

SUP #2019-00094

3202 Old Dominion Blvd.

Zoning ordinance section 12-901(C) applies to this redevelopment proposal and states that *“City Council, upon consideration of the special use permit, finds that the proposed development will be compatible with the existing neighborhood character in terms of bulk, height and design.”*

After a careful review of the latest development proposal and associated staff report, we believe that the current proposal will not be compatible with the existing neighborhood character from a variety of perspectives, which are described below.

Our primary over-arching concern is that if the current development proposal is approved, this will set a precedent for our neighborhood that will be cited by future development applicants seeking to redevelop their properties with significantly larger houses than those currently existing. For example, since the current development proposal shows a new house of 6,362 gross square feet versus the average of 3,233 gross square feet per house along this section of Old Dominion Blvd., a future development proposal applicant could correctly claim that construction of a new house that is twice as big as the average of the neighboring houses should be approved since the City approved the 3202 Old Dominion Blvd. application. This situation could ultimately lead to ever-increasing house sizes to the detriment of current property owners in this neighborhood.

Although the zoning ordinance section referenced above does not specify precisely what level of building size increase is allowed, we believe that a doubling of the existing average house size is clearly not compatible with the existing neighborhood character.

Our concerns specific to the elements of bulk, height, design and landscaping are presented below.

Bulk

The table below provides a summary of the relevant gross square feet (GSF) floor area data related to the subject property.

Existing House	2,770 GSF
Current Proposal	6,362 GSF
Previous Proposal	5,645 GSF
Block Average	3,233 GSF

Note: GSF data cited in current and previous staff reports

The current proposal is 130% larger than the existing house, 97% larger than the block average and is even 13% larger than the previous proposal. Finally, the proposed house would be 32% larger than the largest house on the block. It seems apparent from this data that the bulk of the proposed house will not be compatible with the existing neighborhood.

Height

The height of the proposed house, as calculated in the staff report, will be 25.2 feet. This measurement is to midpoint of the shed dormer. This will be higher than both the height of the existing house at 16 feet (63% higher) and the average height of 19.5 feet (29% higher) for the other houses on the block. Also, as shown in the current proposal, the peak of the roof will be 30 feet above the existing grade.

Apart from these specific measurements, we found the street perspective views contained in the previous and current staff reports to be illuminating. Staff had taken issue with the proposed height in the applicant's previous concept, finding "... the proposal's height too out of character with its immediate neighbors." Yet, as shown in the perspective drawings below, it appears to us that the most recent proposal will appear to be the same height with respect to its immediate neighbors as the previous proposal.

Perspective of current proposal from pg. 13 of staff report:



Figure 11 - Street Perspective

Perspective of previous proposal from pg. 12 of previous staff report:

