

APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC PROCESS PRIOR TO RELEASE OF DRAFT PLAN

PART I: HOUSING MASTER PLAN ADVISORY GROUP

A. INTRODUCTION

An extensive civic engagement process was undertaken as part of the Housing Master Plan. As with all other planning efforts in Alexandria, providing opportunities for the community to participate and provide feedback on the planning process is paramount to ensuring community needs are addressed and building buy-in for successful implementation.

Multiple meetings were held with the appointed Housing Master Plan Advisory Group (AG) and the public between April of 2010 and April of 2011. In addition to set, topic-related meetings, the community outreach effort included a narrated bus tour of approximately 70 existing affordable housing sites within Alexandria as well as an interactive affordable housing allocation exercise in which participants discussed and placed affordable housing throughout the City based on group-established priorities.

B. METHODOLOGY

The City established the AG to help guide the planning process and ensure comprehensive participation from all of the stakeholders potentially impacted by the result of this effort. The AG was comprised of the City's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) plus an additional five appointees. The group included both public sector and private sector representatives including residents, interest groups, for-profit and nonprofit developers, housing advocates, financial industry and legal interests. This group was charged with providing direct feedback on data presented and spearheading the development of the goals and objectives that guided the creation of the implementation plan.

Meetings were strategically held during each phase of the research/planning process and were organized by specific topics. Organizing the meetings by topic allowed for the most efficient use of time in which to obtain targeted feedback and direction. The first session began with an overview of demographic and economic context of the City and a discussion of the planning process and goals. As the research and planning progressed, the topics became more specific and ranged from the housing economics of

affordable development to design tools used for developing affordable housing. An overview of each meeting is provided in the following section, with detailed data about each meeting available on the City's website at www.alexandriava.gov/housingplan.

C. PUBLIC MEETING OVERVIEW

The following section provides an overview of the public meetings held to date.

AG/Public Session 1 – Kick-off: Information and Listening Session April 1, 2010

This meeting served as the official kickoff for the Housing Master Plan. Dr. Lisa Sturtevant, from the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis presented a global market assessment of the DC metropolitan area, as it relates to housing and affordable housing. The presentation provided a framework for the efforts to be completed as part of the Master Plan. In terms of Master Plan business, the City staff and consultants provided an overview of the process, addressed the purpose of the plan and moderated a discussion period with AG members and the community.



AG/Public Session 2 – Affordable Housing Sites Tour (SATURDAY) May 1, 2010

City staff led two buses of stakeholders and AG members on a driving tour that highlighted over 70 housing properties in the City relevant to the Housing Master Plan process. This tour included moderated discussions about topics ranging from existing affordable housing properties and areas where future development likely will occur. The tour provided interested parties to become better acquainted with the issues, opportunities and challenges facing affordable housing in the City.

AG/Public Session 3 – Defining the Challenge May 6, 2010

To set the stage for the Housing Master Plan process and future meetings, City staff presented information illustrating current affordable housing supply and demand, as well as data and projections about population, employment and commuting patterns. The meeting also served to familiarize the AG and the public on the major findings and recommendations generated through the Affordable Housing Initiatives Work Group effort that preceded the Housing Master Plan. A moderated discussion between staff, the consultants, the AG and the community was held.

AG/Public Session 4 – Planning & Zoning 101 June 10, 2010

The City staff presented facts and information regarding the regulatory environment in Virginia and Alexandria can influence affordable housing retention and development. Topics included a review of how factors such as zoning, density, height limitations, and issues such as parking and open space requirements all influence decisions. The presentation concluded with a review of the amount, type and location of planned residential and mixed-use development, redevelopment and infill currently known by the City. The discussion with the AG and public in attendance focused on how the planning and regulatory process affects housing production, including limits, opportunities and costs.

AG/Public Session 5 – Homeless and Special Needs Housing July 1, 2010

The City staff and consultant RKG Associates, Inc. held a session specifically focusing on the housing needs, supply and operating costs for homeless and special needs populations, including an assessment of affordable assisted living needs and challenges within Alexandria. The presentation addressed the challenges facing communities such as Alexandria to meet these needs as well as examples of creative, working solutions here and elsewhere that can be employed by the City. The AG and public discussion addressed several of the frustrations facing both the persons with needs as well as the entities trying to meet those needs.

AG/Public Session 6 – Housing Economics September 16, 2010

This session was designed to present the financial realities of preserving and developing affordable housing in Alexandria's real estate and market climate. RKG Associates, Inc. provided a hands-on presentation of the impact providing affordable housing could have on the financial feasibility of a development project; and how location, scale and development type all influence the magnitude of impact. The presentation included a discussion of new development compared to preservation, and how the priorities established for the Master Plan will influence the efficiency of the City leveraging public monies to influence affordable housing. The meeting included an update regarding concurrent work of the Developer Contribution Group.

