

GLEBE PARK REDEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

July 11, 2007

Meeting Summary

Stakeholders present:

Wilma Probst, Brighton Square Homeowners Association
Jim Hoben, Housing Action
Mike Caison, Alexandria Housing Advisory Committee
Melissa Garcia, Lenox Place Homeowner Association
Paul Cox, Arlandria Civic Association
Barbara Hayes, North Ridge Civic Association
Andy Duncan, Warwick Village Citizen Association
Kathleen Henry, Arlandria Chirilagua Housing Cooperative

Also present:

Ingrid Velasco, ACHC
Ed Ablard, formerly EOC Alexandria
Kevin Beekman, Lenox Place
Bill Clayton, North Ridge Citizens Association
Al, Smuzynski, Wesley Housing
Bonnie Baxley, Community Lodgings
Amy Slack, Del Ray
Brian Allan Jackson, EYA
Mel Miller, ARHA
Connie Ring, ARHA
Roy Priest, ARHA
Connie Lennox, ARHA
Kristen Mitten, Planning and Zoning
Mildrilyn Davis, Housing
Helen McIlvaine, Housing
Pat Haefeli, Planning and Zoning
Jeff Farner, Planning and Zoning

Barbara Ross began the meeting by introducing staff's discussion of development options for the ARHA site on the east side of Old Dominion. She said that staff had worked with the several options from the last meeting, winnowing down the number of them, incorporating ideas by the Stakeholder group and trying to find combine, revise and improve the ones that had the most potential. She reminded the group of the competing goals involved, chiefly, the mix of market rate units and public housing units, the economics, parking and the timing of development approvals.

Jeff Farner, Planning and Zoning, presented and explained three development options. He repeated that they used all of the prior options as a basis for these, did not let zoning limit them, and rejected the options with very large buildings as out of scale and character with existing buildings and character in the neighborhood.

AJ Jackson, EYA, added to the discussion, explaining EYA's attempt to modify the designs they had previously presented to meet the issues he heard discussed by the group. He cautioned that the schemes are still rough and conceptual and that they may need to be modified to make work when detailed drawings are done.

Copies of the three development options were handed out to the group.

Option 1: Workforce Mix/30 units

This option includes three types of housing all of which are 2 and 3 bedroom units:

8 market townhouses @ 1900 sf

10 workforce (4 flats, 6 stacked two floor units above) each @ 1300 sf

12 ARHA flats @ 1,000 sf

In scale and design, the buildings will appear from the street to be townhouses. The height is four stories for the buildings on the street. And three stories for the one building in the back.

This option complies with zoning, although it does need some modifications (such as yards, open space) and may need small FAR increase under density bonus allowed.

Building #1 is 8 TH units back to back with parking underneath the building, entered from the side. Building #2 includes the 10 workforce units. Building #3 is an ARHA apartment building similar to what is proposed for the West Glebe site.

The proposal includes all parking on a surface lot or within the building (THs), including 15% visitor parking. It includes a mix of units and density. Importantly, the civil engineering has already occurred because this option is a modification of Option #3 for which there is already a site plan, so in terms of timing, there is a benefit. On the other hand, by stretching the parking lot to achieve the parking you need, you lose the open space from Option #3. The other negative is the obvious: it has 16 fewer ARHA when compared to Option #3 the original EYA plan. They will have to go off site, and somewhere else in the City.

Kevin Beekman asked how the parking for different occupants would be managed and how the problems other developments have with parking abuses and towing arrangements can be minimized.

AJ Jackson responded by explaining that those details had not been worked out yet, but would be true with any development.

Jim Hoben asked whether it is possible to add units to building #3 by adding another story? Could you put the parking underneath that building.

AJ Jackson explained that there was no room for parking underneath as that building was less deep than the others. Also you would lose outdoor parking spaces in front of the building. Other than parking, you could do a 4 story walk up but there are fire panel and sprinkler issues.

AJ Jackson responded to a question about timing: approvals need to be fall of 2007 and construction would begin in fall of 2008.

