

# GLEBE PARK REDEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

April 16, 2007 Meeting

## Summary of Group Questions and Comments

### INTRODUCTION

**Barbara Ross**, facilitator, introduced herself, explained the role of the Stakeholders Group, and the schedule of upcoming meetings and public hearings.

### STAFF PRESENTATION

**Jeff Farner**, City of Alexandria's Planning and Zoning, Chief, Development Division, gave an overview, with Power Point slides of the development sites and the neighborhood, and showed some of the factors planning staff looks at when considering neighborhood context, such as future development sites, zoning and FAR, topography, including Four Mile Run and Resource Protection Area buffer requirements, existing building heights and typology, and the Four Mile Run master plan.

**Mildrilyn Davis**, City of Alexandria's Director, Office of Housing, discussed with slides, the assisted housing in the Arlandria area and throughout the City. Specific slides identified locations and amounts of publicly assisted housing, privately owned housing with rental assistance, and market affordable housing at 50% and 60% of median income levels throughout the City. The slides show that while there is a concentration of assisted housing in Arlandria, there are many areas of the City that also have a lot of affordable housing. She explained the City's and ARHA's commitment to retaining or replacing all public housing units, as reflected in Resolution 830, and its priority concern about retaining any affordable housing, which is being lost to condo conversions and rising rents, of any type throughout the City.

**Connie Lennox**, Director of Development, Alexandria Housing and Redevelopment Authority (ARHA) discussed the history of the Glebe Park development, the number of units, and the poor condition of the buildings. She also explained the financial requirements for keeping the buildings, the HUD foreclosure potential, ARHA's corrective action plan, and the bid process which led to the selection of EYA as the development partner for redevelopment of Glebe Park

**Brian Allen Jackson**, Vice President, EYA, described, with slides, the challenges of the Glebe Park properties from the developer's perspective, including their small sites, zoning, and land values. He then explained the proposed development plan for each site and for the Glebe Park/James Bland overall redevelopment plan.

*Slides from the Power Point presentations can be found on the Planning and Zoning web site under What's New and Glebe Park Redevelopment Stakeholders Group. Hard copies of the slides are available for pick up at the Planning and Zoning Department in City Hall and will be available at the next meeting.*

## STAKEHOLDER GROUP DISCUSSION.

**Matt Natale**, Parkfairfax, said that he thought the presentation was very good, this being the first time he had heard and seen the material, and the first time Parkfairfax had been asked to participate regarding Glebe Park. He regrets the loss of any affordable housing even if not protected by Resolution 830, but will save further remarks until he considers the information further.

**Jim Rorke**, Lennox Place, explained that it had been Lennox Place that has tried to engage the community in a dialogue up until this point, that the City should have scheduled meetings like this earlier, and that it was his group who pushed City Council to have more community outreach. While the Stakeholders Group includes several affected community groups, there are still individual owners who have not been invited. He asked how this Stakeholder Group could have any effect on the process, given that a City Council letter had already been sent in support of the tax credit application that will fund the Glebe Park development.

**Mildrilyn Davis** responded, explaining that, as City Council was told when they voted to send the support letter, their letter is not determinative. The real decision is Council's consideration of the development applications scheduled for May. The project cannot proceed without Council's approval of the development. If it is not approved, the tax credit application will be withdrawn.

**Paul Cox?** **Jim Rorke?** asked what the consequence would be of not going forward right now, either because of the failure to achieve development approval or otherwise, and whether we could all just wait a year to put something better together.

**Connie Lennox** explained that ARHA is now in technical default with HUD. Even though to date it has kept current on making its mortgage payments, a change in the HUD rules requires that each housing project must be able to pay for itself so ARHA will not be able to continue making payments. Because the purpose of public housing is to provide shelter for people, HUD requires, in addition to money, that the units be occupied. With 87 out of 152 units now not occupied because of mold and deterioration of Glebe Park units, ARHA is in technical default. If this proposal does not go through now, ARHA will likely lose the Glebe Park units.

**Paul Cox**, Arlandria Civic Association, asked whether, given the history of problems with the physical condition at Glebe Park, ARHA could guarantee that the same thing wouldn't happen again in 20 or 25 years.

**Connie Lennox** explained that Glebe Park will be different going forward. First, because ARHA receives subsidies for occupied units, it will receive much more money in the future because there will be full occupancy. If units are filled with people with Section 8 vouchers, ARHA receives more money from HUD, amounting to near market rents. Tax credit financing also makes it different. With the new development, there will be substantially more money coming into the project than was true historically.

