

From: Yashin yashin5@gmail.com

Sent: Tuesday November 7, 2023 3:13 PM

To: Rachel M Drescher <rachel.drescher@alexandriava.gov>; landuse@delraycitizen.net

Subject: Special Use Permit for 404-A East Alexandria Ave

Dear Ms. Drescher and the DRCA Land Use Committee,

We live and own one of the properties surrounding 404A East Alexandria Ave, the property for which there has been a Special Use Permit application. We would like to express our concern regarding the plans for this property.

Our concerns:

- 1) **Neighborhood character** the plans are completely inconsistent with the character of the neighbourhood, including in lot size and style.
- 2) **Safety:** Since the proposed construction would have no street frontage, there would be reduced access to emergency and fire services, as the alleyway does not provide enough width for a fire engine to get through. Currently, city workers must walk into the alley for trash pickup because the alley is so narrow. If that house were to catch fire, it would definitely endanger all surrounding houses.
- 3) **Electricity service implications:** Construction would also impact the electric lines that run overhead through the lot, and how this would be resolved is unclear.
- 4) **Reduced lighting in surrounding houses:** The proposed house would reduce natural lighting to the back of the houses on E Alexandria and Mount Vernon that currently surround the lot.
- 5) **Tree** Plan execution would certainly require damaging the root system of a large tree at the edge of the lot that is on city property, effectively killing it.
- 6) **Safety:** Car access to the proposed construction would be through the alley that runs from Mount Vernon to East Alexandria. The alley has poor vision clearance since it was meant for infrequent traffic.

In short, we are strongly against the proposed construction and hope our concerns are heard.

Sincerely

Yashin Lin and Mark Lim

1407 Mount Vernon Ave

Alexandria VA 22301

From: Alicia Montgomery <lishmo.202@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 7, 2023 1:17 PM
To: Antoine D Pierce <antoine.pierce@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Opposition to SUP2023-00076

Dear Mr. Pierce,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the granting of a Special Use Permit for the construction of a new home in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia. While I appreciate the need for development and growth, I believe that the proposed plans for this new home do not align with the character of our neighborhood and raise several significant concerns that need to be addressed.

1) Incompatibility with the Neighborhood Character:

The proposed plans for the new home do not conform to the character of our neighborhood. It lacks street frontage, which is an essential element of Del Ray's aesthetic, and does not meet the minimum lot-size standards for new builds. This nonconformity could potentially set a precedent for other out-of-character developments, threatening the overall charm and appeal of the neighborhood.

2) Harm to Surrounding Trees:

The construction of this new home could potentially harm the mature trees that surround the build site. Overhead branches and the root structure of these trees may be adversely affected, leading to long-term damage or loss of our precious green canopy. Preserving our trees is vital for the well-being of our neighborhood and its residents.

3) Reduction of Natural Light and Light Pollution:

The new construction could result in a reduction of natural light available to the surrounding homes. This would not only diminish the quality of life for current residents but also add to light pollution, disrupting the serenity of our micro-neighborhood at night. We cherish the peacefulness and natural beauty of our area and wish to protect it.

4) Safety Concerns:

The proposed development may hinder access for fire engines and emergency medical services in the event of emergencies. This could put residents at risk and decrease response times, which is a crucial safety concern that cannot be overlooked.

5) Impact on Electric Lines:

The construction may have an adverse impact on the electric lines to surrounding homes, potentially leading to power outages or disruptions in the neighborhood. The reliability of utility services is essential for residents, and we must ensure that this is not compromised.

6) Negative Impact on Property Values:

The construction of a new home that does not conform to the neighborhood's standards and character could negatively affect property values in the surrounding area. This, in turn, could have financial repercussions for homeowners who have invested in the community.

I urge you to carefully consider these concerns and take into account the well-being and interests of the residents of Del Ray and the micro-community that this project impacts directly. I respectfully request that you deny the Special Use Permit for the proposed new home until a more suitable and harmonious plan can be developed.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. I trust that you will make decisions that are in the best interests of our beloved Del Ray neighborhood and its residents.