Mike Caisson expressed concern about separating the different types of housing into three separate buildings and asked if EYA was able to mix the units throughout the buildings.

AJ Jackson answered that there are design challenges that make that almost impossible, because each of these buildings has a different type of design. In addition, ARHA has difficulty with HOA fees if you mix the units. He stated that overall what EYA tried to do was to increase density and height to add more units, but they are constrained by the need for parking and making that work.

Barbara Ross asked if the mix overall in the scheme could be modified and, when AJ stated it could not, she asked that he not say “No,” now, but wait and see what refinements come out of any plan they proceed with.

Option Two: Stacked townhouses (two over two): 30 units

This option started with one of the townhouse plans from last time and added units and density in a townhouse form by stacking two floor units over two floor units. It has a 50% market split with 15 market rate units and 15 ARHA units. It includes no workforce units.

7 market units @ 1400 sf

8 public units @ 1400 sf

8 market units @ 1800 sf

7 public units @ 1800 sf

The greatest challenge in this option is parking. First, there is no visitor parking. Also, all the resident parking is tandem, meaning people have one driveway and have to park their cars one in front of the other. This arrangement requires a parking reduction. Planning uses a rule of thumb with tandem parking that results in a 9-10 space deficiency here for visitor spaces and a 15-20 space deficiency of owner parking from a functionality perspective.

As to open space, these units have small yards either front or back at ground level, but the people who live upstairs do not get to use it. There is no collective open space.

The buildings are taller than in Option #1 and taller than at Lenox Place.

Planning staff is concerned about this option for these reasons, but also in terms of the long term liveability of the development, especially because of the internal alley/drive. Although we can have the buildings at the street look good, inside the development you will have units facing units with all asphalt and parking in between. It is cramped with no room for sidewalks or trees in front of units or between parking spaces.

AJ Jackson expressed some concern about the market place attractiveness of the two/two model. EYA prefers other styles because these do not sell as well. Buyers either have to live below someone else, or walk up two stories to their homes with no yards.

This option is also a problem in terms of timing because it requires a complete redesign and engineering of the site plan.

It does add three more ARHA units to option #1, but it is still lower than the number in Option #3.

Option 3: EYA existing proposal/34 units

This is the EYA plan that has already been submitted to the City and reviewed by City staff. It had been scheduled for hearing before the Planning Commission and Council last May. It includes a total of 34 units, including 28 ARHA apartments (with 2 and 3 bedrooms) and 6 market rate townhouses (1 bedroom/den). The unit sizes range from 1000 – 3000. The plan includes 39 parking spaces.

Building 3 and building 1 have two level living areas over flats. This is the same arrangement as in Chatham Square. Building 2 includes 6 ARHA units in the two level over flat design, plus 6 townhouse units facing Old Dominion. All parking is on the surface.

Parking

The parking requirements staff uses to assess these development options start with the zoning ordinance, which requires 2 spaces for every townhouse. Apartment parking requirements depend on the number of bedrooms:

1 bedroom = 1.3 parking spaces

2 bedrooms = 1.75 parking spaces

3+ bedrooms= 2.2 spaces

In addition, the City has long required new development to provide an additional 15% of the total parking for the use of visitors to the site.

For ARHA units, there are parking studies of ARHA housing developments, including Glebe Park, that support a ratio of 1 parking space per unit. If you add a factor for 15% visitor parking, that amounts to a requirement of 1.15 parking spaces for each ARHA unit. Zoning ordinance sec. 7-700 recognizes a potential parking reduction for affordable housing.

Based on these requirements, Option #1 and 3 can be supported, but planning staff has a difficult time supporting Option #2 because of the neighborhood concerns about parking. Adding market units to the development mix, adds additional parking needs.

Open space

As to open space in all three options, it is not great. None of the options meets the zoning ordinance requirement. All three development schemes require approval of a modification for open space. Option #3 probably has the best open space, although located on the side of the buildings. Option #1 has some, and it is in the front yards along Old Dominion and a small collective space at the side of the buildings. Option #2 has some and it is for individual owners.