AG/Public Session 7 – Funding October 7, 2010

Session 7 focused on how affordable housing is funded locally, regionally and nationally. The consultant team's presentation included regulatory and investment realities within Virginia; and how those realities affect delivering and protecting affordable housing in Alexandria. The presentation provided an exploration of funding options for affordable housing based on best practices from other jurisdictions and sources available through public, nonprofit and private organizations focused on affordable housing preservation and development. The AG/public discussion included conversations about the current climate surrounding affordable housing as well as potential changes into the future.

AG/Public Session 8 – Land Use/Development Tools #1 October 28, 2010

The outreach strategy included a detailed discussion of specific tools to be considered by the City to aid in implementing the Housing Master Plan. To ensure comprehensive assessment of these potential tools and sufficient opportunity for the AG to understand and vet these concepts, the tools discussions were divided into three general topic areas presented by the consultant tema over three meetings. Session 8 focused on the merits and methods to create various public private partnership (PPP) tools within the City to promote the preservation and development of affordable housing. The meeting included, but was not limited to, topics such as:

- Air rights/public land assets
- Land swaps/preservation
- Density/density bonuses
- Tax abatements
- Joint ventures/direct investment strategies
- Other PPP alternatives

AG/Public Session 9 – Land Use/Development Tools #2 November 11, 2010

The second tools discussion focused on how the City can promote affordable housing through regulatory changes including the development of new and/or modification of existing policies and procedures, particularly as they relate to the development process. Topics addressed and discussed included:

- Transfer of development rights (TDR)
- Mixed income development
- Development process and permitting
- Community land trusts

AG/Public Session 10 – Land Use/Development Tools #3 December 2, 2010

The final tools discussion session focused on design-related tools that can be employed to influence the preservation and provision of affordable housing. These tools range from aesthetic changes and requirements to development strategies aimed at supporting affordable housing. The presentation included visual examples to stimulate discussion. Topic areas from the presentation include:

- Adaptive reuse
- Universal design

- Accessory dwelling units (i.e. granny flats)
 - Existing and new development
- Other design alternatives

AG/Public Session 11 – ARHA Strategic Plan and Priority Housing Unit Policy (PHUP) January 6, 2011

Alexandria’s Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) had a concurrent effort ongoing during the Housing Master Plan focused on identifying strategies for ARHA to enhance its efforts to preserve and provide public and subsidized housing. Given the parallel track ARHA and the City were traveling, the Office of Housing held a joint session with ARHA to discuss issues related to public housing and possible options to house the city’s lowest income residents,. The presentation and AG discussion also addressed the PHUP recommendation from Chapter II of the AHIWG report, and its appropriateness for the Housing Master Plan.

AG/Public Session 12 – Allocation Exercise (SATURDAY) January 29, 2011

City staff and the consultant led an interactive exercise with AG and community participants aimed at identifying supportable strategies on how to enhance the distribution of affordable housing within the city. The participants were tasked with allocating the existing and required affordable housing (to meet existing city demand) for a variety of affordable housing on a large city map based on a series of development parameters. The results of the exercise provided insight into how community members view addressing the needs to support affordable housing.

AG/Public Session 13 – Framework of Preliminary Draft Outline February 3, 2011

The consultant led a presentation and subsequent discussion of the overarching issues that will be addressed in the final Housing Master Plan document. The focus of the meeting was to garner support for the AG and the community on the goals and objectives that define the implementation strategy for the City.

AG/Public Session 14 – Presentation of Draft Implementation Strategy April 14, 2011

The City staff and consultant presented a draft of the goals and strategies, along with a resource prioritization matrix, for input from the AG and public. The discussion focused on specific actions being presented in reference to the Group’s support of each action and the prioritization of all actions.

AG/Public Session 15 – Overview of Draft HMP May 2, 2012

Staff presented an overview of the Draft Housing Master Plan for review and discussion by the AG prior to discussion with the Planning Commission and City Council.

D. ALLOCATION EXERCISE RESULTS

Among the many issues discussed throughout the Housing Master Plan process, none garnered as strong of an emotional reaction as the issue of affordable housing distribution. The discussions held as part of the Housing Master Plan effort focused around three primary subject areas: [1] equity for neighborhoods with a higher concentration of affordable housing; [2] the criteria that should be used to determine suitable locations for affordable housing; and [3] the financial realities of delivering affordable housing in certain areas. Given that one of the



five goals driving the Housing Master Plan effort is, “To make recommendations to ensure a more balanced geographic distribution of affordable, workforce and public housing throughout the City,” it is important to provide the principles used to guide the implementation recommendations.

As in many communities, one of the most polarizing discussions surrounding affordable housing has been the equitable distribution within the community. There are neighborhoods within the city that feel their portion of the City houses a greater “fair share” than other parts of the city and seek an equitable redistribution. This conversation has been particularly sensitive regarding subsidized and public housing. At one end of the discussion was the concern that having a higher concentration of affordable housing in one area influenced individual safety and potentially affected property values. On the other end of the discussion was the recognition that concentrating households with the least means was not an effective measure to develop a sense of community. The stated consensus among the AG and of the community that participated in discussions leading up to the allocation exercise was the need to improve housing quality and housing choice throughout the city for all households, regardless of status.