**Paul Cox** asked whether there would be on site management.

**Connie Lennox** stated that ARHA has not answered that question internally yet.

**Paul Cox** expressed concern for the larger neighborhood, which he described as largely ignored by the City, especially in terms of social services. The area has many affordable housing units of different types, including below market rentals, section 8 housing, special programs and public housing. He asked whether the plan is to have people from James Bland move into Glebe Park.

**Connie Lennox** said that especially with the phasing of development and having to relocate people, people from James Bland could be moved into Glebe Park, although families have to qualify.

**Paul Cox** stated that, given the severe overcrowding in Arlandria, he sees the Glebe Park proposal as an effort to increase density and exacerbate the stress on the neighborhood, while at James Bland, market rate housing will be built so as to be close to jobs and Metro. There is nothing being added by the City to Arlandria to help the people who are already here. He asked for the percentage of publicly assisted, below market rent, units there will be in Glebe Park.

**Brian Allen Jackson** explained that there is actually a decrease in density for Glebe Park, with the number of units changing from 152 to 106. There is an increase in bedrooms but only a total of 13 more. He stated that there will be 100 publicly assisted units, out of 106 total units. Today there are 89% of Glebe Park units with below market rents. The average income of residents today is less than \$10,000.

As to condition of the buildings, he explained that the creation of the Four Mile Run flood channel means that the condition of the units will not have the same stresses in the future. As to on going management, projects financed with tax credits require that a partnership be formed between ARHA and a third party investor (not the developer). The investor is involved for the benefits of tax credits which do not materialize if the units are not occupied. The units are also collateral for the investor's money; if the tax credits do not materialize, the investor gets the units. Because of their financial concern, they are allowed quarterly inspections; VHDA, the Virginia agency that handles the money, inspects tax credit housing on an annual basis. So, there may be more oversight in the future.

**Jim Rorke** stated: What you have to understand is that we support public housing. But we cannot support a plan for a project that includes a higher percentage of public housing to market rate units than any other project in the City on average. We have a neighborhood with a high crime rate, a 300 parking space deficit, numerous families and no open space for children to play.

**Gwen Menefee**, ARHA Resident Council, explained that, although she now owns her own home, she did live in public housing for many of her forty years in the City, and it provided a start for her when she had no other place to live. She is interested in low and moderate income housing for people in the City who need it because, for those who have nowhere else to go, it provides an answer. People who live in public housing have aspirations, as she did.

She was fortunate to be on the Chatham Square community committee, and while that was a long battle, it did lead to something very nice. She hopes this committee will be successful but stated that we need peace and harmony and need to be gentle when talking about people who would live in public housing. She also described how historically people from downtown Alexandria were pushed to Arlandria. We need balance by all sitting at the table so we can all be winners.

**Felita Cheeks**, Glebe Park resident, said she was offended by some of the comments. She has a daughter at GW who is an honor student, with a 3.85 average. She repeated that those in public housing have aspirations.

**Jim Rorke** stated that he did not mean to disparage anyone in public housing. His criticism is with the policy that creates a project that is almost 100% public housing, instead of being mixed. More market rate units would make for a better neighborhood.

**Felita Cheeks** responded that if we had taken that approach a long time ago, it might be different, but the spaces we have are what we have and are necessary; they were a home for her. My kids, now grown, cannot afford to live in the City so they had to move to find affordable housing they could buy. When you have no resources, you are limited in where you can go.

**Paul Cox** identified one of the problems in Arlandria as the lack of good transportation; there is no Metro and no way to get to jobs.

**Felita Cheeks** agreed that transportation was a subject to be worked on, but added that good things do come out of public housing.

**Jon Liss**, Tenants and Workers United, stated that he concurs with the concerns about process for the proposed Glebe Park redevelopment. He also is concerned about the bid process which led to the selection of EYA, and whether the RFQ required bidders to have prior participation with ARHA. His largest concern is with ARHA's poor management, stating that there are properties throughout Arlandria which were bought by a variety of other groups in the late 1980s, and those properties were troubled by the same problems with flooding and physical conditions as Glebe Park. Those buildings now have high occupancy and their owners are not losing money.

*He asked if a study had been done regarding the affect on the African American community of redeveloping James Bland, as well as Glebe Park, with the proposed loss of 52 affordable housing units and all the dislocation and moving it will entail. And he asked what the projected profits were from the Glebe Park proposal, and how they would be used.*

**Connie Ring**, ARHA Vice Chair, explained the RFQ process which led to the selection of EYA as a developer partner for Glebe Park. He stated that there was no requirement of prior involvement with ARHA, although EYA's success on the Chatham Square project played was a factor in their selection, although it was not the major point. As to profit, because the development plans are not finalized, and negotiations are not finished, any financial figures now are speculative.

