

From: Walker, Karen N. kwalker@kirkland.com

Sent: Friday March 1, 2024 4:13 PM

To: PlanComm

Subject: Subdivision #2023-0007 - 1233 North Pickett Street

Please find attached the submission of the Pickett's Ridge Homeowner's Association regarding the application for Subdivision of 1233 North Pickett Street, Agenda item #9 for the Commission hearing next Monday, March 5, 2024. The HOA and its members reserve the right to be heard on the issues presented.

Karen Natalie Walker, P.C.

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To: City of Alexandria Planning Commission

From: Pickett's Ridge Homeowners Association

Date: March 1, 2024

Re: Resident Comments re Application for Subdivision, #2023-00007, 122 North Pickett St.

We submit these comments on behalf of the membership of the Pickett's Ridge Homeowners Association (HOA), including the owners and residents of all three of the constructed homes of the Pickett's Ridge I and II project, *i.e.*, the homes at 1102, 1103 and 1104 Finley Lane.

BACKGROUND

The Pickett's Ridge development includes four lots on Finley Lane, at the end of North Pickett Street just south of Maury Lane. There have been three constructed homes on Finley Lane since 2007 -- 1102, 1103, and 1104 Finley Lane. The fourth lot, 1102 Finley Lane, is owned by the fourth HOA member but construction on a home there has not yet occurred.

Only adjacent properties apparently received notice of the subject application. The homeowners' association (Pickett's Ridge HOA) received no notice. In the future, the HOA would request that it receive all relevant notices from the applicant and the City. The HOA received a copy of the Staff Report on February 26, after learning of the application and requesting copies.

As an initial matter, we note that it appears the application complies with the basic subdivision requirements in terms of regulatory mandates. We also recognize that the applicant is at an early stage of the design/build process. Accordingly, our HOA wishes to engage in collaborative and cooperative dialogue about the forthcoming plans for the subject property. In fact, we welcome (appropriate) redevelopment given that the existing property has been in a state of disrepair (if not blight) for many years. We therefore welcome improvements to the property.

We do wish to have concerns about the future development addressed at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner. The unique nature of this neighborhood is the natural wooded settings with ample space between homes. We therefore wish to be updated continuously regarding plans for the property, including grading, design, construction, access, etc. Accordingly, we hope that all plans and developments take into account the concerns below and that all plans are circulated to and reviewed by our HOA.

HOMEOWNER CONCERNS AND REQUESTS

1. North Pickett Street/Finley Lane Access and Condition

The application does not specify how the new homes would be fronted and how access/driveways would be placed. The location and construction of driveways will impact traffic and safety, not to mention possible property line/liability concerns (see below). Accordingly, we

request that as soon as more information is available regarding the footprint of the homes and the proposal for driveway access that it be shared with the HOA for comment.

Regarding access in general, we encourage the applicant and the City to carefully plan for unrestricted community access during construction. The lower end of North Pickett as well as Finley Lane is a narrow drive with no shoulders and barely allowing for two passenger vehicles to pass. There is no room for trucks or vehicles to be parked on the street south of Maury Lane. The residents of Finley Lane need safe access in and out, as do City vehicles, delivery trucks, and emergency vehicles.

2. Lot Size Comparison

The Staff presentation identifies “similarly situated lots” as the four lots to the north of the subject property (1235, 1301, 1315, and 1325 North Pickett), and indicates the subject property would be consistent in lot size. However, the presentation fails to analyze the four lots on the south side of the subject property (1103, 1104, 1102, and 1101 Finley Lane). The presentation also omits the Maury Lane properties immediately to the west of the subject property (two examples listed below). Those lots are all substantially larger (double or more) the size of the proposed subdivided property:

Subject Property Lot 500	20,000 sq. ft.
Subject Property Lot 501	23,156 sq. ft.
1103 Finley Lane	56,628 sq. ft.
1104 Finley Lane	30,492 sq. ft.
1102 Finley Lane	39,639 sq. ft.
1101 Finley Lane	47,480 sq. ft.
4812 Maury Lane	48,351 sq. ft.
4848 Maury Lane	50,529 sq. ft.