Market prices

EYA has attempted to estimate future market sales prices for the proposed units as follows:

Option 1: market rate units: mid \$500,000s
workforce units : low to mid \$300,000s

Option 2: mid to high 300,000s

Andy Duncan asked for a definition of a workforce unit and about the cost of the 16 unit deficit.

AJ Jackson stated that workforce housing is distinguished by its size, price and finishes. All will look the same from the outside, but inside is more modest.

AJ Jackson talked about how difficult it is to calculate because the economics of this development is tied to James Bland for which the planning and design has not been done yet, and because the manner in which the deficit will be met is unknown. You might be able to acquire units that are already built so you only have to pay for their rehab. Or, you may have to acquire land and build new units. They are still studying this question.

Mildrilyn Davis, Office of Housing added that there may be still other opportunities, such as securing units from new private developments coming on line.

AJ Jackson responded to a question about the need for an HOA, stating that you do need one from option 2. As to option 1 there may be a way to do without one if there is a common agreement as to parking with easements for parking access, etc.

Kevin Beekman stated that there could be an HOA with different classes of membership.

Mike Caisson pointed out that then you would be dividing classes of residents.

Jim Hoben agreed but stated that when you mix housing types you do get these problems and we have to recognize that some occupants will be owners, with specific legal requirements, and some will be renters.

Wilma Probst asked about the status of the West Glebe site.

AJ Jackson stated that the proposal for that site and for the Old Dominion (west) site had not changed.

Wilma Probst stated that she liked Option #1. It is well designed, viable, and a good mix. Staff and EYA have done a great job here with the new designs and with listening to the group.

Jim Hoben also expressed agreement with Option #1. It includes three different types of housing in one development which is an achievement in itself. But it is also handled well. Staff and EYA have responded to Lenox Place concerns. This option also has all the parking. He asked whether the workforce plan could be changed to add more ARHA units? and suggested, for example, 4 more workforce and 4 more public?

AJ Jackson did not think that could be done.

Kathleen Henry: Chirilagua is leaning towards Option # 3, based on its design, open space and the higher number of affordable housing units.

Andy Duncan asked for an explanation of the deficit of 16 units?

AJ Jackson and Mildrilyn Davis explained that the economic return to the developer from building Glebe Park comes from the redevelopment of James Bland and the addition of market rate units there. Under current schemes, there will be a need for 60 James Bland units to be replaced somewhere in the City other than at James Bland. EYA's original proposal, Option #3, includes 100 units under Resolution 830, thus replacing the 40 units now in Glebe Park and the 60 potential replacement units from James Bland. In contrast, both Options 1 and 2 include fewer public housing units and the difference (16 in Option 1 and 13 in Option 2) will have to be addressed by finding replacement units elsewhere in the City.

Melissa Garcia, Lenox Place, expressed concern about replacing more than the 40 Glebe Park Resolution 830 units in Glebe Park.

Paul Cox, Arlandria Civic Association, gave a power point presentation, prepared by his association, about the demographics in Arlandria, with slides showing a high poverty rate, overcrowding, large household size, high crime statistics, low adult education, high number of children, and a mix of racial and ethnic groups. The slides also addressed transportation and the location of jobs in the City, the fact that there is a high number of people without vehicles in the neighborhood and that there is a high rate of turnover in housing because so many are rentals. [City staff wishes to point out that it had not reviewed the material before presented, and some of it is based on information it does not find reliable. It does not vouch for the accuracy of the material.]

The presentation also included a 1994 statement from City Council expressing an interest in achieving additional homeownership in Arlandria; a 1999 statement from the Fair Share Task Force Report and Council supporting deconcentration of low income rental housing and a preference for mixed income projects with enhanced management; a statement by Peter Lawson, ARHA board member, from the minutes of an ARHA board meeting, stating a preference for mixed income housing of roughly 30% public housing and 70% market rate units.

The Arlandria Civic Association's recommendation for Glebe Park is based on this material and concludes that a 70/30 split of market rate and ARHA units is best. It considers workforce housing to be included on the market rate side of the split.

