

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT**

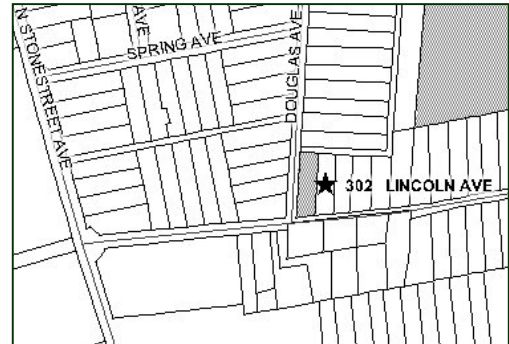
March 2, 2006

SUBJECT: Map Amendment Application
MAP2006-00095

Applicant: Mayor and Council of Rockville

Date Filed: February 24, 2006

Location: 302 Lincoln Avenue



REQUEST: To change the zoning of 9,000 square feet of land known as the Cook/Waters/Lewis House at 302 Lincoln Avenue from R-60 to R-60 HD (Historic District) and create a single site (Landmark) Historic District.

Planning Commission Review Date: March 8, 2006

Mayor and Council Public Hearing: April 10, 2006 (tentative)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission concur that the property is eligible for historic designation and find that such zoning is in conformance with the adopted Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan and will not present an adverse impact to the planning area or neighborhood.

Planning Area and Property Description

The Cook/Waters/Lewis House at 302 Lincoln Avenue is located in Planning Area Six, the Lincoln Park Planning Area. The most recent adopted Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan was prepared and adopted as part of the Rockville Master Plan in 1984. The plan stressed three themes: neighborhood stability, affordable housing, and improved municipal services to the neighborhood. Encroaching industrial uses and cut-through traffic were seen as the most severe threats to neighborhood stability. The 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan reaffirmed the findings and recommendations of the 1984 Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan and called for an update of the Neighborhood Plan. The Historic Preservation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan mentioned Lincoln Park as a potential historic district but did not single out 302 Lincoln Avenue. An updated Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan is under review before the Planning Commission at the present time.

The staff draft of the revised Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan reaffirms the broad goals of the 1984 Neighborhood Plan and incorporates a Historic Preservation Chapter and recommendations. It proposes some type of preservation of the history and character of the neighborhood. It mentions the Cook (e) house at 302 Lincoln Avenue on page 37 as one of three resources that have been researched on a Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory form.

This planning area is predominantly single-family residential area with the exception of an existing multi-family complex on Lenmore Avenue. The neighborhood is approximately 82 acres in size and contains approximately 230 households. The Lincoln Park Civic Association has nominated Lincoln Park for consideration as a local historic district or a conservation district. The neighborhood's housing stock is modest but generally well cared for. Maintenance of some properties has been a concern in the past and the City operates various programs to help qualified, low-income residents maintain individual residences and has stepped up rental property inspections. The City has also developed a Street Tree Master Plan but many rights of way are too narrow to support street trees. Another issue, poor drainage, is being addressed via an engineering plan: "*Lincoln Park – Drainage Improvements.*" Although there are no schools in the neighborhood, the Montgomery County Board of Education owns property on North Stonestreet Avenue that is used for storage and other industrial uses. These uses and other commercial operations along North Stonestreet have proven to be noisy and to encourage business traffic and parking in the neighborhood.

The 1894 house at 302 Lincoln Avenue is unique in Rockville and in Lincoln Park, a "grand" brick urban townhouse in an area of predominantly one to one-and-a-half story frame dwellings of modest proportions. Lincoln Park is a historic African American subdivision platted in 1891 outside Rockville by William Wallace Welsh. Welsh sold lots for \$80 each from 1891 to 1919. Welsh sold a lot in 1894 to George W. Cook and his wife, Fannie, and the house, with high style details similar to late 19th Century Railroad architecture, was built almost immediately thereafter. It is one of only 11 remaining structures built in Lincoln Park before 1920. Cook's wife, Fannie Hill, was the daughter of Reuben and Rachel Hill, one of the first settlers in the Lincoln Park area. The unique decorative details may be related to George Cook's employment on the railroad. The Cook heirs sold the house to Harry and Minnie Waters in 1929. The Waters family came to Montgomery County from Virginia, but soon became active citizens of Lincoln Park. The property remains in the ownership of descendants of the Waters family in 2006. Lincoln Park was annexed into Rockville's corporate limits in 1949. (For more information see Attachment C)

