Ramsey Homes
Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA 44133

• Built under the Lanham Act
  ▪ Construction of various housing forms in early 1940s including slum clearance housing, temporary war housing and permanent war housing to address housing shortage
  ▪ Construction of wartime nursery schools including the Carver Nursery (224 North Fayette Street)

“Scheme of NHA Involves 26,206 Units in 6 Groups in Metropolitan Area,” The Washington Post: Sep 12, 1943: R4
Site History and Context
Site History - 19th-c.

- Largely undeveloped area
- Possibly used as market garden by George Blish, 1836-1849
- Henry Daingerfield’s Estate

1877 G.M. Hopkins Map
Site History - Civil War

- Battery H headquarters on the US Quarter Master’s map (Project Area in red)
- Structures include a Sutler’s Building, a civilian merchant licensed by the US military to supply goods and services
Archaeology

- Development plans will impact below-ground resources
- Archaeological Evaluation is completed
- Data Recovery phase to be completed prior to construction
Archaeology

- Initial testing of the site

Photos: Thunderbird Archeology
1863 Bird’s Eye View of Alexandria by Charles Magnus
Site History - 20th-c.

- 1941 - Land acquired by US government for defense housing
- 1941-42 - Design and Construction of Ramsey Homes (permanent war housing) for US Housing Authority
- 1953 - Federal Public Housing Authority divested many properties and Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority acquired property
- 1984 - Creation of Parker-Gray District and BAR
- 2009 - Creation of Uptown/Parker-Gray National Register District
1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Block Property Survey, April 16, 1941
Directly north of Ramsey Homes site on Wythe Street was the Parker-Gray School (1920-1950) which later became the Charles Houston Elementary School until desegregation. It is the current site of the Charles Houston Recreation Center. Source: Alexandria Library Special Collections.
North side of 800 block of Wythe Street, adjacent to Ramsey Homes, circa 1950, with the school seen in the adjacent block.  
Source: Alexandria Library Special Collections.
Proposed Designs for Ramsey Homes
First proposed Site Plan with center larger apartment building and two quadplexes (not built to this plan)
First proposed elevation of center large apartment building with concrete piers and shiplap siding (not built)
First proposed elevation of quadplex units with concrete slab and drop and shiplap siding (not built)
Revised Plans by Delos Smith of Smith, Werner and Billings, Oct. 10, 1941

Revised Site Plan with four quadplexes (*constructed*)
Revised Plans by Delos Smith of Smith, Werner and Billings, Oct. 10, 1941

Elevations with *Fabcrete*: Entrance Door Side and Living Room Side(*constructed*)
Floor plans of typical unit in quadplex with first floor on left and second floor on right
Revised Plans by Delos Smith of Smith, Werner and Billings, Oct. 10, 1941

Detail of proposed skylights over bath since bath had no windows.
Wooden plaque to be installed once completed.
Delos H. Smith, FAIA (1884-1963)
• Project Architect and Noted Architectural Historian
• Inaugural member of the OHAD Board of Architectural Review
• Worked for US Housing Authority and Alexandria Housing Board
• Noted ecclesiastical and civic architect
  • Rebuilding of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Rock Creek
  • US Capitol Prayer Room
  • New York Avenue Presbyterian Church
  • Montgomery County Court House in Rockville, MD
Elements of Modern Design

- Influenced by Bauhaus and International Style
- Underlying social purpose
- Overtly unornamented
- Use of experimental, industrial and durable materials (precast concrete panels, metal canopies)
- Structure informs design
- Rectilinear: Flat roofs, punched windows, flat façade
- Use of green space and courtyards to encourage health
Concrete Panel Construction (Fabcrete or Vita Crete)

PRECAST CONCRETE IN WARTIME BUILDING

Cameron Valley Homes under Construction with Experimental Precast Concrete Slabs
(Source: The Architectural Record, 1942)
PRECAST SLADS FOR HOUSING

For many years mass housing has been a fertile field for experimentation with all manner of materials and ideas, and in recent years precast concrete, latest of concrete developments, has begun to appear in new housing ideas. The two shown on this page are of more than passing interest, as they are experimental projects for federally financed war housing. The current call for demountable units, built in factory production and quickly erected and moved, coupled with present or expected shortages of certain materials, lends fresh interest to this use of concrete.

Built as an experimental housing project of the ESA at Alexandria, Va., these houses of precast concrete are non-rusting, corrosion-free, and can be relatively easily moved. The on-site concrete production is for floors, walls, and roof, with a broad strip foundation, every 10 or 16 ft., being a part of the project.
The present invention is directed to improvements in building constructions, and more particularly to buildings that are formed from pre-cast units of cementitious material.

