open area on the site is the rear yard, and it has no access from an alley; in any case, it could not accommodate five parking spaces. Under the zoning ordinance parking requirements within the Old and Historic Alexandria District, the Director would likely grant a waiver of parking to the use. The end result, then, is that the commercial use would be permitted to occupy the building without providing any parking. Staff is concerned about allowing additional commercial uses in this area--an area where the parking supply is already tight--without the provision of any parking.

Open Space

For those lots on which parking could be provided to support a commercial use, it would be at the cost of significant amounts of what is now open space. Each of the four parcels contain significant yards. The existing residential zone on the properties includes an open space requirement, which will serve to preserve at least a significant portion of open space. A rezoning to commercial would allow the removal of the open space, most likely to accommodate parking lots. Two of the properties with large yards are located at Washington Street on either side of Princess Street, which is one of the street segments in the City which has been designated 'historic' and maintained as a cobbled street. The two somewhat grand homes, with spacious yards, on each corner mark the entrance from the commercial Washington Street corridor to Princess Street, a primarily residential street. Staff believes the open space serves a land use and urban design goal in this instance, and is more likely

to be preserved if these parcels retain their residential zoning.

Impact on Adjoining Properties

The third issue to be considered with respect to rezoning the residential properties is the impacts on adjoining residential properties. Staff believes the most significant impacts would be those already discussed: parking impacts, and the loss of nearby open space. The commercial uses themselves could possibly create impacts, but it is not atypical for commercial uses and residential uses to coexist very closely in this portion of Old Town.

Staff Recommendation on Comprehensive Change

The uses of three of the seven parcels are well settled, and changing the zoning would have no discernable impact, either negative or positive. Therefore staff focused on the remaining four properties when considering a comprehensive rezoning of residential properties along Washington Street. Staff believes that the cumulative impacts on parking and open space of rezoning the remaining four properties do not support a comprehensive change. Further, staff believes that three of the four properties (all but the subject property) serve an important land use/urban design function as residential uses, marking on Washington Street the entrance into primarily residential neighborhoods. Three of the four (all but the subject property) are on corner lots. Although the buildings face Washington Street, the units also have significant frontage on the side streets (Princess and Oronoco), and are thereby part of a block face that is predominately residential. They link and complete the residential neighborhoods.

323 N. Washington Street Property

The subject property, the house at 323 N. Washington, is the exception. It has no such context, but stands in isolation facing only Washington Street, with no connection to a larger residential neighborhood. For this reason, staff believes it can be distinguished from the other residentially zoned properties near it, and is supporting a master plan amendment and rezoning for this single property. The impacts on open space and parking from converting this single building to commercial use should be minor, and staff supports a change to commercial zoning.

The applicant has requested CL/Commercial Low zoning. Staff is recommending that the parcel be changed, instead, to CD/Commercial Downtown. Although there is some CL zoning along Washington Street, one block north on the west, the predominate zoning in the area is CD, and all of the commercial properties adjacent to the subject property are zoned CD. A change to CD for the property, would therefore simply shift the CD zone line one parcel north on Washington Street. Although the CD zone does allow more density than the CL, and some more uses, it is the zone that was designed for this downtown portion of the City. Therefore, staff recommends the change to CD.

STAFF: Sheldon Lynn, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Kimberley Johnson, Chief, Development.

RESOLUTION NO. MPA-97-0003

WHEREAS, under the Provisions of Section 9.05 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission may adopt amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Alexandria and submit to the City Council such revisions in said plans as changing conditions may make necessary; and

WHEREAS, an application for amendment to the Old Town Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan was filed with the Department of Planning and Zoning on July 1, 1997 for changes in the land use designation to the parcels located at 323 North Washington Street; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Planning and Zoning has analyzed the proposed revision and presented its recommendations to the Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on September 2, 1997 with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendment is necessary and desirable to guide and accomplish the coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the Old Town Small Area Plan section of the City; and
2. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the 1992 Master Plan and with the specific goals and objectives set forth in the Old Town Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan; and
3. The proposed amendment shows the Planning Commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the Old Town Small Area Plan; and
4. Based on the foregoing findings and all other facts and circumstances of which the Planning Commission may properly take notice in making and adopting a master plan for the City of Alexandria, adoption of the amendment to the Old Town Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents of the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Alexandria that:

1. The following amendment is hereby adopted in its entirety as an amendment to the Old Town Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in accordance with Section 9.05 of the Charter of the City of Alexandria, Virginia:

RESOLUTION NO. MPA-97-0003

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Change the designation of the parcel at 323 North Washington Street from RM/Residential to CD/Commercial Downtown.

2. This resolution shall be signed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission and attested by its secretary, and a true copy of this resolution forwarded and certified to the City Council.

ADOPTED the 2nd day of September, 1997.

W. B. Hurd, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sheldon Lynn, Secretary