



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

May 7, 2015

REQUEST: Major Subdivision Preliminary Plans/ 1207 South Highland Avenue

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Eric Tiso

PETITIONER: Mark Manzo

OWNER: Florese and Rebecca Applebaum

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 1207 S Highland Avenue is located on the east side of the street, 115' north of the intersection with Toone Street. The site is currently improved with a one- and two-story commercial building that had previously occupied the entire lot. A few years ago, the portion covering approximately 1/3 of the eastern portion of the lot was destroyed in a fire and has not been rebuilt. The lot is bordered on the north and south sides with 15' alleys.

General Area: This property is located in the southeastern corner of the Canton neighborhood, which has a mix of residential and commercial areas, with several nonconforming commercial uses scattered among the traditional rowhomes of the more residential portions of the neighborhood. Across Baylis Street to the east is a five-story residential building that is part of the Brewers Hill Planned Unit Development (PUD) development. Boston Street is two blocks to the south, with the developments of the Canton Crossing and the District at Canton Crossing PUDs. The Du Burns Arena and the Senator Bonvegna Field are half a block south and two blocks west of this site.

HISTORY

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

ANALYSIS

Project: This proposal is to demolish the existing commercial building, dedicate a 25' strip of land on the northern side of the parcel to increase the existing 15' alley right-of-way width to 40', thereby creating a sufficient right-of-way for twelve new fee-simple townhomes. The proposed homes will face to the north. A landscaping strip will be provided as well as a 5' sidewalk and street parking for approximately eight cars. The paved section of the existing 15' alley will be increased to 20' in drivable width.

Each home will have an internal garage accessed from the south side of the homes. The first floors of each home will be inset four feet with upper floors cantilevered overhead to increase the effective width of that alley, in order to provide better access into and out of the garages while preserving internal volume on the upper floors.

In its consideration of the proposal, staff reviewed the following factors:

Subdivision Regulations: Applicants are requesting Planning Commission review of the Preliminary Subdivision plan prior to producing final plans and architecture, as the layout of the twelve homes does not follow a more traditional development pattern. Due to the longer lots fronting on Elliott Street to the north, and Toone Street to the south having a long depth of 100', the remaining parcel in this block that is 1207 South Highland Street is of an odd dimension to be easily redeveloped for townhomes. While this dimension served the nonconforming commercial use on this site in the past, it does not allow for a more traditional layout of four townhomes, or perhaps even five narrower townhomes fronting on South Highland and four or five lots fronting on Baylis Street for a total of eight or ten homes that could be built on this lot as it is configured today. The improvement of the existing alley into a 40' right-of-way and fronting of the proposed homes through the middle of the block is necessary to develop this parcel in a financially feasible way for the applicant, yielding a total of twelve homes. The public benefit to this arrangement is the removal of a nonconforming commercial building and uses that have fallen into disrepair.

Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC): This project was reviewed on March 25, 2014. The preliminary subdivision plans address the comments of the committee. Each of the homes will provide a parking space within an internal garage, and eight or nine parking spaces can be provided in the new right-of-way in front of the homes for visitors or neighborhood use.

Zoning Regulations: The twelve proposed lots will require variances from the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA) for yard setbacks, building height, and lot coverage. An appeal has been filed (BMZ2015-00130), and it is currently scheduled for hearing before the BMZA on May 5, 2015. Approval of this appeal will be required prior to presentation of the Final Plans to the Planning Commission.

Elevations: The applicant has only submitted generalized elevations at this time. Should the Planning Commission accept these preliminary subdivision and development plans, final architecture will be presented at a public hearing with the Major Subdivision Final Plans submittal.

Community Notification: Staff notified the Canton Community Association, and the Canton-Highlandtown Community Association of this action.



**Thomas J. Stosur
Director**