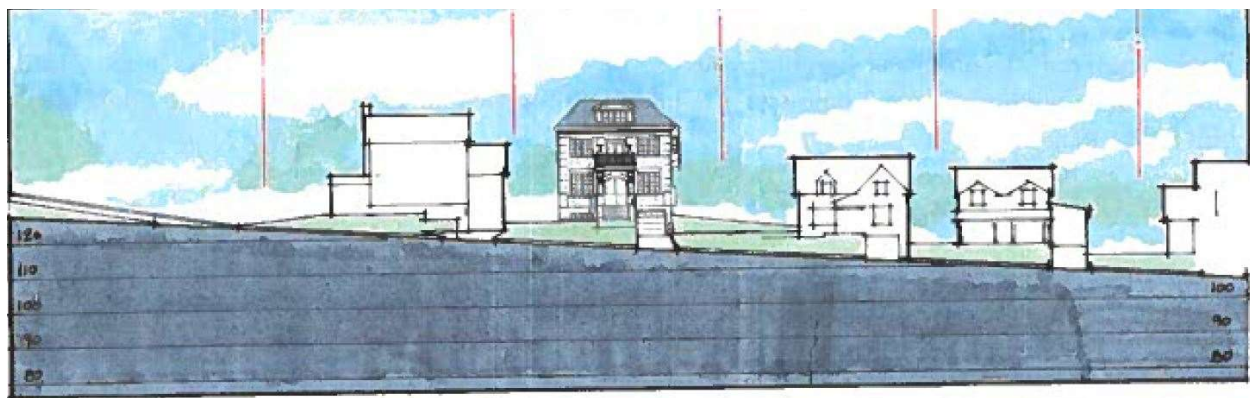
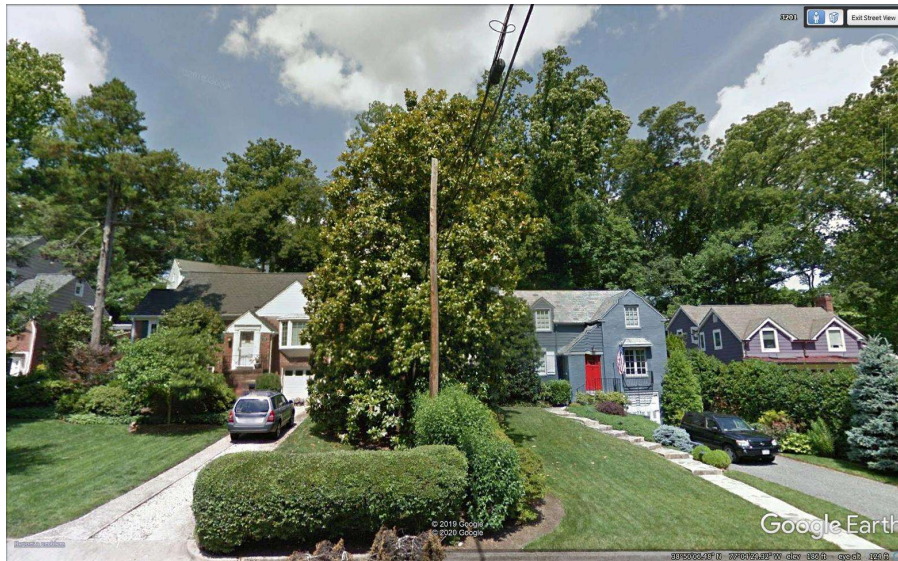


Figure 10 - Street Perspective

Design and Landscaping

We generally share staff's assessment that the current design is an improvement over the previous design proposal in terms of being more compatible with the neighborhood character from an architectural standpoint. However, in addition to the concerns described above with respect to bulk and height, there are elements of the design, including landscaping, that still are a concern.

1. It appears to us that the extent of impervious surfaces will be significantly increased from existing conditions with the new concept. The larger footprint, new driveway and front and rear patios seem to be proposed as being made with impervious materials.
2. We also note that the new design plan now shows four separate entrances into the first floor (front door plus two sets of french doors and rear patio door) and two separate entrances into the basement (one directly from the garage and one from the north side). We are concerned that this design would lend itself to conversion from a single family house to a multifamily dwelling. This would not be compatible with our neighborhood and we believe would be in conflict with R-8 zoning regulations.
3. We are concerned about the proposed loss of existing tree cover on the lot. Apart from the direct loss of trees on the lot, we are also concerned that the large and now deeper excavation that will be required for the two-car garage and basement will negatively impact the roots and condition of existing trees surrounding the lot. Having lived here for 20 years we are particularly concerned about the loss of the large mature Southern Magnolia tree (shown in photo below) whose canopy straddles the property line with 3204. We have always valued that tree for its beauty and buffering/screening function. It appears from the landscaping plan that this lot will become much less vegetated once constructed.



Chris and Gwen Gay
3201 Old Dominion Boulevard



NRCA, P.O. Box 3242, Alexandria, VA 22302

February 3, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL

ATTN: Mr. Nathan Macek, Chair
City of Alexandria Planning Commission
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Agenda Item 10, Special Use Permit #2019-00094—3202 Old Dominion Boulevard

Dear Mr. Macek:

I am writing on behalf of the North Ridge Citizens Association (NRCA) pursuant to Special Use Permit #2019-00094 (February 4, 2020, Docket Item #10). While not entirely opposed to the replacement of the existing structure at 3202 Old Dominion Boulevard, which is a substandard lot, we remain seriously apprehensive about the height, bulk and compatibility of the proposed structure considering the immediate neighborhood.

Concerns were first raised during our November 11, 2019 monthly meeting, when the applicant and the architect presented an initial building design. These concerns were reiterated by the Planning Commission staff in its December 24th report, resulting in the application's withdrawal. At staff's suggestion, the building design was altered to the extent that when resubmitted in January 2020, staff reversed its position and supported granting the SUP - in effect, agreeing that the proposed replacement structure would be "compatible with the existing neighborhood character in terms of bulk, height, and design," as required by Zoning Ordinance 12-901(C).