Sincerely,

Alicia Montgomery, owner-resident

406 E. Alexandria Ave

Alexandria, VA 22301

phone 202-689-9617



Nov. 20, 2023

Karl W. Moritz, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning
City of Alexandria
City Hall, Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: SUP2023-00076
404A E. Alexandria Ave

Dear Mr. Moritz,

At the Nov. 8 membership meeting, the Del Ray Citizens Association (DRCA) voted to oppose the new single family residence with a “detached” Accessory Dwelling Unit on a substandard lot at 404 E Alexandria Ave for the following reasons:

1. The proposed project does not meet the historical development pattern of Del Ray by not having street frontage.
2. Fire truck and life safety emergency access to the site.
3. Stormwater management on the site due to the historical flooding concentrated on the western end of the 400 block of E. Alexandria Ave.
4. The exclusion of the basement from the FAR calculation and setbacks is questionable as we do not think it meets the zoning requirements for being below the average grade calculation based on the proposed basement exterior walls in the courtyard.
5. Utility impact on the neighbors due to the numerous overhead electrical wires, the outflow connection for stormwater, and the construction issues with the site.
6. Impact of proposed construction on trees both on city owned and neighbors' properties.



7. Vision clearance at alley entrances.

The Del Ray Citizens Association Land Use Committee (DRCA LUC) held a public Zoom meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023. The applicant presented the SUP application that had been submitted to the City. Members of the community who were in attendance were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments. On Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023, during the regular DRCA Zoom membership meeting, an abbreviated presentation was made and the motion set forth by the LUC was discussed.

The historical development pattern in Del Ray is to have houses that front on a street. Although alley homes exist in Old Town, it is not part of Del Ray's development and the proposal was not supported.

One of the main concerns of the neighbors was the potential restricted fire and life safety emergency vehicle access to the site due to the fact it does not have street frontage. The public alleys are only 10' wide and even the trash and recycling trucks cannot make it through the alleys. The various contractors currently pull the trash & recycle cans down the alley to the trucks parked on the street as the alley is too narrow.

The western end of E. Alexandria Ave near Mt. Vernon Ave has experienced numerous major floods during rain storms. The applicant was advised that the subterranean courtyard they are proposing will be exposed to flooding when these storms occur, with the potential of 3 -4 feet of stormwater entering the house as has happened to other residences. While it is conceivable that stormwater management features could mitigate the rain that could build up in the courtyard, it will take more than a sump pump dumping water onto grade to control the water. Tying into city storm drains will be necessary, and it is unclear at this time how the applicant would propose to deal with the water.

The project as designed is dependent on the basement square footage being excluded from the FAR calculation, and the assumption that because the basement does not count as FAR, the ADU is considered detached even though there are continuous interior spaces between the primary dwelling and the ADU. The LUC questioned whether the basement would comply for being below the average grade calculation. In addition, the setbacks do



not appear to be in compliance. It appears the foundation will project into the public alleys for the portion of the basement that is shown against the property lines.

The neighbors were also concerned about the numerous overhead electrical lines that supply power to their homes. The lines are fed off of a power pole that is at the north end of the project site and criss-cross overhead. Although the applicant stated he had had discussions with Dominion Power, an actual plan for how their homes would remain in service cannot be developed until the project is approved and the neighbors were left questioning what would happen.

There are also construction issues to be addressed in accessing the site due to the narrow alleys. The proposed structures encompass most of the site and there is not enough site available to use for staging during construction. The applicant stated that craning building materials over the row houses on Mt. Vernon was not feasible.

There are three trees on adjacent property whose root zones would be impacted by the retaining walls of the subterranean courtyard. Two are in the rear corners of 404 and 406 E. Alexandria and the other is on City-owned property adjacent to the site. The applicant has had discussions with the City Arborist about the City owned tree, but it appears the trees on the neighbors' properties have not been addressed.

