

Meeting notes are recorded by City staff to provide a written summary of the Advisory Group discussion and comments from the public. They are not intended to be a verbatim transcription of events at the meeting.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Faroll Hamer, Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning, opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees and recognizing City and ARHA officials. (For full list of staff and consultant teams for the Braddock East and James Bland Redevelopment projects see notes of the first Advisory Group meeting on February 8, 2008).

Advisory Group attendance:

Harvey Gray: Person knowledgeable about Parker Gray history.

Janice Howard: At-Large Member.

Gwen Menefee: Public Housing Advocate.

Nakia Johnson: Public Housing Resident.

Connie Ring: Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority Commissioner.

John Komoroske: Planning Commissioner.

Sylvia Sibrover: Northeast Citizens Association Representative.

Merrick Malone: At-Large Member.

Howard Katz: Developer with affordable/workforce housing development experience.

Leslie Zupan: Inner City Civic Association Representative.

Advisory Group absentees:

John DuPree: At-Large Member.

Salena Zellers: Braddock Neighborhood Resident.

Mary Means introduces the format of the meeting as being an opportunity to hear from the group and talk to each other.

JAMES BLAND DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL USE PERMIT UPDATE:

Dirk Geratz, Principal Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning, provided an update on the Bland DSUP process. Community meetings are ongoing and will be continuing during the summer.

REVIEW OF DESIGN CHARRETTE

(Refer to PowerPoint presentation)

Ben Carlson of Goody Clancy presented the themes that had emerged from the Design Charrette held on June 26th, including a composite drawing of the outcome from the three groups.

In general terms, the results of the Charrette suggested that, due to community preferences on height and density and the need for public amenities, it would be desirable to relocate up to 1/3 of the total number of public housing units on the Adkins, Madden

and Ramsey sites to sites elsewhere in the City. This indicates that there is a need to include a relocation strategy as part of the Plan.

Advisory Group Questions/Comments

Q: What % of the 1/3 would be relocated as a group? Concerned about splitting the residents up and distributing them too widely.

A. That would be addressed in the criteria for the relocation strategy.

A. ARHA prefers about 20 units minimum for management purposes.

A. For tax credit purposes the requirement may be a bit more than 20.

Q: Are there any prospects for public housing at Potomac Yard?

A. Yes, and also at Landmark/Van Dorn and the Beauregard corridor.

Q: What about at Landbay L of Potomac Yard which is close to the Metro.

A. That's a possibility but it is further down the time-line.

C. The top priority should be living space. There is some suggestion that there will be public housing units going away.

A. There is a commitment to maintaining the full number of existing public housing units *and* providing better housing. It is not clear whether all replacement housing would be in Braddock East.

A. The City is now consciously planning for public housing on alternative sites in the City to provide more choice and better opportunities. This is not something the City has done before and not something other cities commonly do.

Q. Community Center - should there be more than one? Rte1 is a barrier; maybe need one on both sides.

A. This is a possibility. Further analysis needs to be undertaken of the type of community center that is needed and where it would be best located to be accessible to users.

Q. Charles Houston Rec Center – how can we better use this facility? The layout is really exciting. What we are doing here should complement Charles Houston. The Rec Center Committee is trying to make sure that the center is user-friendly for the existing residents in the area. Need to communicate with Parks & Rec about this. There will be competition for parking spaces.

Q. What about the Boys & Girls Club? Is it being renovated?

A. The Rec Center has more facilities.

A. The Boys & Girls club has received funds for a planned renovation and will be proceeding with the work.

C. The school also needs a lot of help especially if children are being moved out of the area.

Q. How are the community facilities going to be paid for?

Q. What is the rationale for having Payne Street cut through Adkins?

A. It creates a stronger sense of community as it provides a more walkable environment. It also would provide a place for unit front doors. There will need to be some public or semipublic accessways leading across the site to unit front doors in any case, and placing these on an extension of Payne Street nicely ties these in with the larger neighborhood access network.

Q. The street uses land that could be used for open space. Its one of the trade-offs we have to consider. What is the priority?

A. That is true. There are alternatives to a through street carrying traffic, such as a landscaped walkway solely for pedestrians, or sidewalks plus a narrow drive linked to Wythe or Madison Streets but not both, accommodating resident and service vehicles only. Any of these solutions could potentially work if designed right to fit in with the redevelopment program and the larger neighborhood.

C. Trade-offs will depend upon perspectives and priorities.

ADVISORY GROUP GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mary Means facilitated the general group discussion and asked that consideration be given to two basic questions:

- 1. What emerging element of the Braddock East plan do you feel most proud of?*
- 2. Is there a concern you have that we need to work on further?*

Responses to Question 1:

- The goal to accommodate everyone who wants to continue living in the neighborhood. Do not disperse them.
- The ability of BEAG to discuss difficult issues together – keeping and discussing public housing over the years has been a challenge. We can agree to disagree. We are talking about people and sense of community – this helps us come together.
- Residents being able to move back into the area if they want to. Providing adequate supportive services such as employment training and, critically, childcare which is essential to allow single mothers to find employment.
- Equitable rights for people who have lived in this neighborhood a long time. There are lots of inherent advantages with living in this area, such as Metro access, and this is especially important for a population with limited transport options.
- The amount of public housing that will come back to the area will be high (possibly the entire existing inventory).
- Will be proud of the process if the Plan respects other adjacent neighborhoods.

