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January 3, 2022

Kali Casper, AICP, ENV SP
Assistant Planning Director
Town of Blacksburg
400 South Main Street
Blacksburg, VA 24060

RE: Northside Park Section XII Preliminary Plat
Balzer Job #24220049.00

Dear Kali,

Thank you for meeting with us and the developer on August 22, 2022 to discuss the proposed preliminary plat for Northside Park Section XII. We understand based on the meeting that Staff has identified code sections which it has made the determination are not met by the proposed subdivision layout, in addition to the previously discussed variance to Section 5-320 (documented in a 2018 letter to C. Givens). The following letter should serve as a variance request for administrative and Planning Commission review of the proposed application.

A summary of the requested variances is provided as follows:

- Section 5-305:** *"The arrangement of streets in new subdivisions shall make provision for the continuation of existing streets in adjoining areas where streets already exist. Major, collector and local streets shall be respectively extended as such. The street arrangement must be such as to cause no unnecessary hardship to owners of adjoining property when the subdividers plat their land and seek to provide for convenient vehicle access to it."*
- Section 5-317:** *"Design standards for blocks are as follows: Length: The length of blocks shall be determined by public safety, traffic flow, and natural topography considerations. Where streets are approximately parallel, connecting streets shall be provided between the parallel streets at reasonable intervals as established by application of the criteria in the preceding sentence. In general, residential blocks should be between five hundred feet (500') and twelve hundred feet (1200') in length"*
- Section 5-320:** *"Collector and arterial roads within a proposed subdivision shall be built with medians to provide for landscaping and to provide for efficient traffic movement. The medians shall meet the current standards of the Virginia Department of Transportation."*

The proposed changes to the original approved preliminary plat (last revised July 26, 2011 and approved by the Town on November 9, 2011) are a result of lessons learned from hardships faced in constructing Phase II of Section XII. In particular, reconciling the street elevations, orientation to the topography, and the 12% maximum driveway slope per Section 5204(f) of the Zoning Ordinance proved to be an issue that resulted in undesirable driveway slopes, home elevations, and excessive steps up to the front door.

The revised layout provides the opportunity for the roads and the site to be oriented and graded in a manner that prevents excessive cut during individual lot development and allows homes to be built into the natural topography without excessive driveway slopes. The result is a higher-quality development with less maintenance issues incurred by the homeowner and the Town. Other overall benefits and reasonings behind the proposed changes include:

- The total number of lots in Section XII is reduced, thus lessening impacts to traffic, infrastructure, schools, etc.
- The proposed open space has been increased by over 10 acres from 21.4 acres to 32.9 acres (nearly 38% of the total development area).
- By pushing the location of Progress Street to the west, the length of the multi-use trail is extended allowing for a gentler slope and more accessible design. The current trail is



constructed with slopes topping out over 15%, whereas the revised alignment would allow for a maximum slope of 10.7%.

- The revised street layout avoids an additional road crossing (previously Primrose Drive) through the low valley in the center of this section of the development (where the main stormwater management facility is proposed). Since the original street layout was approved in 2011, Virginia stormwater management requirements have changed significantly. The original layout did not leave adequate room in a usable area to reasonably meet current stormwater management requirements.

In addition to these overall concepts, specific reasonings related to each code section are detailed as follows.

Section 5-305

This variance is requested to allow us to propose that existing roads Craig Drive and Primrose Drive end in cul-de-sacs.

The developer acknowledges that connectivity of Craig Drive and Primrose Drive could be feasibly met; however, we strongly feel that given the reasons and justification below, the requested waiver of these subdivision requirements is based on sound engineering judgement, value engineering, and provides a better result for both the ultimate homeowners and the Town. This request is made in consideration of the following reasons and justifications:

Lot Desirability

The layout proposes two cul-de-sacs (Craig Drive and Cannongate Drive) that if connected to create one continuous road (Craig Drive), could create additional lots in the subdivision compared to two cul-de-sacs. However, after iterations of design, it was determined that issues maintaining the Town of Blacksburg maximum driveway slope of twelve percent per §5204, Part F would be encountered during the construction design process for the lots along this road and create undesirable lots for the Town and the ultimate homeowners. Ultimately this condition would lead to the same undesirable driveway slopes, home elevations, and excessive steps up to the front door that are present in Phase II. As discussed with Staff, we have included sample lot grading exhibits with this request as evidence that the design efforts for this revised layout have been coordinated with a finished lot product that meets the Town's driveway slope standards.

