To: Members of BRAG

From: Shirley Downs
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Suggestions Regarding More Effective Civic Engagement:

GET INFORMATION OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE: During the recent political campaign and during the efforts by the City to find out more effective ways to involve local residents, and members of appointed Commissions and Advisory Groups one major suggestion was for the City to be proactive in consulting with residents and to provide information to everyone as soon as possible so that members of the public and members of Commissions and Advisory groups are able to have relevant information as soon as possible. This enhances the ability to review materials and to provide more thoughtful input.

DISTRIBUTE ALL INFORMATION AS BROADLY AS POSSIBLE: As I stated at the last BRAG meeting, just relying on posting meetings on e-news isn't enough. This only involves those already deeply involved or who have signed up for e-news. I suggested that notices of the meetings and information including email references and electronic data sites, should be sent to all those from the Beauregard Stakeholder List, to all of the Local Civic Associations and Condo Associations in the area, to all those residents who have shown up at other BRAG meetings and to local press, print and on-line news sources and blogs and other news reporters. The reason I suggest this is that you want to involve not only the committed activists but also those in the general public who are interested but just are not aware of the issues being discussed or the meetings taking place.

Obviously providing as much information as possible as early as possible is important both for BRAG members and other Commission Members, policy group members, and the public. As much opportunity for review, as early as possible, is important. Please note that when Zumilda Rodriguez staffed the Stakeholder Group meetings and the subsequent City Meetings on the Beauregard Plan she did send meeting and information notices, with appropriate electronic site references, to all of the Beauregard Stakeholders Group List as well as to those additional people who showed up at meetings. This was very effective and appreciated. Please restore this process and add the additional notices.

MAKE MINUTES AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC: Please also note that when Donna Fossom made the point about Minutes being a record of what happened at meetings she was correct. Not only are members of BRAG in attendance at these meeting but also members of the public so I would agree with Annabelle Fisher that it would be useful for all materials, including the minutes of past meetings, to be made available to the public because public participants may catch some important ingredients

that may be missing in the minutes which others might not. Many of us have been involved in Beauregard Plan meetings for a number of years and are deeply knowledgeable about the issues being discussed as, for example, I was regarding the language, approved by Council, re the road next to Dora Kelly Park. This would allow members of the public to highlight where Minutes might be improved or made clearer and improve transparency.

PROVIDE ENOUGH TIME FOR PUBLIC COMMENT: Altogether too often the public comment period in meetings is very truncated. It is often way at the end, and very brief. To be honest and effective the public comment period needs to be planned for and undertaken with sufficient time for the public to actually speak. In speaking to Rich Baier after the last meeting he said that some groups divide the public comment in half and allow some public comments in the beginning so that Commission/Advisory Group members can integrate commentary on the suggestions and issues raised during the meeting. Then there is also a second comment period at the end which allows the public to bring up issues that have not been addressed. However this matter is addressed there has to be sufficient time for the public to comment incorporated into the agenda to make such commentary and input real.

From: Shirley Downs shirleydowns@verizon.net
Date: Fri 11/30/2012 2:33 PM
Subject: BRAG meeting on Saturday Dec 1, 2012

Dear Dave,

As you know I have been concerned that the members of BRAG and members of the public have not had sufficient time to read, review and digest the materials that were sent out. This is very dense and difficult stuff and I fear that the decisions made are going to inhibit adequate review and input by the advisory group and the public on this process and preclude or inhibit subsequent improvements and refinements to the plan as we go forward. When this plan was voted on in June many of us who had worked on it wanted a delay so that issues that had not yet been addressed could be examined and worked on. When the plan was passed we were told that your group would provide opportunities to do that. Donna Fossom, when making the case for the approval of the plan in June, stated that we were looking at the Beauregard Plan from 10,000 feet and that as we moved foreword to the design standards, DSUP and at other levels we would have further opportunities to address these issues. What we are afraid of is that we will not in fact have a chance to examine these issues in the manner in which they deserve because we are moving too fast and there is not adequate time for review and input.

Second, with regard to the issue of the parallel roads, after the BRAG meeting the groups went to City Hall and spoke at open mike on November 17th, about their concerns, and the City Council then stated that City Staff and BRAG should look at these issues and address them. There has been one meeting with the City Staff and the local residents and there is to be a meeting between Duke and Staff on December 12th. The issue of the road framework is scheduled to go before the Transportation Commission on the on December 12. This is not sufficient and adequate time for input and review. There is no opportunity to report back to the BRAG Group about the results of that meeting between Duke and the City Staff. I am also concerned that local residents, who were supposed to be included in that meeting, are now being excluded from the meeting and the discussion. This is not helpful, open or transparent. These are their residences. These are their properties and lives that are going to be impacted.

We need input, discussion, and genuine transparency on these issues. It may be that Staff and BRAG members can suggest ways to address and mitigate the problems being raised by the residents. Or perhaps after discussion and review, you and City Staff, will come to a decision that you cannot solve this problem. But then you can put foreword a recommendation to the City Council that this issue should be taken up by the Council before moving on. We can't move foreword on an issue as important as the location of the road and the issues that are being raised and approve the street plan as is when there are so many outstanding concerns and issues. If such approval goes to the Transportation Commission and it is agreed to then this is a rubber stamp that nothing can be done ---- to bad. That was not the message of the City Council.

