

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
for
May 20, 2010
Meeting No. 8-2010**

APPLICATION: HDC2010-00496A

ADDRESS: Victory Court
209 Monroe Street

ACCEPTED: April 27, 2010

45 DAY LIMIT: June 18, 2010

OWNER: Montgomery County/
Victory Housing

REQUEST: Certificate of Approval: Site
Plan elements within Historic
District
Courtesy Review:
Preliminary Plan of
Subdivision



Approximate project area and historic district, current

STAFF: Robin D. Ziek

OVERVIEW

The applicant (see Attachment A) requests a Certificate of Approval for proposed changes within the Rockville Heights Historic District relating to the submitted Site Plan: encroachment of a shared-use path; landscape plantings within the historic district as part of the larger Victory Court project; construction of emergency vehicle access between 150 Maryland Avenue (Lot 1) and 101 Fleet Street (Lot 3) (See Attachment G-a, -b, -d, -e, -f, -g).

The applicant also requests a Courtesy Review for the Preliminary Plan of Subdivision. This will establish individual lots for each of the houses within the Historic District, in accordance with the Mayor and Council's delineation of the environmental setting for this example of early 20th century suburban development [see Attachment G-c].

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONApprove the Site Plan as submitted, with the following modifications:

1. Eight foot (8') Shared Use Path encroachment within the Historic District;
2. Landscape Plan for plantings within the Historic District, with modifications noted on page 10-11 of the staff report; and
3. Include turnaround area for driveway on Lot 1 (150 Maryland Avenue).

Recommend the following:

1. Approval by the Planning Commission of the Preliminary Plan of Subdivision, with Outlots A and B, to be owned and maintained by the County.

DRAFT MOTION OF APPROVAL:

Finding that the Site Plan for the Victory Court Senior Housing reflects the Mayor and Council's intentions noted with the establishment of the Rockville Heights Historic District environmental setting, with the following additions: that an eight-foot shared-use path may encroach into the Historic District as shown on the Site Plan; that the Landscape Plan reflects the re-establishment of a landscape buffer between the historic district and Victory Court Senior Housing with the modifications stated in this staff report, I move approval of HDC2010-00496A.

DRAFT MOTION OF RECOMMENDATION

Finding that the Preliminary Plan of Subdivision for the Rockville Heights Historic District complies with prior guidance provided by the HDC, I recommend that the Planning Commission approve the Preliminary Plan of Subdivision with the following recommendations:

- 1) Additional plantings for screening should be added at Lot 1 to screen the adjacent parking lot; and

BACKGROUND

Historic Significance

The Rockville Heights Historic District is significant as an intact collection of early 20th century residential architecture of varying styles. Although the district borders the Town



Center and the area is more “urbanized” today, these homes represent the small town land use patterns that characterized Rockville’s built environment prior to WWII. The Rockville Heights Historic District is located at the northern end of the Rockville Heights subdivision, platted in 1890. The house at 107 Fleet Street dates to 1904 and reflects the late 19th century Queen Anne style. The other four houses were built between 1926 and 1936. Together, they present an early 20th century streetscape and reflect the early residential character of this part of Rockville.

Historic District Property

The historic district properties are owned by Montgomery County, as are all of the parcels defined by Maryland Avenue, Fleet Street, Monroe Street and Mount Vernon Place. The houses were acquired by the County in the 1960s and have been used for a variety of office uses. Although the County has recently painted all of the houses, several of them are empty and will need additional rehabilitation prior to occupancy.