Process:

The property was nominated for designation by the owner, Carolyn V. Lewis, in September of 2004. The Historic District Commission held a public hearing on the property significance on January 19, 2006. Peerless Rockville and the property owners testified in favor of the designation. No testimony in opposition was received and the record was closed. The staff analysis of the property history and testimony found it eligible for designation as a single site (Landmark) historic district by the City of Rockville. The HDC concurred and recommended the site as eligible for historic designation on January 19, 2006. The Mayor and Council directed staff to file a Map Amendment Application for the rezoning on their behalf on February 21, 2006. The application was assigned application number MAP2006-00095.

The Planning Commission is requested to review the attached information and make a recommendation to the Mayor and Council. The Planning Commission review is not limited to historical, cultural, archeological, or architectural significance, but can encompass other planning criteria.

Impact:

The basic underlying zone and permitted uses of the property will not change. It is a single family detached residential structure and will remain a single family detached residence. The owners will be eligible for tax credits for maintenance and improvements to a historic property after designation. Any exterior changes in material or design must be approved by the Historic District Commission prior to issuance of a building permit or commencement of work.

Historical Summary:

It is likely that the area that became Lincoln Park was set aside for African American ownership because at least five black families had already purchased land and established homes in the general area by 1879. One of these families was that of Reuben Hill. The story of the Hill family in the 19th and 20th Century is illustrative of the restrictions and hardships that African-Americans encountered in their daily lives before desegregation. Reuben Hill (1832-1917) was a slave of the Stonestreet family before emancipation. His wife, Rachel Martin, was a free mulatto woman and thus their children were born free. Reuben and Rachel did not formally marry until 1871 since he was a slave. They purchased land on "Burgundy" east of Horner's Lane after their marriage, and are one of the five African-American families shown on the 1879 Hopkins Atlas map. Their daughter, Fannie Hill, was born in 1870 and married George Cook in 1886. Fannie (Hill) and George Cook built this house in 1894 in Lincoln Park across Lincoln Avenue from her brother's house, the Reuben T. Hill house at 305 Lincoln Avenue. The Reuben T. Hill House was designated as a Rockville historic site in 2003. The Cook house was sold in 1929 to Harry and Minnie Waters. The Waters family and their heirs, the Lewis family, have owned it to the present time. (For more information, see Attachment C.)

Staff Comments

This rezoning was processed at the request of the property owner with no objections expressed from the community. Designation is in compliance with both the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Rockville and the proposed revised Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan and, as the basic use will not change, will not have a negative affect on the neighborhood or streetscape. Designation will allow placement of a historical marker that tells the history of the neighborhood and the contribution of the designated property. The property will also be eligible for the 10% Montgomery County property tax credit, and the 20% State of Maryland income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic properties. Any significant changes in material or design to the exterior of the building, or the building of any new structures will be reviewed by the Historic District Commission for compatibility with the existing structure, and retention of the character of the structure and site.

Public Notification

Notices of the Historic District Commission (HDC) evaluation and meeting were sent via first class mail to the property owners, The Lincoln Park Civic Association, adjacent property owners and other interested parties on January 13, 2006. The site history, photographs of the site and neighborhood, and the agenda for the evaluation meeting were also posted on the city's web page.

Attachments

- A. Site Map
- B. Statement of Significance of 302 Lincoln Avenue
- C. History of 302 Lincoln Avenue
- D. Historic District Commission Staff Analysis
- E. HDC Minutes January 19, 2006