Lastly, though an existing condition, the vision clearances at the alley entrances was pointed out by the neighbors as being potentially hazardous.

While we understand that the applicant is treating this as a feasibility study and does not want to invest too much time or money into the project before confirming if it is a buildable lot, the DRCA feels like there are too many unanswered variables regarding the proposed house and substandard lot. For these reasons, we cannot support the application.

During the meeting, the applicant stated that he intended to rent out the house and ADU. This information brought up the question of how this could be allowed, as zoning code section 7-203.B.6 Accessory dwellings, states that "the owner of the property shall maintain the property as their primary residence at the time the permit required by





7-203(A), above, is issued.” Requiring owner occupancy of either the primary dwelling or the ADU was of paramount importance when the DRCA originally supported the ADU ordinance. This was in order to control the use of the ADU and to discourage both units on a property being used for short-term rentals (VRBO and AirBnBs). Staff revealed that there was no formalized method for determining primary residence and that there was a Staff-level interpretation made on how to handle a proposal for both a new house and new ADU built on a vacant lot. It seems the primary residence requirement is effectively being ignored by this interpretation policy. This was quite a surprise to members of the DRCA and is something that needs clarification to both staff and the community. We are concerned that lack of enforcement of the primary residence requirement will lead to the majority of ADUs being used as short-term rentals, or by a developer to build out the maximum envelope of a site pushing the sale price higher, rather than providing additional affordable housing. Learning that there is not a homeowner living on site to talk to about mis-use of the ADU degrades the quality of life for those living adjacent to the property. We realize that the ADU topic deserves discussion separate from the SUP proposal under review, and would like to request that it be addressed with a written response to the DRCA outlining the current enforcement of the code.

Sincerely,

Kristine Hesse, DRCA LUC Co-Chair
Lisa Lettieri, DRCA LUC Co-Chair

Katie Waynick
DRCA President

cc: Sam Shelby, P & Z
Rachel Drescher, P & Z
Eric Teran, Eustilus Architects

From: Mary Ellen <maryellen.file@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, December 29, 2023 4:43 PM

To: Rachel M Drescher <rachel.drescher@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Ann.Horiwitz@alexandriava.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL]404 A East Alexandria Avenue

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my objection to the plan to build a house in an unbuildable lot at the above referenced address.

There are safety concerns as well as parking, and other issues. That lot has been a nice patch of "green space."

The Del Ray Citizens Association is against this as well as the Del Ray Citizens.

I feel sure that if this lot is safe and practical to build on, someone would have done so 100 or more years ago. My family goes back over 100 years in Del Ray and I have lived here for 80 of those years. I love this neighborhood.

What I am taking from this is that the least important factor in this decision is the people it affects , although I am sure you care about our tax money.

I am also disappointed that no one has responded to the concerns of the Citizens Association.

I ask you to please not approve this project.

Mary Ellen File

1401 Mount Vernon Avenue

Alexandria 22301

Please consider

From: Raj Singh <raj.singh.kumar@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, December 24, 2023 5:52 PM

Cc: Rachel M Drescher <rachel.drescher@alexandriava.gov>; Ann Horowitz <ann.horowitz@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: 404A E Alexandria Ave

Hi Rachel and Ann,

I'm writing, as the owner of 404 E Alexandria, Raj and Kim Singh, about the development behind our home. There is a reason it hasn't been built on all this time, and there is a real possibility three large mature trees will die. A 2500 fine or 2 inch tree replacement isn't an acceptable solution. In addition the house will alter the sun and shade to all existing homes.

I'm curious how will the construction equipment get to the site and where will it be stored? In addition, within Del Ray, I don't believe a home has been built with no street frontage, and the architecture of the home doesn't fit in with the area.

The owner is a well known individual who owns several properties and lists them as short term rental. While it's unknown if this will be a short term rental, one can take the available data and conclude it will be. This doesn't adhere to more housing for residents if only tourists are using it.