- Proud of the process. There has been a growth in education on issues and building of consensus. Growth of the committee in its understanding and balancing of issues, even though we are not going to agree on everything.
- Retaining the ARHA units and maintaining communities.
- It has been a civil discussion.

Responses to Question 2:

- Concerned about financial viability and timing of when alternative sites will come on line.
- Concerned about the issue of deconcentration. Happy that we are talking about 1/3 of the public housing units moving off-site. Also concerned about ARHA's long-term viability.
- Chatham Square had a HOPE VI grant that helped with social services. There has been a discussion about the desirability of social services in Braddock East but not how it's going to be paid for.
- Concerned about the reference in a previous presentation to "hang out" space. It is not appropriate in this context.
- Need to recognize that this group was chosen because we have an interest in this particular neighborhood. Relocation involves other neighborhoods that are not present at the table. Need to be cautious if we are creating criteria for those neighborhoods.
- Concerned if the City is relying on bonus density to get public housing built on other sites. This typically doesn't work out financially as they are not getting enough density back to pay for it. The success of Bland is unknown. There are a lot of unknowns projecting 2-5 years ahead that will not unfold until later.
- Need to be clear that developers don't create affordability – the public sector has to pay for it. How much money is the government prepared to put in? Need to concentrate resources from partners; do not disperse.
- Concerned about the buy-in of City Council to support this project. Cannot rely on volunteer services. The plan needs to address City contributions.
- But what do the taxpayers want? Is the City willing to put money into this at a tight budget time? Maybe taxpayers don't want this. This goes to the City/ARHA discussion about cost of maintaining public housing units and the issue of whether public housing units need to be owned by ARHA, or could be rented at lower cost or sold with covenants. Is it appropriate for this group to be considering policy? Money

needs to come from somewhere other than the private sector. What is the City's policy? Is it committed to mixed-income housing?

➤ The group needs to set goals and the plan will have to look for money proactively.

A. The Plan is making a series of assumptions; some may hold and some may not. Need to look at the bigger picture. Things may change when sites are ultimately developed. Need a series of general assumptions/themes. Appreciate that this is not easy.

A. The assumption of a 2:1 ratio between market rate and public housing includes the assumption that half of development cost is covered by Federal or State sources (like tax credits). The actual amount of public subsidy will determine the ultimate size of the project. It will have to be made to work with the resources available.

C. Whatever the project, it has to be economically viable with the circumstances that are prevalent at the time. Historically the City's contributions have been indirect (e.g. density bonuses); relying on federal funding for direct subsidy. Many cities are now recognizing the need to give direct subsidies (e.g. DC and Richmond). This may be necessary in Alexandria if the City wants to keep public housing units.

Q. Why didn't ARHA go after the 2nd round of HOPE VI?

A. We don't compete very well with the criteria that are applied this year. This is not a seriously distressed area, compared to other applicants nationwide. ARHA has to balance the cost of preparing the application with the chances of succeeding.

A. Also, the number and dollar amount of HOPE VI awards are diminishing, increasing competition and the need to find alternative funding sources.

A. The political base for the HOPE VI program erodes as the program decreases in size.

A. Many other jurisdictions do not have the value in land that Alexandria has, which allows the redevelopment to pay for itself. So it's a challenge to get a grant.

Mary Means posed the question of how do we address the money needed for the necessary social services in the face of diminishing funds from HUD?

C. We need to work more with sister agencies providing social services to take advantage of their resources. Need to work together to focus these resources, like they do in DC. There are grants and monies available; they just need to be coordinated.

C. Many people in public housing have the education/training and could get a job but for the lack of reliable childcare.

C. The Urban League careers program was a good example of agencies cooperating - it provided transportation, job training and childcare

A. Resources for social services are dwindling. A model is well established for leveraging HOPE VI funds to develop a network to provide these services, but without HOPE VI it is more challenging.

A. ARHA recognizes the need to address human beings, not just about units. Need to look at the social services agenda/strategy for HOPE VI and see how we can apply this to Alexandria with or without HOPE VI funding.

Q. Can Alexandria afford to maintain the public housing it has? Question ARHA's long term sustainability as it has dwindling resources. Even with redevelopment they need a subsidy.

C. There is no question about ARHA's financial viability. ARHA gets the majority of its funding from HUD; and HUD is not going away. The question is do we stay still or move forward and in what form. Do we want a new mixed-income community or should it stay as it is? Alexandria is an extraordinary community with a rich character. If any American community could succeed in housing its residents of diverse incomes, it should be Alexandria. Cannot envision an Alexandria that does not have compassion for people who need housing support. There will be challenges and we will need to be creative in the future but optimistic that we will be successful. Alexandria is not and should not become an elitist community.