Given that the subdivided lots would be substantially smaller than the adjacent lots to the south, extra attention should be given (going forward) to issues such as dwelling placement, dwelling elevation and height, tree preservation, and access location, particularly with respect to the immediately adjacent property, 1103 Finley Lane.

3. Plans for Street Frontage/Access

As mentioned in item #1 above, we have questions regarding the North Pickett/Finley street frontage, particularly in terms of landscaping, tree removal, and the placement/installation of access/driveways to the new residences. In particular, there has been considerable confusion over the years regarding which parts of the North Pickett/Finley thoroughfare areas are City property as opposed to private and/or HOA property.

By way of example, over the years there have been disagreements about City/private snow removal, trash removal, and pavement upkeep obligations and whether the street is public or

private property. The DSUP for Pickett's Ridge provided that after construction of the Finley Lane homes, the street was to become a city/public road in accordance with the DSUP. Because the DSUP has been extended multiple times (due to the one remaining unconstructed lot), even City Staff was unclear on the North Pickett/Finley ownership/control situation. For practical purposes, the City has accepted its responsibilities regarding snow and trash removal, so further discussions have not been held. However, if there is any lack of clarity regarding the public/private ownership of the street area at or near the subject property, that needs to be resolved, and the placement of any new driveways or other features must be restricted to the subject property borders or public right of way. Specifically, if Finley Lane or any parts thereof are property of the HOA or its members, the HOA would have significant liability concerns and legal objections regarding any access, driveway, construction vehicle or other encroachment on Finley Lane.

4. Drainage, Grading, and Tree Removal

The HOA urges all relevant City agencies to carefully consider drainage, grading, and tree removal issues. The DSUP governing the HOA properties severely restricts the removal of trees and development around conservation easements/lines of disturbance. There are already major drainage issues in this area given the steep hill from the subject property down to 1101 Finley. Every major rainfall results in gushing water flows down North Pickett and Finley Lane, causing flooding of driveways, yards, and the street itself. Homeowners have spent a considerable amount of time and money addressing drainage problems on their property, and therefore want to ensure new construction does not worsen the problem.

We understand the next stage of development will require a grading plan, which the Department of Transportation will review. As a part of this process, we wish to address these storm water issues and the site plan generally.

A separate but related issue relates to the survivability/removal of trees and vegetation. Excessive storm runoff can further damage existing trees on both the subject property and surrounding ones. Moreover, the preservation of as many trees and as much vegetation as possible will help avoid excessive erosion and stormwater drainage problems. Accordingly, in addition to urging careful review of the grading plan, we urge the City to preserve as many trees as possible including all large mature trees.

We wish to clarify that, on the other hand, we strongly encourage the removal and pruning of diseased or damaged trees. One diseased tree on the subject property already fell across Finley Lane, blocking access and costing residents substantial sums in having portions of the tree removed from their property. We also encourage the removal/cutting of the running bamboo that is rampant on the subject property, including on much of the street frontage. As the City is aware, running bamboo is a highly invasive species that spreads easily, creating a nuisance and potentially damaging roads, trees, fences, and adjacent properties. Per the City's listing of bamboo on its list of Invasive Plants noting that such plants are "the greatest threat to natural areas," removing or limiting the spread of running bamboo is crucial.

5. Architectural Review/Aesthetics

Finally, while we have asked for additional plans regarding the proposed homes to be constructed on the subject lots (particularly Lot 501 which is immediately adjacent to 1103 Finley), we have been told that such plans are not yet available. We understand that may be the case, but urge the applicant and City agencies to share all pertinent information with the HOA and residents as soon as possible and permitting ample time to comment.

From: Mary Catherine Gibbs mcgibbs@wiregill.com

Sent: Tuesday March 5, 2024 11:26 AM

To: PlanComm

Subject: RE: Subdivision #2023-0007 - 1233 North Pickett Street

I'm also copying the Planning Commission and the Staff so they have this information for the record. Thanks so much for your interest in the subdivision and Classic Cottages looks forward to continuing the dialog about future plans for the lots as that information becomes available.

