

**PLANNING UNIT REPORT
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
of May 9, 2006**

RE: I.D. #03615, Demolition Permit – 5402 Whitcomb Drive

1. Requested Action: Approval of a demolition permit for a single-family residence at 5402 Whitcomb Drive.
2. Applicable Regulations: Section 28.04 (22) provides the guidelines and regulations for the approval of demolition permits. The proposed use of the property post demolition will be three single-family lots to be created by Certified Survey Map. Section 16.23, Subdivision Regulations, provides the requirements for land divisions.
3. Report Prepared By: Timothy M. Parks, Planner

GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Applicant & Property Owner: Susan Peters, Peterscott, LLC; N60 W34698 Forest Bay Road; Oconomowoc.
2. Development Schedule: The applicant wishes to begin demolition as soon as all necessary approvals have been obtained.
3. Parcel Location: An approximately 0.75-acre parcel located at the northwest corner of Loruth Terrace and Whitcomb Drive; Aldermanic District 20; Madison Metropolitan School District.
4. Existing Conditions: The site is developed with an existing single-family residence, zoned R1 (Single-Family Residence District).
5. Proposed Use: The applicant wishes to demolish the residence to allow division of the property into three lots by approval of a Certified Survey Map. It is anticipated that the three proposed lots will each be developed with single-family residences.
6. Surrounding Land Use and Zoning: The subject site is generally surrounded by other single-family residences in R1 (Single-Family Residence District) zoning, with Orchard Ridge Park east of the property across Loruth Terrace.
7. Adopted Land Use Plan: The Comprehensive Plan identifies this area for low-density residential uses.
8. Environmental Corridor Status: This property is not located within a mapped environmental corridor. The public parklands to the east are identified on the corridor maps.
9. Public Utilities & Services: This property is served by a full range of urban services.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

This application is subject to the demolition standards of Section 28.04 (22).

ANALYSIS, EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION:

The applicant is requesting approval of a demolition permit to demolish an existing two-story, single-family residence located on approximately 0.75-acres at the northwest corner of Loruth Terrace and Whitcomb Drive. City records indicate the house, which has 3,616 square feet of living area, was built in 1955 with additions added subsequently. A gravel drive extends from Loruth Terrace to serve an attached garage. The property is a heavily wooded parcel with approximately 106.5 feet of frontage along Whitcomb Drive and 307 feet of frontage along Loruth Terrace. The subject site is located in the Orchard Ridge neighborhood, which is generally characterized by single-family residences on large lots. The lots in immediate vicinity of the subject property generally range in size between a third-acre and an acre. The site and surrounding neighborhood are zoned R1 (Single-Family Residence District).

The letter of intent as well as a number of photos of the existing residence suggests that the home has been severely neglected over the course of a number of years by previous owners. A windshield survey by the Planning Unit found the exterior home to be in a deteriorated state and the site to be overgrown. More significantly, the Inspection Unit was required to take enforcement action in Dane County Circuit Court in 2003 and 2004 against the former owners resulting from their keeping between 100 and 150 cats on premises and the impact it was having on the condition of the property and the surrounding neighborhood. The letter of intent submitted by the applicants suggests that it would be financially infeasible to rehabilitate the property.

The new owners wish to demolish the house to facilitate the division of the property into three lots by Certified Survey Map. The lots will ultimately be developed with individual single-family residences per R1 bulk requirements. The three lots will be oriented towards Loruth Terrace, with lot frontages of 100 feet for the northern two lots and 106.8 feet for the southernmost lot adjacent to Whitcomb Drive. All three lots will be 106.7 feet deep. The size of the three lots more than adequately conform to minimum R1 zoning requirements, which require at least 65 feet of lot frontage and 8,000 square feet of lot area for each lot. The three lots proposed also generally maintain the average lot width present in the surrounding area, which largely features 100-foot minimum lot widths. The proposed lots, however, will be much shallower than the majority of lots in the area, which have depths ranging between 160 feet and 300 feet.

The proposed demolition permit for this single-family residence is unique from the vast majority of demolition permits reviewed by the Plan Commission in recent years. Typically, the request to demolish a building is accompanied by specific plans for the building(s) that will replace the demolished building. The demolition standards grant the Plan Commission the ability to review the proposed use of a property following a demolition, which in this case is the subdivision of the site into three lots by Certified Survey Map. Ordinarily, a land division request such as the one proposed would be reviewed administratively by staff to ensure conformance with various City regulations, including but not limited to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations.

As noted above, the lots more than amply comply with the minimum lot dimensions required in R1 zoning. In general, the lots also comply with the minimum design criteria in the Subdivision Regulations. A passage in those criteria requires that “the size, shape and orientation of the lots shall be appropriate for the location of the subdivision and for the type of development and use contemplated.” The Comprehensive Plan, which identifies the site and surrounding area for low-density residential uses, encourages infill development to be “compatible with established neighborhood character” and to be consistent with an adopted neighborhood plan for the area, for which one does not exist for this established area of the City.

In this case, the three lots to be created will comply with the R1 requirements in the Zoning Ordinance, and the three new houses will need to comply with the setbacks and other bulk requirements of the district. The applicant proposes to create lots that appear to mirror the prevalent minimum lot width elsewhere in the neighborhood. The proposed lot widths will likely result in a pattern of home locations on those lots that continues the general rhythm of building facades along Loruth Terrace. However, the proposed lots will not be as deep or as large in area compared to most of the lots in the surrounding area along and east of Gilbert Road, though a 10,000 square-foot lot was created by a City-approved in 1987 on the western end of the same block at 1129 Gilbert Road. The Plan Commission should give consideration to the overall size of the proposed lots when considering the proposed use of the property following demolition and the impacts it may have on the “normal and orderly development...of the surrounding properties” as directed in the demolition standards.

In the event the Plan Commission approves the demolition permit, a reuse and recycling plan approved by the Recycling Coordinator will be required prior to the issuance of wrecking permit.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Unit recommends that the Plan Commission find that the demolition standards are met and **approve** demolition of single-family residence at 5402 Whitcomb Drive and division of the property into three lots subject to input at the public hearing and the comments from reviewing agencies on both the demolition permit and the proposed Certified Survey Map.