While we commend the efforts of P&Z staff in working with the applicant to resolve initial concerns, several neighbors adjacent to – or in close proximity of – 3202 Old Dominion Boulevard remain concerned about the building plan.

Our NRCA reviewers could not agree that the requirements of the ordinance have been met with the latest revisions. Issues of continued concern include:

- Based on the data provided in the January 25th staff report (Figure 11, page 13), the bulk of the proposed replacement house at 6,362 GSF is more than twice (230 percent) the existing home, and nearly twice (197 percent) the average of homes on this block of Old Dominion. In fact, it is now 717 GSF larger than that of the original proposal.
- The height of the proposed structure, although four feet lower than originally proposed, will still be the highest on the block – nearly 30 percent taller than the average home. The



NRCA, P.O. Box 3242, Alexandria, VA 22302

proposed house would tower over neighboring 3204 Old Dominion and would be taller than the house at 3200 Old Dominion, which is on higher ground. Given that this is a substandard lot, we must recognize that bulk and height impacts are all the more severe. While lowering the structure's height may impede the construction of nine or ten-foot ceilings, this is an issue that does not serve as a legitimate basis for approval of a building plan that is inconsistent with the character of neighboring properties.

- We remain concerned that existing trees, particularly a large magnolia and a large cedar, will either be removed or destroyed and that the shrub and canopy coverage standards (pages 17-19 of the City's 2019 *Landscape Guidelines*) will not be met.

In summary, NRCA urges the Planning Commission to return this application to staff for further design modification. The goal should be to lessen the impact of a replacement structure on neighboring residents. This request stems not only from our apprehensions about this building's immediate effects on the neighborhood, but also the long-term precedent that would be set if houses on substandard lots that deviate so far from the norm can still be found—to quote the ordinance—"compatible with the existing neighborhood character in terms of bulk, height, and design."

Sincerely,

Kay Stimson
NRCA President

December 22nd, 2019

Karina Vera

3202 Old Dominion Blvd

Alexandria, VA 22305

Reference: Special Use Permit Application for 3202 Old Dominion Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22305

Dear Karina,

Thank you for sharing your plans and intentions for redevelopment of the 3202 Old Dominion Blvd home. We understand the City of Alexandria approval is required to demolish and rebuild a house in the City. As a resident and neighbor, I (we) are writing to express our support for the demolition and replacement of residence at 3202 Old Dominion Blvd.

We further believe that the proposed home design falls within the character of our Beverly Hills neighborhood, will be an improvement over the existing structure and should have a positive effect on home values in the neighborhood.

I, (we) are in support and hereby express that by this letter to be forwarded to the City of Alexandria.

Sincerely,



Print Name: SUSANNE HOWARD AND LEYMAN HOWARD

Proximity to 3202 Old Dominion Blvd: 3107 Old Dominion Blvd
(ACROSS THE STREET)

Your Address: 3107 Old Dominion Blvd

FW: [EXTERNAL]3202 Old Dominion Blvd**Sam Shelby <sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov>**

Tue 2/4/2020 11:15 AM

To: Patrick Silva <Patrick.Silva@alexandriava.gov>**Cc:** Ann Horowitz <ann.horowitz@alexandriava.gov>; Tony LaColla <Anthony.LaColla@alexandriava.gov>; Karl Moritz <Karl.Moritz@alexandriava.gov>

Hi Patrick,

More correspondence to include for the meeting tonight. Thanks!

Sam Shelby
Urban Planner
Planning & Zoning
City of Alexandria
703-746-3865

-----Original Message-----

From: Frank Durkin <frank@fxdurkin.com>**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2020 11:04 AM**To:** lgubser@comcast.net**Cc:** Karina Vera <kveralop@gmail.com>; Sam Shelby <sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov>**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]3202 Old Dominion Blvd

Mr. Gubser,

I am writing at the request of my client, Ms Karina Vera-Lopez. She asked me to contact you regarding the opposition letter submitted by Mr. Christopher Gay.