Grading

The connection of Craig Drive and Cannongate Drive will result in significant additional grading on-site. It is desired by the client to perform minimal grading due to additional costs associated with excessive earthwork and to avoid geological risks identified by the geotechnical report completed by Hurt & Proffitt on April 19, 2022. The report found that "factors increasing the likelihood of karst are *cut grading* that would lessen the soil 'arch' thickness above a feature or increases in loading due to *fill grading* or large structures." Additionally, the report recommends minor to moderate cut and fill for the site grades.

Connectivity

It is understood that a concern of the cul-de-sacs as an alternative to the extension of Craig Drive and Primrose Drive is restricting access to the rest of the site to residents. While cul-de-sac streets do not connect within the site, pedestrian access to open space will be provided through trails and sidewalks. A connectivity exhibit will be provided with this document to show pedestrian paths throughout the site. These sidewalks and trails will allow pedestrians to access all open areas and provide recreation for residents of the subdivision. It is noted that the proposed layout contains the same number of cul-de-sacs as the original approved preliminary plat.



Section 5-317

Claire Drive extends throughout a large portion of the site and is approximately 1500' in length. §5317 states that blocks "should" be within the stated length of 500 to 1200 feet in length. Claire Drive is within 300' from the length suggested by this portion of the code.

To reconfigure the layout for Claire Drive to be within the threshold suggested by the Town code, Primrose Drive could be extended to Claire Drive to create shorter blocks. However, the existing topography across the site between the tie-in point of existing Primrose Drive to Claire Drive down to the future Progress Street makes up 66 feet of elevation change. Attempting to make a street connection between these points, accounting for §5-313 of the Subdivision Ordinance (allowable street grades, street intersection landings, etc.), would result in a substantial additional grading and the same undesirable lot conditions discussed in the above "Grading" section. Per the recommendations by the geotechnical report, additional substantial cut and fill should be avoided to reduce risk of disruption of potential karst features.

Given the proximity in which the road is to the *suggested* threshold per §5317 and the above concerns associated with shortening the block by way of an extension of Primrose Drive, we believe the current road and trail layout maintains justifiable connectivity and accessibility of the site and adjacent streets.

Section 5-320

The proposed construction of the first portion of Progress Street (approximately 420 linear feet) to its intersection with Cannongate Drive is done without construction of a median, matching the section of Progress Street within the existing sections of Northside Park.

On February 13, 2018, the Town provided a letter to Mr. Carroll Givens that referenced several items relating to the construction of the Progress Street extension as part of the Northside Park subdivision. A copy of that letter is attached hereto. Item number two from that letter references the Town's support of a future variance request for eliminating the requirement for median construction should it be submitted for Planning Commission consideration and all other design requirements for that road would be included for construction. As shown on our preliminary plat, those other requirements including right of way width, pavement width, sidewalk installation, street design geometry, curb and gutter have been provided in our current design.

Based on this documentation, we humbly request these variances be granted in concurrence with our preliminary plat approval. Thank you for considering this request and if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Attachments:

- 2018 Letter from TOB to C. Givens
- Pedestrian Connectivity Exhibit
- Sample Lot Grading Exhibits

Sincerely,
BALZER AND ASSOCIATES

James R. Taylor, P.E., M.ASCE
Associate

February 13, 2018

Mr. Carroll Givens
1722 C&O Dam Road
Daniels, WV
25832

Dear Mr. Givens,

As a follow up to our meeting on November 6, 2017 and the letter we received from Parker Design Group dated April 28, 2017, the Town through this letter is documenting our discussions and evaluation of your request regarding the construction of Progress Street in relation to the Northside residential development. Your request is to not construct the full length of Progress Street as shown on the preliminary plat approved on November 9, 2011.

The approved preliminary plat showed the layout of 119 lots designed under the R-4 zoning district with the open space conservation subdivision overlay district standards. It is our understanding, based on information provided by you and your consultant, that the construction of Progress Street as a boulevard collector road through the entire project is impacted by two fundamental issues: (1) the cost of construction, which you believe is not feasible for the 119 lot subdivision to bear, and (2) all sections of the subdivision can meet subdivision standards as it relates to road access without the construction of the entire road as shown on the approved plan.