Two del ray committees stated no to building on this site, so it's also peculiar that city council would go against the advice given.

I'm available to talk.

Raj

From: Matthew Kaim matthewkaim@yahoo.com

Sent: Wednesday January 3, 2024 1:43 PM

To: PlanComm

Subject: Concerns over 404A East Alexandria

Hello All,

My name is Matt Kaim and I am the property owner of 1413 Mt Vernon Avenue, which is adjacent to the lot being considered for a SUP for 404A E Alexandria Avenue in Del Ray. I have owned this home since 2009.

I plan to be at the zoning meeting tomorrow (January 4), but wanted to send a few of my serious concerns with you in this e-mail.

- 1) The 2600 sq ft lot size is nearly 50% smaller than the required 5000 sq ft R-2-5 zone requirement, and the 45' width of the lot is less than the 50' required width
- 2) The proposed property does not meet the 100' or less emergency access requirement. This is a big risk to all surrounding homes, including mine. The 100' requirement was set for a reason.
- 3) My property, the lot in question, and surrounding properties are prone to severe flooding. My property already gets supersaturated quickly and floods due to underground springs around my property and my neighbors' properties. My backyard is the lowest point of all surrounding properties and the runoff/storm water from the proposed structures will worsen this flooding. There is no street for the runoff from the proposed structures to be guided to.
- 4) The project does not comply with the city's vision clearance requirements, making it very dangerous for pedestrians/and small children, which are oftentimes in the alleys.
- 5) Any car parked in the proposed parking spot would need to maneuver into my parking area in order to drive down the alley. This is not acceptable.
- 6) The City did not meet with any neighbors to discuss concerns provided to the City through the Del Ray Citizen's Association.
- 7) The alley from Mt Vernon does not provide the width/clearance for excavation/construction equipment, and attempts to bring that equipment down the alley will cause damage to my property, including trees and cars parked in my parking area.
- 8) The 2 story main building will not look like an accessory structure.
- 9) Parking on Mt Vernon, E Alexandria, and the block in general is very limited. There is no abundance of parking.
- 10) A low-pitch roof does not meet the character of Del Ray.

11) The 100+ year old tree will likely be killed by this project. This is unacceptable, as is the nominal \$200 fine for killing the tree.

12) The approval of this construction will set a very bad precedent for allowing developers to build structures otherwise out of code/zoning laws across Del Ray and Alexandria.

Please let me know if you have any questions or wish to discuss any of this before the meeting tomorrow.

Thank you.

Matt Kaim

703-731-3782

From: Tom VanAntwerp tom@tomvanantwerp.com

Sent: Wednesday January 3, 2024 2:54 PM

To: PlanComm

Subject: Resident comments on docket items 5 and 6

I'm writing to express my views regarding docket item 5 (service station at Monroe and Mount Vernon Ave, Special Use Permit #2023-00097) and docket item 6 (404A E Alexandria, Special Use Permit #2023-00076).

I am against the extension of the SUP for the service station. The dual curb cuts for the service station on both Mount Vernon and Monroe make it treacherous for pedestrians walking by it on any side. It contributes to danger to pedestrians on Mount Vernon Ave, a street mostly geared toward pedestrian-friendly commercial. This service station contributes to making Monroe a busier street than it ought to be, creating a hazardous divide between north and south ends of Del Ray. This service station exists in contradiction to the aims of the Mount Vernon Avenue Area Business Plan. A 20 year extension of this SUP locks the neighborhood into a poor allocation of this land, which doesn't well serve the actual residents versus those driving through. I encourage you to not support this SUP.

I am for the SUP for 404A E Alexandria. I live very near to the lot in question, and it has always perplexed me why that land stood empty. Putting a new home there would be an excellent addition to the neighborhood.

Thank you for taking the time to review my comments.

Best,

Tom VanAntwerp

Resident, Del Ray