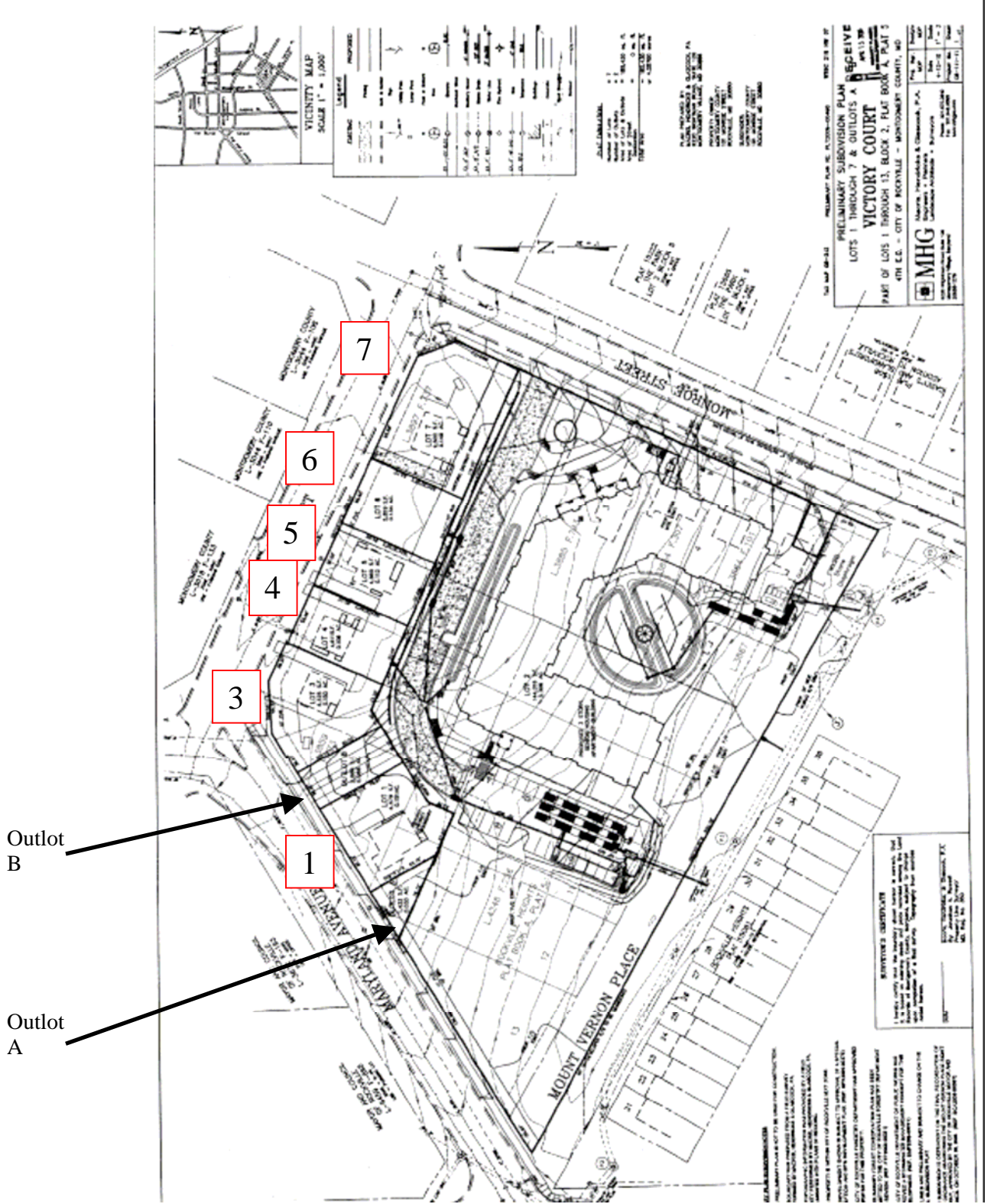
Approval of the historic district coincided with finalizing the agreement between Montgomery County and Victory Housing Inc., to construct low-to-moderate income housing for independent seniors on this property. The project design has been modified through the public review process. The environmental setting of the Historic District was established by the Mayor and Council, to accommodate both the historic houses and the new construction. The senior housing development will involve the reduction in depth of the current properties associated with the historic houses. Backyard trees will be removed, as well as the existing street trees. The Landscape Plan for the new project reflects these changes, and seeks to provide adequate landscaping in support of the residential character of the historic district.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS

3/18/2010	Courtesy Review with HDC
1/9/2010	Board of Appeals approval of SPX2009-00378
9/12/2009 11/17/2009 12/5/2009	Board of Appeals review of proposed use through Special Exception application SPX2009-00378
11/19/2009	Courtesy Review with HDC
7/16/2009	Courtesy Review with HDC
3/19/2009	Courtesy Review with HDC
12/18/2008	Courtesy Review with HDC
10/13/2008	Historic District adopted by M&C
6/16/2005	HDC recommended the "Rockville Heights Historic District" to include buildings at 101, 103, 105, 107 Fleet Street and 150 Maryland Avenue

PROPOSED PROJECT

Proposed Preliminary Plan of Subdivision (see Circle ; and large format copy)



KEY:***Outlot A –Forest Conservation easement*****Lot 1: 150 Maryland Avenue*****Outlot B – Pedestrian path and Emergency vehicle access*****Lot 3: 101 Fleet Street****Lot 4: 103 Fleet Street****Lot 5: 105 Fleet Street****Lot 6: vacant****Lot 7: 107 Fleet Street**

The Victory Court Senior Housing Project will provide 86 units of affordable housing for independent elderly residents (see Attachment B). The building will have three stories, and has a “C” configuration that provides a south-facing courtyard. The driveway and most of the parking will be placed behind the Rockville Heights historic properties. Topographic changes will be mediated with terraced landscape beds and retaining walls. Residential metal fencing, which has already been approved by the HDC, will provide a safe edge along the backs of Lots 3 – 7 along Fleet Street. Lot 1 and Outlots A and B are on grade with the parking area for Victory Court and do not require safety fencing.