We have reviewed the request regarding Progress Street construction in light of the provisions contained in the Town's Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance. We are in general agreement with the proposal in your letter. With regards to the Town subdivision and zoning regulations, the Town has made the follow specific determinations:

1. Subdivision Ordinance/Section 5-302 – Dedication of streets

The subdivide shall make provision for the dedication to the Town of proposed street extensions as set forth in the comprehensive plan or other formal documents approved by the Planning Commission and Town Council and for the dedication to the Town of the fee simple title to the land for other land proposed streets in the subdivision.

OBSERVATIONS

- a. The approved preliminary subdivision plat makes "provisions" for the dedication of the right-of-way for Progress Street to extend through the entire property in conformance with the Subdivision Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan.
- b. Except for phase 3, each phase of the subdivision can provide the right-of-way and streets to meet all Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance requirements for roadway connections and cul-de-sac lengths without construction of Progress Street.

- c. Phase 3 of the subdivision requires the extension of Progress Street 625 feet to access lots 13-26 and provide the connection to phase 2 of the Northside development on Primrose Drive.

Based on the above, our determination is that the construction of the roadway in its entirety is not required. The dedication of the right-of-way in its entirety, however, will need to occur with phase 1 of the final plat. The required right-of-way width is 75 feet. In addition, construction of 625 feet of Progress Street is required for access to phase 3 and to provide a connection to Primrose Drive.

2. Subdivision Ordinance/Section 5-302 – Medians

Collector and arterial roads within a proposed subdivision shall be built with medians to provide for landscaping and to provide for efficient traffic movement. The medians shall meet the current standards of the Virginia Department of Transportation.

The construction of any portion of Progress Street is required to meet Section 5-302. Any change to this provision will require a variance from the Planning Commission. Staff would support eliminating the boulevard requirement should any variance be sought in future. Other requirements for lane widths, sidewalks, etc., would still be required.

3. Zoning Ordinance/Section 3263(2) – Open Space Design Overlay District – Open Space

At least twenty-five percent of the minimum required open space shall be designated for active recreation purpose, and no more than fifty percent shall be utilized, in order to preserve a reasonable proportion of natural areas on the site. The purpose for which open space areas are proposed shall be documented by the applicant.

The approved preliminary plat design includes the required active recreation components to meet this requirement. These include both a trail system that would connect Primrose Park to the Northside neighborhood and extend to Progress Street. Secondly, the active recreation includes improvements to the Northside Park open space area. The construction of these two items is required in accordance with the approved layout. The reconstructed access drive to the existing pump station and a driveway access to the park needs to be combined with a connection to the dead end of Progress Street. A parking area for the park is also required to be constructed along with the driveway access. This is expected to be designed and constructed with Phase 1.

To demonstrate your concurrence with these determinations and your willingness to dedicate the right-of-way and construct the required recreational access amenities, please sign the “concurrence” line below and then return a copy to my attention. Then resubmit subdivision plans with revisions that reflect these determinations. When you are prepared to proceed with phase 3, or any subsequent phase that requires the extension of Progress Street to access lots, you may request a variance to the median in accordance with the Subdivision Ordinance for the segment of Progress Street.

I believe this provides a summary of our discussions and agreements. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (540) 443-1005-or Anne McClung at (540) 443-1300.

