



City and Borough of Sitka

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Coast Guard City, USA

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Spivey and Planning Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning Director

Date: January 14, 2021

Subject: **Platting Variance VAR 21-01**

The applicant, Jill Hirai, is interested in purchasing the subject property located at 708 Indian River Road in order to build a small home for a family member. The smaller lot subdivision would allow use of the land for more residential development, but minimize the cost that would have to be incurred to build a zero lot line or multifamily home.

The minimum square footage for lots in the R-2 MHP District is 6,000 square feet net of access easements. Were 708 Indian River to be subdivided as proposed by the applicant, the resulting lots 6A and 6B would be 4,800 square feet each. The applicant is therefore requesting a platting variance to create these substandard lots.

Based on lot analysis done by staff, the smaller lot sizes should not impair the ability for the developer to build single-family or duplex structures within the setbacks. Staff calculates that the two lots should have 1500-1700 square feet of buildable space each – please refer to the Buildable Area Diagram for more details. Both lots would have buildable width of approximately 26', the south lot has buildable depth of approximately 66' and the north lot has buildable depth of approximately 59'. The drainage and no development easement at the rear of the property limits the lot depth, but also maintains the open space requirements needed as R-2 MHP has a maximum coverage area of 50%.

As this zoning district allows manufactured homes, staff wanted to see how feasible manufactured home placement would be on either of the lots resulting from this platting variance. Per Sitka General Code 6.12.010(E), the minimum dimensions for a manufactured home allowed is 8' wide by 40' long. Both lots could easily have manufactured homes placed on them that meet the minimum standards. Larger units could certainly be accommodated as well; both single and double widths would likely fit on the lots, and units ranging from 55' – 65' in length could likely be accommodated (depending on which lot is utilized).

If this platting variance is not granted, the other residential uses for this lot would include a single family home, a zero lot line, or a multifamily home with up to five dwelling units.

From a code administration standpoint, the proposed variance does not result in more density or potential for traffic generation than would otherwise be possible given the zoning; when measuring the possible incremental impact, the variance does not create any additional impact to the neighborhood.

SGC 21.48.010 Requirements for Platting Variances

A variance from the requirements of this title may be granted only if the planning commission finds that:

- A. The granting of the platting variance will not be detrimental to the public safety, or welfare, or injurious to adjacent property.
- B. The tract to be subdivided is of such unusual size and shape or topographical conditions that the strict application of the requirements of this title will result in undue and substantial hardship to the owner of the property.

There are various examples of lots, both planned and unplanned, that are below 6,000 square feet in size. Many of our downtown residential lots are in the 2,700 – 5,000 square foot range and are still considered highly attractive neighborhoods. The Planned Unit Development on Lillian Drive features 4,500 square foot lots, all of which have been developed and utilized for residential structures. Given the prevalence of other lots this size, staff finds that the granting of this platting variance will not be detrimental to public safety, welfare, or be injurious to adjacent property owners and enables development of otherwise vacant property.

Further, Comprehensive Plan Housing Action H1.1e specifically aims to “*Encourage higher density development.*” Granting this platting variance is a 20% reduction in the required lot size in exchange for creating single-family housing opportunities for two families/buyers.

The original subdivision was done at a time where 8,000 square feet was the district minimum, and enabled primarily zero lot line and duplex/triplex housing development. Given that minimum lot sizes have since decreased to 6,000 square feet in most residential areas, this lot now has much more flexible and higher density options for development. Enabling this platting variance would be a further evolution of that flexibility.

The applicant has also included a plat note that would restrict setback variances for any future development. This will help to ensure that future developments are built within the bounds of the prevailing development standards of the time, and that future variance requests to build on these lots should not come back to the Commission.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Aerial

Attachment B: Proposed Plat

Attachment C: Current Plat

Attachment D: Buildable Area Diagram

Attachment E: Applicant Materials

Recommended Motions:

1. "I move to approve the platting variance to create two substandard lots at 708 Indian River Road in the R-2 MHP multifamily and mobile home district. The property is also known as a Lot 6, Indian River Land Subdivision. The request is filed by Jill Hirai. The owners of record are Jerome and Sarah Mahoskey."
2. "I move to adopt the required findings for platting variances."
 - A. The granting of the platting variance will not be detrimental to the public safety, or welfare, or injurious to adjacent property.
 - B. The tract to be subdivided is of such unusual size and shape or topographical conditions that the strict application of the requirements of this title will result in undue and substantial hardship to the owner of the property.