Thanks, Mary Catherine

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Mary Catherine Gibbs
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Nate Macek, Chair
and Members of the Alexandria Planning Commission

FROM: Mary Catherine Gibbs

RE: Response to Residents' Comments from Pickett's Ridge HOA
Subdivision No. 2023-00007 - 1233 N. Pickett Street

DATE: March 5, 2024

This memorandum is written on behalf of the Applicant, Classic Cottages, LLC, in response to the Resident Comments submitted to the Planning Commission on March 1, 2024 from the Pickett's Ridge Homeowners Association (Pickett's Ridge HOA) related to the above referenced subdivision application on your docket for March 5, 2024.

First and foremost, Classic Cottages welcomes input from its neighbors wherever they are seeking to provide high-quality infill redevelopment in the area. Chad Riedy of Classic Cottages sent advance notice of the pending application to all adjoining neighbors, including those who adjoin the Property on Finley Lane, on January 17, 2024. A copy of one of those letters sent on January 17th is attached for the record. While Classic Cottages complied with the Zoning Ordinance requirements for sending notice of the upcoming hearing to all adjoining neighbors, Pickett's Ridge HOA's counsel also reached out to my office and to Mr. Riedy and Classic Cottages is open to discussing the project further as plans become available.

The Applicant provides the following specific responses to the comments raised by the Pickett's Ridge HOA and divides them into two categories:

1. Related to Subdivision Approval:

a. Lot comparisons: Staff correctly compared the lots to the left (northwest) of 1233 N. Pickett as those lots are the similarly situated lots in the original subdivision of Varsity Park, with which the Zoning Ordinance requires comparison. See Zoning Ordinance Section 11-1710(B). The other lots listed by the Pickett's Ridge HOA are not within the original subdivision of Varsity Park, of which 1233 N. Pickett was a residue. The lots in the Pickett's Ridge HOA are not part of that subdivision nor were the lots across N. Pickett Street.

2. Unrelated to Subdivision Approval:

a. Plans for future development on this site are not permitted to be considered by the Planning Commission as part of the approval of the subdivision, however, Classic Cottages is willing to discuss those plans with the neighbors as a courtesy as part

of the grading plan process that would occur after approval of the subdivision plat.

- b. Right Of Way questions related to the end of Pickett St: Classic Cottages will be improving the condition of the end of N. Pickett Street as part of the grading plan process moving forward for redevelopment of the two new lots. Classic Cottages will provide an extension of the sidewalk that is found to its left along its entire frontage on N. Pickett St. including curb and gutter.
- c. Access to the new lots will be off of N. Pickett Street, not Finley Lane.
- d. Classic Cottages will seek to preserve as many trees as is possible recognizing the significant grade on the proposed Lot 501, however, several trees will be removed, particularly in the middle of the new lot, as well as all of the invasive bamboo referenced. Classic Cottages will also be removing all the dead or dying/diseased trees from the site that have become a cause of concern for some neighbors.



January 17, 2024

**Betina & Vertume Dufault
1103 Finley La
Alexandria VA, 22304**

Via Certified Mail Delivery to

Re: 1233 N Pickett St.

Dear Neighbors,

My name is Chad Riedy, and I am the Planning Manager at Classic Cottages. We recently purchased the property at 1233 N Pickett St, and I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and our company. We are a local design/build firm based here in Alexandria and have been building new homes in Northern Virginia for the past 13 years. We are a relatively small firm building about 30 homes a year primarily in Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax County. We pride ourselves on our ability to build a high-quality home that will last for generations.

Regarding the property at 1233 N Pickett St, it is our intention to subdivide the lot into two lots for the purposes of constructing two new single-family homes. We submitted our application for subdivision with the City of Alexandria at the end of December and our application is scheduled to be heard in front of the Planning Commission on March 5, 2024. In addition to reaching out to you we will also be reaching out to the Seminary Hill Civic Association to discuss this project with them.

It is our intent to create a project that will fit seamlessly into the neighborhood and integrate the rich history of the area with the desires of today's families. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at the contact information noted below. You may also call our office at 703-256-1400. Thank you so much for your time and I hope you have a wonderful day.

Best,

Chad Riedy
Planning Manager, Classic Cottages
chad@ccottages.com
571-385-0928