Sincerely,



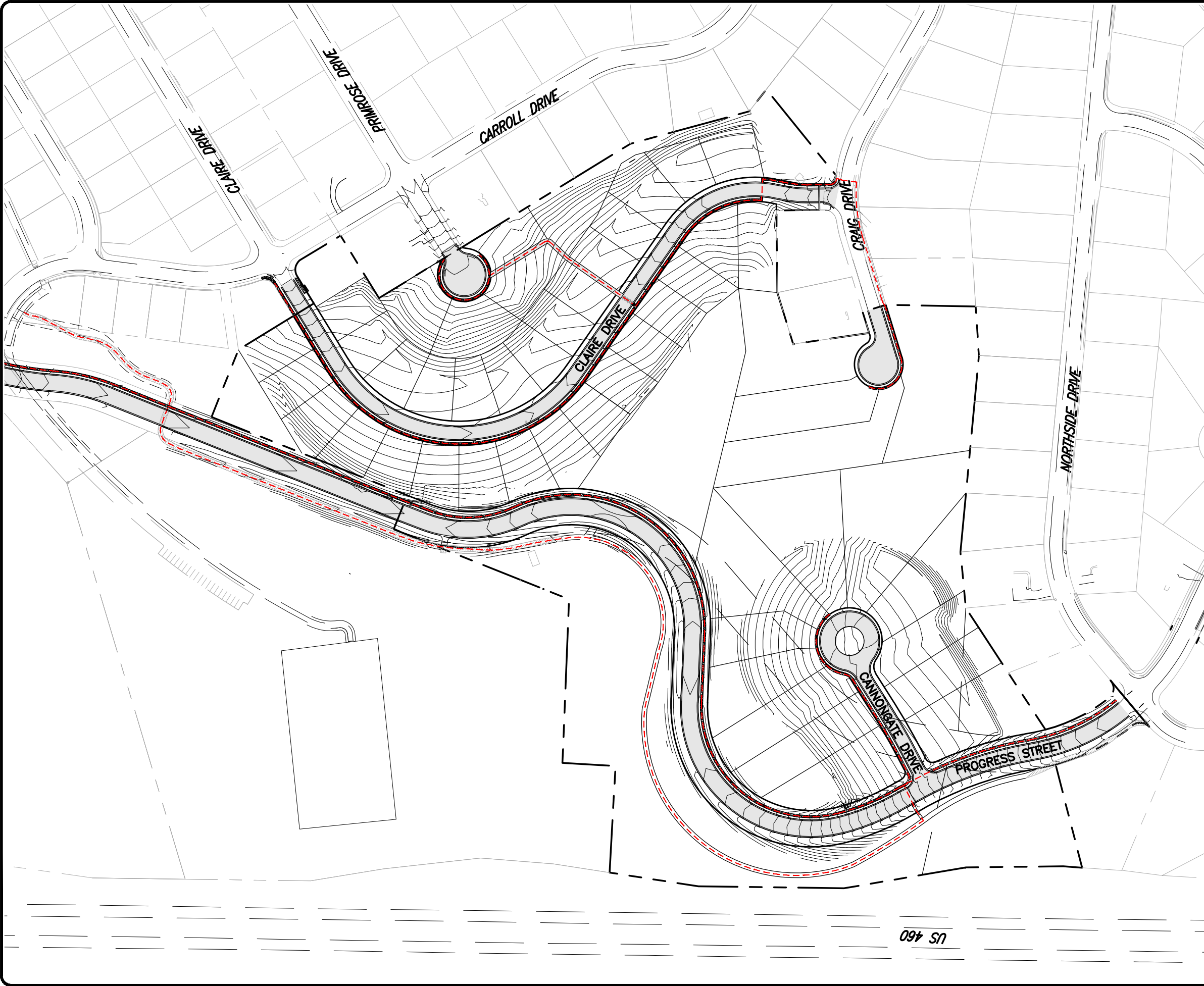
Christopher S. Lawrence

Concurrence:

C. Givens Brothers, LLC

By: _____
Carroll Givens

cc: Lawrence Spencer, Town Attorney
Anne McClung, Planning and Building Director
Jeanne Stosser, SAS Construction



LEGEND

PEDESTRIAN PATH - - -



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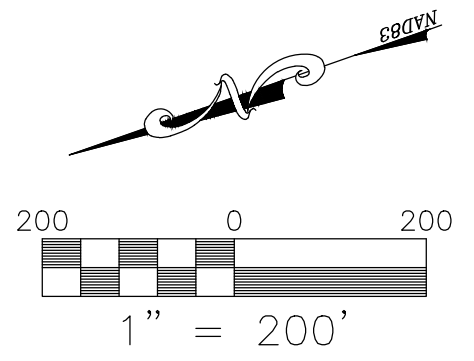
80 College Street
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 540.381.4290

NORTHSIDE PARK - SECTION XII

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS EXHIBIT

MOUNT TABOR MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT
 TOWN OF BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

DATE 01/01/2023
 SCALE 1" = 200'
 REVISIONS



EX

PROJECT NO 24220049.00

US 460



APPROXIMATE CUT/FILL VOLUMES:

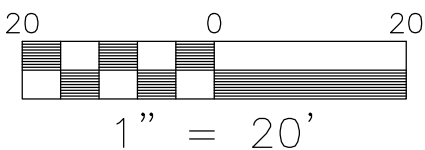
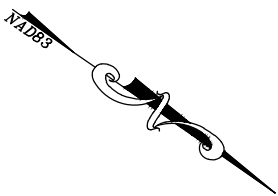
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NET = 0 C.Y.