The allocation exercise provided AG and interested community members an opportunity to become “planners for a day,” and make group recommendations as to the distribution of affordable housing based on existing supply, current demand levels and projected need into the near future. Participants were distributed into five groups led by City staff members and charged with three tasks: [1] define the parameters from which affordable housing distribution should be done, [2] allocate affordable rental housing units to meet the current estimated demand throughout the city assuming the cost to deliver these units are universal, and [3] reconsider the distribution based on the market analysis findings on the true “cost” of delivering affordable housing in different areas of the city. Each group was given a large city map and a supply of Lego blocks representing specified numbers (denoted by size) and types (denoted by color) of affordable housing (i.e. market rate affordable as compared to public housing). Prior to the start of the exercise, staff set up

Lego blocks representing the city's existing distribution of affordable housing supply on the maps to show existing distributions. Participants initially added blocks representing the unmet demand. In the portion of the exercise that took into account the cost of providing housing in different areas of the city, they then had an opportunity to redistribute whatever blocks they chose, including currently existing affordable housing.

The event yielded some expected and some unexpected results. There was general recognition by the AG that there are mitigating factors related to the delivery of affordable housing, particularly for those households with special needs and/or with the most modest means. Simply put, creating an equal spread of affordable housing (both market rate and subsidized) throughout the city was not viewed as the most efficient approach to serving these populations. Issues such as transportation, access and proximity to services and housing cost all are factors that need to be considered when attempting to place new affordable housing units. Among the most discussed was the need for the housing to improve the resident's quality of life. For example, relocating public housing units out of the Old Town area (where transportation and access to services are relatively high) to a part of the city isolated from public transit, employment opportunities and basic commercial and social needs was not seen as an appropriate or effective tool.

It is important to note that the relative cost implications of delivering affordable units in certain parts of the city generally was not given substantial weight by the AG or the majority of the public who participated in this process. For this issue, the general opinion expressed was recognition that housing is expensive in Alexandria and the value of locations that can adequately accommodate affordable housing outweighs the financial costs of providing opportunities for modest-income and special needs households. That said, there was an acknowledgement that all sites do not serve all populations equally, and should be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine which income levels and need-based groups would be best served at that particular location.

Based on these discussions, the following themes emerged as consensus items with regard to objectives for the location of affordable housing:

- To capitalize on the transportation and access benefits of the transportation hubs that support households in need of public transit services.
- To promote the development of accessible/adaptable housing for all new housing projects within the city.
- To ensure that any relocation efforts provide a net benefit to the quality of life of the occupants.
- To encourage replacement of units on-site as the first preference.

- To consider context sensitive approaches to deliver affordable housing in areas of the City with established design or historic standards.
- To evaluate each opportunity and determine which need-based groups would be best served at that site.

PART II: HOUSING CONTRIBUTION WORK GROUP

A. INTRODUCTION

A development community discussion process was undertaken as part of the Housing Contribution Review for the Housing Master Plan that was laid out in the AHIWG Report. The mission of the group was to review and consider revisions to the current affordable housing contribution formula, which has been in use since 2005. The process provided an opportunity for the development community along with the public to participate and provide feedback on the discussion and it was important to ensure an open dialog to create buy-in for successful implementation. Multiple meetings were held with the Housing Contribution Work Group (HCWG) between April of 2011 and May of 2012.

B. METHODOLOGY

The City established the HCWG to help guide the contribution process and ensure comprehensive participation from all of the stakeholders potentially impacted by the result of this effort. The HCWG was comprised of nineteen persons representing both public sector and private sector representatives including citizens, industry groups, for-profit and nonprofit developers, representatives from the planning commission and affordable housing advisory committee and legal interests. This group was charged with providing direct feedback on level of affordable housing contribution for new development projects in the City.

C. MEETING OVERVIEW

The following section provides an overview of the meetings held to date.

HCWG/Meeting 1 – Introduction April 4, 2011

These meetings served as the introduction of the mission of the group, discussion of the developer interview conducted by RKG, and a presentation on the contribution formulas of surrounding jurisdictions.

HCWG/Meeting 2 – Economic Model April 21 and April 26, 2011

These meetings provided a presentation of the economic model developed by RKG Associates to both HCWG members and development community as a whole, and solicited input and feedback from the development community.

HCWG/Meeting 3 – Affordable Housing Contributions and Pledges April 28, 2011

This meeting served as a review of the current policy, goals of the group as proposed by the Office of Housing and the starting point for the development of the new formula.

HCWG/Meeting 4 – Contribution Principles May 18, 2011

The meeting included discussion of the principles for the contribution formula and review of the RKG economic model.

HCWG/Meeting 5 –Voluntary Contribution Formula June 27, 2011

The work group considered a staff proposal for a revised formula based on inflation indexing.

HCWG/Meeting 6 –Bonus Density May 31, 2012

The group discussed a staff proposal for changes with regard to bonus density. Staff also provided a Housing Master Plan status update.

HCWG/Meeting 7 – Final Wrap-Up TBD

PART 3: PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL

Housing staff presented an overview of the draft plan in public Work Sessions with the City Council (May 8, 2012) and Planning Commission (June 3, 2012).