The Preliminary Plan of Subdivision (see p. 5, Attachment C, and G-c) has been modified from the March 18th Courtesy Review to provide additional sideyard area for Lot 1. This will permit installation of a driveway with a turnaround area so that vehicles will not have to back out onto Maryland Avenue, and still provide green space for the house at Lot 1 (150 Maryland Avenue).

At the same time, Outlot B has been reduced in size and shifted towards Lot 3. Lot 3 will still have a substantial sideyard on the Maryland Avenue side, while Outlot B will have enough area around the pedestrian path and emergency vehicle access for landscape plantings.

The HDC should review/approve the proposed paving material. The applicant proposes a type of paving that will reduce the apparent paved area, such as “grasscrete”, while still providing the necessary support for emergency vehicles. The pedestrian path will be paved with concrete.

Shared-use path along Fleet Street

The proposal for the shared-use path along Fleet Street and Maryland Avenue is an example of competing interests within the City (see Attachments F and H). At the previous Courtesy review, there was discussion of a potential alternative design with a two-foot wide grass strip and a six-foot wide bikepath. The Department of Public Works (DPW) has since clarified that the width of the paving is determined by Section 21-60(1) of the City Code (Streets and Public Improvements), and is not subject to review by the HDC or Planning Commission. A waiver to the Road Code for an alternative design may be granted only by the Mayor and Council (Section 21-20).

At the City's request, the applicant staked out the proposed shared-use path at the initial ten foot width. These stakes are still in place on site; and staff recommends reviewing these stake locations with the understanding that the reduction in width will allow the front yards to be two feet deeper. This will reduce the encroachment of paving within the boundaries of the Historic District.

The HDC is asked to approve the installation of the shared-use path specifically where it extends into the Rockville Heights Historic District, at Lot 7 (107 Fleet Street). Staff recommends approval of this as the additional paving will have little effect on the existing front yards.

Landscape Plan

The Landscape Plan (see Attachment G-d,-e,-f,-g) introduces an edge of deciduous and evergreen trees along the south boundary of the historic district, as well as the removal of existing paving and the construction of new paving within the historic district. Staff recommends the following:

Paving:

1. The two large existing parking lots (adjacent to Lot 1 at 150 Maryland Avenue, and behind Lot 7 at 107 Fleet Street) will be removed, as indicated on the Site Plan. Individual driveways will be constructed on Lot 1 and Lot 7 to provide two off-street parking spaces for these houses.

The applicant should address the removal of the paving, and staff anticipates that the currently paved areas will be reconstructed as open lawn. Existing paving that is also shown at the rear of Lots 3, 4, and 5, and the sidewalk shown behind Lot 3, should also be removed. In addition, part of the parking area behind Lot 7 is shown on the Site Plan, and should also be removed. Timing of this work should be discussed, as the County will continue to own the houses within the historic district, and not Victory Housing, Inc. Empty houses are not desirable in the City, and every step should be taken to make these historic houses available for reuse in the near future.

2. The 10' wide driveway that is proposed at Lot 1 should be amended to include a paved turnaround area, so cars can avoid backing out into Maryland Avenue.

Landscape and Plant Materials:

The Landscape Plan shows the introduction of a mix of shade trees and evergreens along the boundary edges of the historic district and within the historic district at Outlots A and B.

1. The screening potential should be enhanced with the addition of shrubs, to add to the density and diversity of the landscape buffer.
2. The *Carpinus Caoliniana* (American Hornbeam) that is proposed on Lot 1 should be moved closer to the property line to provide more of an open yard for Lot 1.
3. Please see the City's Landscape Manual (Section 4d) for screening requirements that may apply if a residential property is adjacent to a parking lot (see Lot 1). Similarly, although the walkway and emergency egress will be outlined with new trees, additional plantings of shrubs will enhance the sense of privacy for sideyards at Lots 1 and 3.
4. The City Forester has noted that two evergreens are shown in the location of an existing crabapple tree, which is to remain. Therefore, these two evergreens should be repositioned along the backyard boundary of the historic district.
5. As all of the existing street trees will be removed, staff recommends additional trees along the edge of the PUE at Lots 1, 3, 4, and 5 to provide a sense of street trees along Fleet Street.

Attachments:

- A. Application
- B. Applicant's Letter re Status of Special Exception Conditions of Approval
- C. Preliminary Plan of Subdivision
- D. Shared-use Path along fleet Street – 8' of paving
- E. Void
- F. DPW Memo 5/14/2010
- G. Large Format Drawings Site Plan submittal:
 - a. Level II Site Plan SP-1
 - b. SP-2
 - c. Preliminary Subdivision Plan
 - d. Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan PFCP-1
 - e. PFCP-2
 - f. PFCP-3
 - g. Landscape Plan LS-1
- H. Large Format Drawing of shared –use path