**Connie Lennox** explained that another positive feature of EYA's proposal was that it was the only bidder who agreed to pay all of the up front construction costs.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

**Robin Roberts**, Lennox Place, cites the Cabrini Greens and the Robert Taylor homes housing projects as examples of high concentrations of public housing with negative lessons, and believes that the question of the proposed dramatic increase in population density, when based on the actual number of people who will be coming into this very crowded area, has not yet been addressed. There are issues of public transportation, connectivity, and overcrowding in the neighborhood already. Also, the process to date has not been good. While, after three presentations, he is clear on the business case for the Glebe Park development, the humanity questions are woefully lacking.

**Phil McMillan**, Brighton Square, raised the issue of public transportation and very limited bus routes along West Glebe Road, which may provide access to job locations, but not to shopping. The closest shopping locations are a 1.5 mile walk from the West Glebe project. He also pointed to on site management as an important distinction he sees in the neighborhood between those properties that are cared for, such as Kingsport with on site management, and the smaller, private buildings on Notabene, where there is loitering, small property crimes and nuisance activity, such as public urination.

**Connie Lennox** explained that on site management is all a question of dollars, and that no other ARHA properties have on site except one building of elderly housing. She explained that the West Glebe property did have an on site manager at one time but that the condition of the units ended that arrangement.

**Lynn Brautigan**, Beverly Hills Manor, asked about the numbers on the slides regarding the concentration of assisted rental housing in Arlandria. Specifically, she noted how the 8.7% figure for assisted rentals, changes the percentage to 20.5% with the footnote information, *and asked how the number will change with the 100 new units of public housing being proposed.*

**Johan Broekhuysen**, Lennox Place, addressing Felita and Gwen, stated that it was Lennox Place that started this process of involving others in the discussion. He and others bought into the area because they like diversity. They all agree that as part of a community, we all should look out for others. However, with 100%, or very close to it, low income residents, families will find it harder to achieve the success you have had. On the other hand, if the project is mixed, it is easier to achieve aspirations.

To achieve a greater mix, we need to tell the City to spread public housing out throughout the City, including in wealthier areas. Although the 152 units in Glebe Park are being reduced to 100 units of public housing, only 40 now are truly public housing. It is not accurate to say that density is being reduced from 152 to 100 units of public housing.

**Connie Ring** cited a planning study in 1987 when he was a member of City Council, that explains how the original plan for Glebe Park when it was purchased was for all units, even those

that were “market rate.” to be at least partially subsidized. Thus, all 152 units of Glebe Park were always intended to have some degree of subsidy and affordability.

**Andy Hall**, Del Ray Citizens/Land Use, asked about additional new housing projects that ARHA will be dealing with over the next six years.

**Connie Lennox** explained that ARHA now has 849 units of public housing and it cannot have more without HUD and City approval. It has 111 moderate rehab housing units, some market rate housing and 1722 housing vouchers. There are no new proposals coming into ARHA now, and it does not plan to expand its portfolio.

**Mildrilyn Davis** explained that the Potomac Yard affordable housing project does not involve ARHA, and that there are other groups in the City such as Wesley Housing, RPJ and AHDC who manage housing. She also stated that the Affordable Housing Initiatives Work Group is meeting right now to look at the preservation of affordable housing, as well as issues regarding development and Resolution 830

**Paul Cox** stated an interest in moving beyond the three meetings scheduled, and hopes to be able to get housing associations together with other local groups such as the coops and Tenants and Workers over the long term, because the neighborhood needs an ongoing dialogue, and to deal with neighborhood issues together.

**Melissa Garcia, Lennox Place**, cited research from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs regarding the range of social problems that extreme concentrations of poverty in urban areas can create, and explained that modern government initiatives emphasize dispersal of public housing. She asked whether ARHA was committed to the scattered site policy, and whether we were not setting ourselves up for failure by not considering all viable alternatives.

**Matt Gillman, Lennox Place**, *would like to have a list of all variances that are being requested in these developments. He also asked for information from ACPS schools about the capacity for approximately 90 new families at Charles Barrett, Cora Kelly and Mount Vernon schools.*

*Matter in italics above includes questions for specific follow up by staff, ARHA and EYA.*