The primary object of the invention is to produce a building employing units so constructed that they may be easily and quickly assembled and held in rigid relationship to provide walls, partitions, floors and roofs.

Another object of the invention is to provide a building unit which is light in weight, water and fire proof and so fashioned that the units when united can be used to produce a building of any desired size and shape, and at a minimum cost.
Public Housing
Public Housing in the early 20th-c.

- National Housing Act of 1934 - created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to provide housing and for job creation through the Public Works Administration (PWA)
- Houser Movement (1920s and 1930s) for social and urban reform
- PWA Housing - oversaw all phases of public housing development except for style which was left to local architects
- US Housing Act of 1937
- Slum Clearance
- Lanham Act of 1940 - focus on housing shortages in defense work areas
- The Housing Act of 1949
Characteristics of Public Housing in 1930s and 1940s

• Multifamily and attached dwellings in an ordered site plan, often with courtyards and substantial open space
• Utilitarian design and high-quality, durable materials
• Units did not have hallways to minimize wasting space and units situated to take advantage of natural light and ventilation
Public Housing in Alexandria

• 1939 - Alexandria Housing Authority formed
• 1956 - Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority
• 1975 - Office of Housing established in City government
Defense Worker Housing in Alexandria, 1941

**Uncle Sam Houses His Workers**

FRANK BAKER, takes a pleasure in the sortie of the Stars and Stripes, which he's liberally spreading across the living rooms of a bungalow settlement - down in Washington. His victory, the Baker family - 517 Tennessee Avenue, Mrs. Baker, 35, with two children, 11, Ben, and 10, Carol, are among the thousands of defense workers who have come to Alexandria to get away from the dust of the city, and to be near the Navy yards, and other factories, where they are employed.

The Bakers are not only one example among the defense and Government workers who have come to Alexandria. In all, over 1000 families have come to the city in recent months, and the Alexandria housing situation is not as bad as it was a year ago. The new influx of people has caused an increase in the demand for housing, and a decrease in the supply.

The Attention of the Alexandria Housing Authority has been drawn to this situation, and steps are being taken to meet the needs of the people. The Authority is working with the Federal Housing Administration to provide additional housing for defense workers.

Qualifications for residence in Alexandria are as follows: no family with more than $1000 a year and no son who is under 16 years of age must have a job in the city. The only exceptions are for those who are employed in the government or military services.

**At Home With a Defense Family...**

3. bedrooms, bath, living room. Shown is Mary Frances Brawley, a visitor. Making it better...
“We are going to help rid Washington of all substandard dwellings,” says John Ihlder, executive head of the Alley Dwelling Authority, speaking for his agency.

“National defense housing fits into this program as it results in low-rent dwellings for defense workers who otherwise would overcrowd existing dwellers.”

“Instead of using city streets, 12-year-old Ruth May Easke may now play with other children of all ages in spacious courts around which the buildings are grouped. And Mrs. Easke can gossip cross-court with her neighbors...”
Site Redevelopment
Preservation Alternative *(retain one building)*
Preservation Alternative (retain one building)
## Redevelopment Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Vacated</td>
<td>2/28/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demolition Start</td>
<td>2/29/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archeology Start</td>
<td>4/1/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Start</td>
<td>5/1/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed in Service</td>
<td>7/1/2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Redevelopment Proposal
What is Section 106?

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment.
Section 106 at Ramsey Homes

- Redevelopment of site is a federal undertaking
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is a federal agency and they delegate authority to localities to carry out (Alexandria Office of Housing is agent)

4 steps of 106 Process
1. Initiate Section 106 Review
2. Identify eligible, or potentially eligible, historic resources
3. Assess project effects (i.e., any adverse effects or no effects)
4. Mitigate or resolve adverse effects
Section 106 Timeline

- February 2016: Office of Housing initiated Section 106 coordination with ARHA and Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources (VDHR)
- Spring 2016: Invitation to Consulting Parties to Participate
- June, September and November 2016: Consulting Parties Meetings and Determination of Adverse Effects
- Winter/Spring 2017: Mitigation Options Discussed; Advisory Council on Historic Preservation becomes Consulting Party
- July 2017: Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed
Section 106 Mitigation

- Documentation
- Deconstruction Tour prior to Demolition and 3D documentation
- Interpretive signage
- Genealogical Research and Oral Histories
- Symposium on Ramsey Homes and context of public housing in Alexandria
- Information on City website
Resources

• All history reports, measured drawings, and approved redevelopment plans can be found at VHDLLC’s website - www.vhdllc.us