Planning Deputy Director, Jeff Farner, in a discussion with me told me that if the BRAG group wished they could recommend that this issue be put aside for further review and that it could go foreword at a later point in time. That would mean that the Transportation portion of the plan would not be agreed to on the 12th at the Transportation Commission but could go forward after further discussion and review.

I have other issues that I would like to be able to discuss with you regarding "place making". Again, I have spoken to Jeff and he has stated that it may be possible to address some of these issues in the Land Use portion of the discussion and review. I am attempting to do everything that I can to make this plan and place as vibrant and successful as possible.

Sincerely Yours,

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Citizen Public Comments, Beauregard Rezoning Advisory Group Meeting, 12/12/12: Bud Jackson

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Good evening. My name is Bud Jackson and I live at 2568 Nicky Lane – immediately adjacent to the proposed Adams neighborhood Duke Realty redevelopment plan.

My profession is strategic communications consulting and over the years I have worked with developers to gain approval and public support for developments and redevelopments. I have also worked on the other side of the table with neighborhood and environmental groups to block unreasonable developments.

Regardless of what side of the table I have been on, my counsel has always been to communicate and to find common ground because it is in everyone's best interests to avoid confrontation and to reach a consensus.

Earlier this week, I was part of a group who met with city staff and a representative of Duke Realty to address our concerns with a proposed public road that, by their estimate, will bring approximately 6-8,000 cars daily to within ten feet of my bedroom window and patio, as it will many of my neighbors.

It will severely change our quality of life …and upon final plan approval will immediately adversely impact our home values …and make it more difficult to re-sell our homes.

Additionally, this road will be within yards of public playgrounds at John Adams School. It could potentially only take one person with a medical emergency before we see an out of control car plowing into a playground of children, or even a car fire putting children at risk.

The road needs to be changed. If the plans were re-drafted, the parallel road could essentially be flipped with the internal road – which would move the busier higher traffic count road further from the playground and adjacent homes. It would also allow for a lower speed limit and perhaps even allow for a form of speed bump which could increase safety, especially near the school.

I understand that this would potentially require a lot of work, and I sense resistance from the city and Duke Realty to make the extra effort after all the work they have already done -- but it must be done to accommodate valid resident safety and quality of life concerns. And while many of my neighbors and I would prefer no road at all, we would be willing to accept this modification as a reasonable alternative that balances the need for progress with the impact upon city resident quality of life and safety.

Now… it is important to make a couple of points for this committee and for the public record that were made with city staff and duke realty at our meeting.

I first learned about this road only two weeks ago. I understand there have been past meetings but I believe this committee and city staff do not fully appreciate how little is known about this proposal because in some ways it has been overshadowed by the tsunami of development plans that have recently burdened our neighborhood.

Also, the city never directly contacted homeowners who are adjacent to this proposed redevelopment, which I believe was a disservice to both residents and the city and is partly to blame for where things now stand.

It is also important to note that Duke Realty never contacted homeowners adjacent to their property to seek their input. The first time I had ever communicated with a representative from Duke Realty was during our meeting this week at city hall.

As someone who has advised developers, I can tell you that public outreach is an important step towards seeking the goodwill of neighbors while helping to minimize potential public opposition.

Duke's failure to reach out is at best, unfortunate. At worst, it was an attempt to move this proposal further down the road so that inertia takes over before neighbors can effectively react. Another tactic sometimes employed by developers.

For now, I am giving Duke Realty the benefit of the doubt. But their failure to reach out should be publicly noted.

The bottom-line right now is that we are the victims of being brought into this proposal after it has already been drafted. The cake has started to bake without an important ingredient – the input of people whose quality of life will be severely impacted.

And because the cake has already started to bake I am concerned that the city and the developer will be reluctant take the time and to spend the money to partially go back to the drawing board to make the modifications needed to address our concerns.

But that is exactly what is required. City residents should not be collateral damage for the failure of the city and the developer to bring us into this project earlier. And if a choice needs to be made to take more time and to incur more expense … or to trample upon the quality of life and safety of city residents – the choice should be made to protect resident safety and quality of life.

And after all, it's not city residents' fault that the cake has been thrown into the oven before we had a chance to collaborate on the recipe.

So while I am hopeful that the city and the developer will continue to work with us let me state for the record and for this committee:

That I oppose the proposed two-lane public road's current location. If needed we will mobilize the community and fight the redevelopment.

Because if this proposed redevelopment passes as-is, it will essentially represent the city council exercising eminent domain over the quality of life of city residents. It will demonstrate a greater concern for developers and their profits than for the working families and retired people who call Alexandria home.

So I respectfully request that this committee, the developer and the city, tap the brakes a little bit and to take the time and yes, even incur the expense, if needed to make this right.

And for our part we will continue to work with the city staff, city council and duke realty.

There is a pathway to making this right. It just requires a little more work, without short-cuts, to get it done.

Thank you.

Parking for Tenants and Guests
1900 & 2000
N. Beauregard Only