NORTHSIDE PARK
 SECTION XII
 PHASE III

SAMPLE GRADING PLAN
 LOT 34



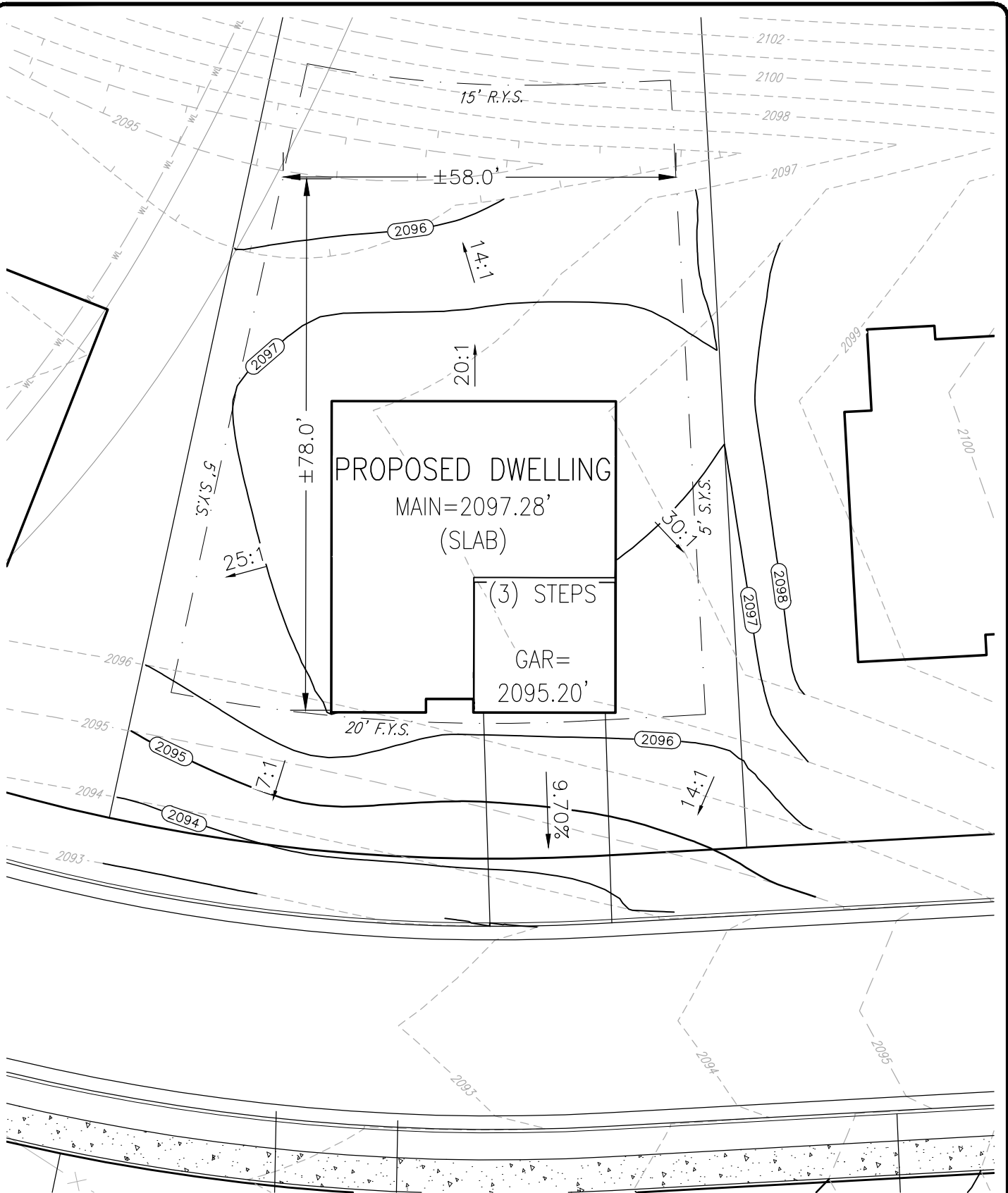
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APPROXIMATE CUT/FILL VOLUMES:

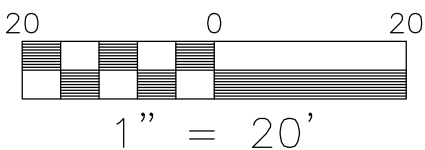
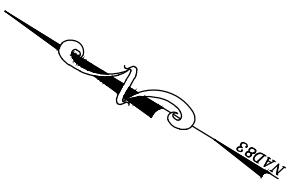
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NET = 0 C.Y.

NORTHSIDE PARK
SECTION XII
PHASE III

SAMPLE GRADING PLAN
LOT 52



MAY 25, 2022
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