GEM Program

Side Lots for Side Yards Initiative

WILL THERE BE RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS?

Yes. The property will be subject to restrictive covenants which will run with the land and shall be binding for all parties having or acquiring any right, title or interest in the property.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Property owners interested in vacant parcels eligible under the Side Lot Disposition Initiative will apply directly to:

Department of Planning & Community Development
Bureau of Community Enrichment

Application packets may be obtained by calling 757.664.6770.

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GEM PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The GEM Program will be administered by the Department of Planning and Community Development. The purpose of this document is to present the guidelines and procedures for obtaining ownership of GEM parcels under the **Side Lots for Side Yards Initiative**.

WHAT IS A GEM PROPERTY?

Properties in the GEM program are acquired under existing blight eradication legislation (VA Codes §58.1-3970.1 and §58.1-3965) which allows cities to acquire private property where nuisance abatement liens and/or delinquent taxes are not paid.

The GEM Program focuses on those properties most critical to the achievement of specific community development goals and objectives, and converts them to productive uses consistent with neighborhood plans and other community initiatives.

The disposition strategies for GEM parcels are determined by neighborhood plan objectives and whether the property is determined to be a site suitable for new housing construction or non-buildable lot. As defined by the program guidelines, a site suitable for new housing construction is defined as being no less than 37.5 feet in width and 100 feet in depth. All acceptable development strategies will be noted as part of the property description and sales information for the property in the GEM Parcel Management System and published as a part of the Request for Proposals (RFP).

Ownership of properties to be used as "public spaces" will be retained by the City and reused in accordance with a community management initiative or to support neighborhood services initiatives undertaken by the City. Properties sold for "private development" are expected to be reused primarily for housing development, room additions and side yards.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES?

- Development of GEM properties will help reverse the negative trend of urban blight; neglected lots are symbolic of urban blight.
- Transformation of GEM lots into productive uses can present opportunities for reinvestment; present opportunities for economic growth and recovery of older neighborhoods; and eliminate vacant lots which depress market values.
- Strategic implementation of the GEM Program will improve a neighborhood's overall quality of life.
- Vacant land reclamation improves the overall appearance of the community and increases the marketability of new development and investment opportunities. It is a critical step in revitalizing older communities.
- By assembling strings of adjoining vacant properties, larger development sites can be aggressively marketed for new residential construction.

WHAT IS THE SIDE LOTS FOR SIDE YARDS INITIATIVE?

Where single vacant lots (non-buildable) are located next to a property with improvements, the Side Lot for Side Yards Initiative provides an opportunity to adjacent property owners to expand their properties. Side yards must be legally combined with owner's original house lot, permanently creating a larger residential parcel. It is strongly encouraged that GEM lots be fenced, landscaped or, by some other means, physically or aesthetically consolidated with the adjacent property.

The objectives of the Side Lot Disposition program are:

- To place vacant properties under an adjacent owner's care;
- To encourage the long-term growth of the City's property tax revenue by enhancing property values;
- To give neighborhood residents additional yard space that can be used for additions, driveways, gardens, or other personal uses

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Owners of property adjacent to GEM Program properties as defined by program guidelines.
- Property owners with financial capacity to undertake the expense of the related closing costs.
- Property owners who do not own any real property in the City of Norfolk that has unresolved citation of violation of the state and local maintenance codes and ordinances.
- Owners' property must be free of municipal liens.
- Owners must not be delinquent in their property taxes.
- Applicants who have not been the prior owner of any real property in the City of Norfolk that was transferred to the Treasurer as a result of tax foreclosure proceedings.

HOW MUCH WILL THE LOTS COST?

There is no cost for the GEM parcels under the Side Lots for Side Yards Initiative; however, applicants will be required to pay any related costs associated with the transfer of the title.

Upon conveyance, property owners will be responsible for all future real estate taxes.