Jim Hoben had no objection to the mix of 70/30 but stated that there is a need to increase the density in the neighborhood to bring in more market rate housing.

Kathleen Henry asked for information about the split of the existing neighborhood. If the split now is more like 90/10, then to achieve the 70/30 you are talking about would require erasing an entire neighborhood of people and families and asks how we can justify that.

Paul Cox responded that he does have those numbers, but not at the meeting.

Jim Hoben thought that looking at the mix and density is a way of working towards a solution in this area. But it is really important to keep existing affordable housing and to slow the condo conversions because that means renters who cannot afford to buy are forced to move. The City lost a huge number of affordable units (both renters and owners) since 2000, specifically affordable units dropped from 23,000 in 2000 to 8,000 in 2006.

He also asked how the other statistics, such as related to crime or families relate to this project?

Paul Cox responded, explaining that creating diversity will lead to including higher income populations in the neighborhood and that will bring economic development to Mount Vernon Avenue, creating businesses and jobs. Lower income people do not have disposable income and do not draw businesses.

Jim Hoben spoke about how the neighborhood changed since 2000, and described it 30 years ago when it was entirely poor with large areas of vacant land.

Wilma Probst stated that she has lived in the area since the 1980s and the area has changed drastically, especially by the introduction of townhouse development. Lenox Place is a big part of the change over the last 20 years, as is Brighton Square.

Mike Caisson asked how the demographics presented correlate to a need for 70/30 and these three development sites.

Paul Cox explained that he and others' opinions should not be misinterpreted. They like their neighborhood, but would like to see more economic development and he believes that comes from a greater mix of incomes.

Barbara Hayes asked whether there is any funding for work force housing?

Mildrilyn Davis responded that there is down payment assistance but no subsidies for building it, such as low income tax credit financing.

Mel Miller pointed out that there has been no discussion about the land cost with work force units, which will be less to ARHA.

Kathleen Henry asked why, given that ARHA and the City are different entities, loss of 6 or 16 units will cost the City more?

Mildrilyn Davis explained that given the economic relationship with James Bland, lowering the number of ARHA units in Glebe Park means a need to find the replacement units elsewhere at a cost to someone, possibly the City. The City Council ARHA Workgroup has acknowledged the need to look at Glebe Park separately, and a willingness to consider finding alternative sites and or existing units, and to look at how much that would cost.

Mike Caisson asked how the ARHA housing on South Whiting was built.

Connie Lenox explained that when Chatham Square replaced two blocks of ARHA housing in the Berg, there was a need for 48 units off site to replace units not being recreated on the Berg site. ARHA and the City worked together and found three sites through the City for new housing. 18 units were built on a publicly owned site on South Reynolds; 6 were built on a piece of public land at Braddock Rd near TC Williams; and 24 were built on private land on South Whiting that had to be purchased. Each of these developments are 100% ARHA units.

Melissa Garcia stated that the Lenox Place income mix creates a sustainable community and draws business.

Ed Ablard stated that, since 1994, CC has said it would address homelessness. It does not appear, based on Paul's statistics, that this is a good area to place kids. Why would ARHA want to move families into an area with so many kids? Smaller units would be better because they can house the homeless.

Amy Slack pointed out that Option #3 may have more open space but that it is located behind a building and does not appear safe for kids. Parents like to have a safe open space where kids can play and parents can keep eye on them. As to economics, the market is simply not there for the Upper Potomac West Plan.

Bonnie Baxley clarified her comments on open space from an earlier meeting: Community Lodgings families do use open space, but what is important for them is to have it been consolidated and located where the parents can keep an eye on the children. Small dribs and drabs of open space that are isolated in a development will simply not be used.

AJ Jackson explained that in Option #3, the open space is not "behind" a building because that building includes front doors facing the open space, and was designed exactly with these concerns in mind.

Ed Ablard asked why efficiency units for veterans could not be created instead of these 2 and 3 bedroom units. He also pointed out that people with lower incomes spend more than people with higher incomes who tend to save their money.

Connie Lennox responded that the main ARHA population in need for housing is families.