I will not address any of Mr. Gay's arguments until the hearing, but I wanted to clear up any factual confusion prior to that so we can make the best use of our time.

Let me assure you that this is nowhere near a 6,000+ square foot house. Mr. Gay appears to be taking his numbers from the FAR worksheet which was submitted with the original (rejected) design and includes areas excluded from FAR, specifically, the attic and the basement. This allows him to compare our gross area with the neighbors' net areas, a significantly different metric.

Please be aware that since that worksheet was submitted, we worked with staff to reduce the attic from a 1300 square-foot occupiable room to a 300 square foot storage area. The basement has increased slightly (80 square feet) below the new front porch, but remains an exclusionary area. The main floors remain unchanged, as does the compliant FAR area.

In short, the house is smaller than originally proposed, both mathematically and visually, and does not wildly vary from the neighborhood.

Please call me with any questions, and I look forward to seeing you this evening.

Regards,

Frank Durkin
202-531-1455

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Karina Vera <kveralop@gmail.com>

Proposed house

1 message

Jane Seward <janeseward@comcast.net>

Tue, Feb 4, 2020 at 9:51 AM

To: Karina Vera <kveralop@gmail.com>, Lynn Gas <queenbeegas@yahoo.com>

Karina, it was nice to meet you last night to talk about your proposed house. Thank you for your willingness to accommodate concerns expressed by neighbors.

Although speaking on my own as a neighbor, I serve on the Board of North Ridge Citizens Association and lead Green Space, Canopy Trees, and Beautification issues for North Ridge. NRCA and your neighbors are passionate about North Ridge's signature characteristic - canopy trees which frame our houses, cool summer temperatures, absorb CO2, produce O2, reduce pollution, and absorb water reducing runoff; canopy trees increase the value of our houses. We are also passionate about maintaining the overall character of the houses in the neighborhood.

With respect to the design and size of the house, I will defer to whatever the NRCA board decides regarding its size in relation to adjacent houses and other houses in the neighborhood. They have studied and are studying your proposed design.

Whatever house design and size that is ultimately approved, to minimize the impact of its size and the construction process, you agreed to work with us to plant canopy trees on your property. Canopy trees will enhance your property, minimize the size and height of the house, and contribute to NRCA reforestation efforts; you agreed to establish protection zones around the mature magnolia and the oaks belonging to the neighbor on the left of your property to ensure that roots are protected during construction, avoiding construction debris and water being dumped into the soil. You agreed to planting a canopy tree in the front right of your property and several along the back right of your house which would shield your house from the neighbor's which towers over yours. You were enthusiastic about working with our Canopy Tree Campaign to decide on the specific trees and their placement.

We did not talk about the new driveway you are planning, but we would urge you to consider a material that is not impervious to water. One of the problems that we are experiencing in Alexandria is increasing water runoff because of increased urbanization and impervious surfaces.

I would be happy to meet with you at your property to identify shrubs and trees worth saving, ways to protect tree roots and to mitigate soil contamination during construction. We can talk about types of trees and shrubs you might want to plant.

jane

Sent from my iPhone to

On Feb 3, 2020, at 10:55 PM, Karina Vera <kveralop@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Jane,

FW: [EXTERNAL]Please add this email to the hearing. Thanks!

Sam Shelby <sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov>

Tue 2/4/2020 12:11 PM

To: Patrick Silva <Patrick.Silva@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Ann Horowitz <ann.horowitz@alexandriava.gov>; Tony LaColla <Anthony.LaColla@alexandriava.gov>; Karl Moritz <Karl.Moritz@alexandriava.gov>

More correspondence for Old Dominion – one more to follow immediately after this.

Sam Shelby
Urban Planner
Planning & Zoning
City of Alexandria
703-746-3865

From: Karina Vera <kveralop@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 11:57 AM

To: Sam Shelby <sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov>; Frank Durkin <frank@fxdurkin.com>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]Please add this email to the hearing. Thanks!

Dear North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) members,

In reference to your letter dated December 23rd, 2019 to the City of Alexandria Planning & Zoning Commission, I would like to address the following:

Per your request, I have moved my hearing to February, 2020.

We have also made changes to the bulk, height, and design of my original home design. The new design is more compatible with neighborhood's character as you requested. Additionally, I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Jane Seward and we have discussed options of planting canopy trees in my property to support her Tree Conservation Project at North Ridge. It was a very pleasant and informative meeting, and I am excited to work with her in the near future.