C. The current interest of the market, and therefore developers, in supporting mixed-income communities presents a tremendous funding opportunity for Braddock East redevelopment.

Mary Means noted that the Braddock Metro Plan included "community benefits" as a category for City funds. Could we include social services on the list?

C. Yes, it's just another amenity needed, like trees, so it should be included.

C. Rte 1 goes through the area. We are looking at Braddock East as one area but Rte 1 is a huge physical barrier. Need to address this.

A. We can't use traditional traffic calming on Rte 1 due to heavy traffic volume. But at present there are many crosswalks and 3 to 4 lanes of traffic, so the barrier is not insurmountable. Recent installation of countdown pedestrian signals and related sidewalk improvements go a long way to making crossings safer and more convenient. A larger challenge is how to select appropriate land uses along Henry and Patrick Streets that can tolerate the traffic. Live-work units and other residential units, like those at Braddock Lofts with main living spaces above ground level, deserve serious consideration, because extensive retail cannot be supported.

C. The survey of public housing residents indicated that 90% of people want to come back to the redevelopment. Will we be able to accommodate this?

C. Some people want to come back but some people don't.

A. Among public housing redevelopments nationwide, on average only 20% of original development residents come back.

A. The return rate could be higher here - 20% to 60% - but unlikely more than that. In any case we should be able to accommodate everyone wanting to stay by retaining roughly 2/3 of existing units in the neighborhood.

A. This needs to be considered in the context of the proposed development and the number of moves needed. This will impact the statistics.

A. In the case of James Bland, as this will be a phased development it will be possible to limit the need to move more than once (due to availability of Glebe Park units as swing space). It may be different for Madden and Adkins.

A. Many public housing redevelopment projects lack the extra site area or spare housing units needed to accommodate a phased development. Also not many other areas have a 1 for 1 replacement policy for public housing.

C. The Plan should recommend against moving residents more than once.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/ COMMENT:

C. Concerned about traffic pollution.

Q. If City offers zoning change, can developer (EYA) provide social service benefit in return.

A. Yes, and EYA is providing social benefits in the instance of James Bland.

Q. In Fairfax County, developers are required to provide some affordable housing.

A. We cannot do this due to State law. But Alexandria offers a 20% density bonus for affordable housing.

A. However, Alexandria neighborhoods cannot necessarily tolerate significant bonus density, limiting application of this incentive.

Q. How many residents will be affected by the redevelopment?

A. There are about 2.7 persons per household – roughly 1000 residents within the 365 units on all four Braddock East public housing sites.

C. At Chatham Square the people had choices for relocation.

C. Oppose the view that Alexandria should not retain public housing.

C. Public housing residents are also taxpayers who couldn't afford to stay here if it weren't for public housing.

C. Don't want to live in a community of just rich people.

C. There is an opportunity here to think outside of the box on gathering funds and resources. Social services agencies like the opportunity to collaborate; through this plan, the city should facilitate this.

C. The message that resonates from public housing residents is that they and their families have been part of the fabric of the neighborhood for many years – as long as anyone -- and want to be part of the new planned community.

C. There should be a public park on the east side of Route 1.

A. There is no funding for this.

C. Could get a state park bond to buy ARHA land to fund new public housing.

C. Concerned that the Advisory group is not working on the James Bland project. It's going on its own course and BEAG will not be recommending on the proposals.

Q. How do we make comments on the James Bland plan?

A. There have been and continue to be numerous public meeting opportunities specifically focused on James Bland, which is an active development proposal deserving a distinct level of attention from the other Braddock East sites.

A. James Bland needs to be rezoned and fit into the context of Braddock East – everything we have been discussing is relevant to Bland also.

C. We need a separate BEAG meeting about Bland.

A. We could incorporate a discussion on the Bland plans into the next meeting on Sept 3.

C. Should try to get local companies involved to help sponsor community workforce training programs. Also, consider the precedent in the U.K. where residents can purchase public housing units

A. Offering units for purchase by residents could be considered for affordable housing units but would challenge the ability to maintain sufficient number of public housing units.

NEXT STEPS:

Andrea Barlow, Principal Planner Department of Planning and Zoning, presented the schedule for upcoming meetings. The Community Barbeque for ARHA residents has been rescheduled to Saturday July 19th, 4-7 pm. Any additional comments on the plan content are welcome and continued dialogue via email during the summer is encouraged. Some reports regarding the impact of Hope VI are now posted on the web site. These provided useful background information and address some of the requests for metrics.

Staff and the consultants will review the questions and requests for more information and respond to the Advisory Group at future meetings.

Future meetings:

ARHA Residents Barbecue, July 19

Meeting of ARHA Redevelopment Work Group August 6

BEAG Meeting 7, Sept 3

BEAG Meeting 8 and community meeting, Sept 16