



**Housing Master Plan Kick-off Meeting  
Monday, June 7, 2010 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.**

**Meeting Summary**

Meeting materials are available online at: [www.Alexandriava.gov/housingplan](http://www.Alexandriava.gov/housingplan)

Mildrilyn Davis, Director, Office of Housing welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the subject for the evening – ***Planning and Zoning 101: How the planning and regulatory process affects housing production, including limits, opportunities and costs*** – and the presenters from the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Department of Planning & Zoning and Brandi Collins, Urban Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning presented the findings from the City related to how planning and regulation impact affordable housing. *The presentation is posted online.*

Jonathan Rak, Attorney, McGuire Woods also presented, providing the audience with the development community’s perspective on affordable housing development in practice. He indicated that predictability and consistency across the board with regard to regulation are critical for developers when they undertake a project. He provided several “real life” examples where the lack of consistency impacted a project and discussed other programs being implemented within the region that assists affordable housing development. *The presentation is posted online.*

The meeting concluded with a moderated question and answer period, led by Russell Archambault, Vice President and Principal, RKG Associates, Inc.

**Questions/comments related to the development process:**

- Can you rate Alexandria in terms of its development process?  
*A: The places that are the toughest to develop in, such as Arlington, Fairfax, and Alexandria, are usually the most attractive from a market standpoint. They all have different processes, more difficult in some aspects than others.*
- Where does affordable housing fit on the list of demands on the developer as compared to things such as underground parking, open space, etc.?  
*A: That is relative to the project, but the perception is that it rates comparatively below these other needs.*
- What can be done to encourage developers to incorporate universal design?  
*A: Predictability and uniformity of requirements.*
- What can we do to promote implementation of affordable housing policies through new development? *A: Implementation tools will be discussed at the October and November meetings. Preferred tools should be included in the Housing Master Plan recommendations.*
- Does using the LIHTC increase the profit margin of developing affordable housing? *Generally yes, but there are many factors that impact the profit margin.*

## **Disabled Veterans**

- Is there a funding source for the provision of affordable housing for disabled vets? *A: This will be addressed at the next session (July 1) focusing on housing for the homeless and those with special needs.*

## **Discussion points and observations about fiscal issues/city policy and the value of affordable housing:**

- Need to be able to show that affordable housing has a bottom line value...It costs taxpayers significantly, and in these difficult financial times, it needs to be clear that it is critical to a healthy community and what those benefits are (not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it also makes good financial sense);
- Affordable housing does have a value in the community – diversity, working people have a place to live near their jobs, reduced travel and carbon emissions;
- Empirical evidence from RPJ housing shows that the salaries of their affordable housing residents make a real contribution to the local economy; this can be a qualitative way of showing the financial value of affordable housing;
- Having firemen, police, teachers, health workers live and work in Alexandria is an important value that is difficult to place a financial price tag on;
- Need to remember that any of us could be the one out on the street at anytime;
- There is a difference between perception of affordable housing & what the city defines as affordable;
- Affordable housing is going to cost money and the city is going to have to pay for it;
- Important to set community priorities;
- City policy needs to be clear on the importance of affordable housing to the community – and that the need is not currently being met. If the policy is not clear from above, then we will not be able to achieve;
- Need to factor in the cost of externalities – such as health costs when people don't have housing;
- Need to look at creative tools for income generation – for example, channeling fees from companies that film movies in Alexandria to the Housing Trust Fund;
- It is important to put a face on affordable housing and emphasize that these are people in our community who need affordable housing; people tend to assume that affordable housing is only for people on welfare;

## **Discussion about the process for approval of the housing master plan:**

- Important to put a concrete policy plan together that is specific and policy oriented so that there is a real guide for city staff and predictability for developers;
- Need to approach the legislative director with any changes that will be needed in state legislation to allow an ADU policy – or whatever policy we come up with that has some teeth for implementation;
- Concerned that the plan needs to have teeth and strong policy guidance, not watered down so community will accept;
- What is the objective in terms of community buy-in for the plan? Are we intending to garner 100% support from the public for the Housing Master Plan?