I would also like to voice my concern about sending inaccurate information to the City of Alexandria Planning and Zoning Commission. The official letter stated that the height of my first home proposal was 18.8 ft. taller than the adjacent home. I understand this misinformation came from a neighbor, but it is completely incorrect. My neighbor's current home height based on the block face height study requested by the City is 18.9 ft., indicating that my original home height proposal would have been 37.7 ft. tall, twice as tall as his home's height. The previous height in the City report was 10.5ft taller, but has now decreased to 3.4 ft. This information is not just inaccurate but defamatory. The "imposing structure" rumors spread very quickly among neighbors and it set an overall pessimistic tone and hostility towards my home project. I have tried multiple times to reach my neighbors as you requested, but few neighbors were willing to open their doors to discuss these issues.

As of yesterday, the neighbors I was able to speak with expressed their support towards the new plans. They really like the changes, but are unwilling to memorialize their support in writing. Their main response is that they don't want to go against the other neighbors, who are still unhappy with the plans such as Mr. Christopher Gay. After many attempts, I was only able to get support in writing from Mr. and Mrs. Howard.

Mr. Gray has presented two letters to your board and the latest was also sent to the City of Alexandria Planning & Zoning Commission. We noticed a lack of accuracy and distortion of information in his

correspondence. One of the many to mention is the height of the proposed home. I am attaching a Block Face Height Study (FRONT Study) requested by the City and it clearly states that my house is 3.4 ft. taller in comparison to my neighbor to the right and 0.7 SHORTER than my neighbor to the left. Mr. Gray references the REAR shed dormer, but since it is not applicable nor requested by the city, not study was completed nor is one required.

Mr. Gray has also implied in his first letter that I will be renting my basement, “external entrance to the basement and are concerned that the owner may be planning to rent out the space.” He continues implying this in his second letter, “design would lend itself to conversion from a single family house to a multifamily dwelling.” I am puzzled to know if he assumes this for anybody who has an egress door or French doors in the first floor. I find these remarks derogatory and quite frankly insulting as I have no intention of doing any of this. His obvious intent it to falsely inflame other neighbors by making baseless and insulting accusations in regard to my intended use of my home.

Lastly, meeting your board members last December was a delightful experience. It was refreshing to know that I will living in a community that not only protects its neighbors but also understand their concerns. As a new neighbor, I am asking you to also protect my rights. As you can see, I have worked diligently with my team to meet my neighbors and address the North Ridge Citizens' Association requests. I believe this community is great and I cannot wait to finally begin the construction of my new home. I hope you all can support my home plans, so I can finally move forward with the next phase of my project.

Respectfully submitted,

--

Karina Vera-Lopez DDS

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Fwd: [EXTERNAL]3202 Old Dominion Boulevard - Our COncerns

Sam Shelby <sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov>

Tue 2/4/2020 9:40 AM

To: Patrick Silva <Patrick.Silva@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Ann Horowitz <ann.horowitz@alexandriava.gov>; Tony LaColla <Anthony.LaColla@alexandriava.gov>; Karl Moritz <Karl.Moritz@alexandriava.gov>

Please include in the planning commission's materials.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Megan Shannon, C.I.D." <megan@meganblakedesign.com>

Date: February 3, 2020 at 8:29:59 PM EST

To: Sam Shelby <sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov>, Greg Shannon <gjshannon@gmail.com>

Cc: Kay Stimson <kstimson@me.com>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]3202 Old Dominion Boulevard - Our COncerns

Hi Sam,

I had a rough week last week with family health issues and am realizing how late I am to the table for 3202 Old Dominion. My concern is that the neighbor getting this variance or allowance to build larger on a small lot, that can change the landscape for this neighborhood. It opens the gates for the neighborhood to build larger homes on their lots and changes the green landscape and character of this special place in Alexandria. I am also concerned about the height and the blockage of sunlight in the winter months as the sun just skims the top of the existing house.

The our my husband and I's concerns and one of us will be there tomorrow evening to support this.

Hope this is NOT too late. Can you please add these concerns to the list.

Thank you!

Megan and Greg Shannon

Megan Blake Design

Megan Shannon, C.I.D.
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