



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

April 21, 2016

REQUEST: Minor Subdivision Final Plans (Waiver)/ 1501-1503 Covington Street

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Eric Tiso

PETITIONER: Emmett Voelkel, c/o AB Associates

OWNER: SAAM, LLC

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 1501-1503 Covington Street is located on the southeastern corner at the intersection with East Fort Avenue. The property contains 0.073± acres of land, is zoned B-2-2, and is currently improved with three-story attached buildings that have been recently used as a tavern, restaurant and two apartment units. This site is located within the Riverside National Register Historic District.

General Area: This property is located within the Riverside neighborhood, which is predominantly residential in nature, with commercial uses along major corridors such as East Fort Avenue, and Key Highway. Riverside Park is located one block to the south, and Digital Harbor High School is located three blocks to the north.

HISTORY

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

ANALYSIS

Project: The proposal in this case is to resubdivide the property along the former lot line, and separating and renovating the buildings for use as two homes.

Subdivision Regulations and Waiver: This project includes a waiver request to not require plans submittals as listed in the subdivision regulations, and to abbreviate the review process. Prior to the 2011 update of the subdivision regulations, it was possible to resubdivide properties as an administrative action. During the 2011 update, a discrepancy was noted in that process that these were in effect subdivisions that were not being presented to the Planning Commission, and so the subdivision regulations were amended to provide for review of this category of resubdivision.

The net result of this correction is that these relatively simple resubdivision applications need to provide plan submittals that require a survey, a circulation for agency review that can take 6-8 weeks, and increased fees for professional services (surveyor and engineer). This may have the effect of discouraging redevelopment, which frequently is located in residential neighborhoods.

Staff believes that this is a reasonable request, and so this is also being considered as part of the current update of the subdivision regulations. A more reasonable future path to consider would be a middle-ground option that would involve a reduced agency circulation involving the Department of Planning, the Zoning Administrator's office, and the Property Locations Division within the Department of Transportation. That proposed change would in effect strike a balance between too much and not enough process. For these reasons, staff recommends approval of the waiver, and of the resubdivision.

Zoning Regulations: In this case, the proposal to renovate the properties for one dwelling unit each would reduce the overall intensity of use of the two properties. The property was last authorized for use as two dwelling units, which would not change. The commercial use of the properties would be discontinued. No parking will be required, as all existing parking requirements had been previously waived, and the reduction in the intensity of use would not require the provision of any additional parking spaces.

Community Notification: The Riverside Neighborhood Association was notified of this action.



Thomas J. Stosur
Director