



**Planning for Alexandria's Future Housing Needs
Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Agency (ARHA)
RFP 14-02, Developer Partners, Multiple Site(s)**

**Meeting Summary for Meeting #1: Braddock East Community
April 13, 2015, 7:00pm**

Location: Durant Center, 1605 Cameron St.

Participants:

- 65 attendees, not including ARHA and City staff and consultants.
- Of those in attendance, 83% live in the neighborhood, including 17 residents of the targeted public housing sites.
- Length of time in the neighborhood include: 5% <1 year, 35% 1-5 years, 13% 6-10 years, 28% 11-20 years, 20% >20 years.

I. Introduction: Roy Priest, CEO of ARHA and VHD LLC provided an overview of the project and the purpose of the meeting.

- ARHA is redeveloping 5 publicly assisted housing sites (ARHA Administrative Building, Hopkins Tancil Courts, Samuel Madden Homes (Uptown), Andrew Adkins, and Cameron Valley) in 3 small plan areas. The project is motivated by a variety of factors, including continued cuts in federal funding increasing ARHA's reliance on rental income to sustain its publicly assisted housing units.
- **Tonight's meeting focuses on the Andrew Adkins and Samuel Madden public housing sites within the Braddock East Community.** There will be two additional meetings this week focused on Old Town/Old Town North and the Hopkins-Tancil Courts publicly assisted housing site on 4/15/15 and Taylor Run/Duke Street and the Cameron Valley public housing site on 4/16/15.
- ARHA recently finalized its strategic plan which includes the redevelopment of these 5 development sites as the catalyst for the other plan goals.
- Redevelopment of these properties will help ARHA (1) replace its aging, obsolescent housing stock with livable, decent housing for residents; (2) leverage the value of ARHA's land assets to ensure the agency's long-term financial sustainability; and (3) create successful, mixed-income communities. ARHA also hopes to add to the City's overall stock of affordable housing through redevelopment.
- ARHA created the Virginia Housing Development (VHD) LLC to serve as its development arm.
- ARHA's initiatives are consistent with Resolution 830 (a joint City Council-ARHA resolution) which requires the preservation of publicly assisted housing units on a one-for-one basis in all new development, and is consistent with the City's adopted housing master plan.



- Mr. Priest described 5 completed ARHA redevelopment projects spanning approximately 30 years, and demonstrating effective use of several tools and strategies, including mixed-income communities, smart growth, implementation of the one-for-one replacement requirement, quality design, and innovative financing.
- The project timeline is long-term; relocation activities will not occur for more than 2 years and demolition of the first development site will not occur before winter of 2017-18, assuming the very competitive financing is secured.
- ARHA anticipates using a variety of financing sources for redevelopment, some of which were made possible by its James Bland effort.
- Through these developments, ARHA seeks to address the recent (city-wide) loss in affordable housing, the decline in available public resources, and the scarcity of development sites in the City, while capturing the highest and best use of ARHA-owned land. ARHA is committed to replacing existing units within the same community to the extent possible by maximizing density and creating a mix of units and housing choices on site.
- Each project will be subject to the regular City development review process and will comply with the city's civic engagement process, starting with tonight's meeting.

II. Citywide Review Process

- Karl Moritz, Director of the Alexandria Office of Planning and Zoning, described the citywide review process for all new developments. First, the City works with community residents to develop small area plans (SAPs) that define what they want to see in new development. Then the City reviews all development proposals against the SAP as well as other identified needs and policies, including transportation management and improvements, parking requirements, water/sewer capacity improvements, and housing/housing contribution policies.
- Brandi Collins from the Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning described the community-defined guiding principles and development recommendations of the three SAPs that govern the land use for Andrew Adkins and Samuel Madden: Braddock Road Metro Station Plan (1992), Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan (2008), and Braddock East Master Plan (2008). Transformation of existing public housing into mixed-income communities is a critical recommendation of both the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan (BMNP) and Braddock East Master Plan (BEMP). Ms. Collins described the recommended land uses, heights, densities, and site configurations for the two properties, as identified in the BMNP and BEMP.
- Robert Kerns, from the Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning described the five stages of the City's development process. For each site, the city reviews design principles (e.g., shape and size of building, height, public amenities such as open space, sidewalks, and connections) and legal requirements (e.g., zoning). Mr. Kerns described the existing conditions at each public housing site and emphasized that a site's existing conditions serves as the foundation for any future development. The City also makes sure new development is compatible with the broader neighborhood fabric and incorporates the lessons and successes of recent development in the area. Mr. Kerns also described the development considerations that must be maintained during the review process and the community benefits that could enhance the current neighborhood.



- Eric Keeler from the Alexandria Office of Housing described the City’s housing policy, which reflects collaboration between the City and ARHA. Key themes of the plan include housing for all, mixed-income development, and demand for housing at 50% of AMI. The City’s Housing Master Plan supports Resolution 830 to ensure that as redevelopment occurs at these sites, all existing publicly assisted units are replaced.
- Those who have questions can contact the City or ARHA at the following email addresses: Connie Staudinger – cstaudinger@arha.us, Brandon Mitchell bmitchell@arha.us, or Brandi Collins – brandi.collins@alexandriava.gov. Information about the project will be posted to: <http://www.alexandriava.gov/planning/info/default.aspx?id=83919>

III. Community Feedback

- Rhae Parkes of EJP Consulting Group explained that this meeting is a preliminary exercise to provide feedback to ARHA and to developers competing for the projects, and to make sure participants are fully aware of what each site’s Small Area Plan calls for. Once the developers are selected for each site, the activities will follow the City adopted development review process; Rhae encouraged the community’s continued participation in upcoming events.
- The following provides a summary of the questions, comments, and recommendations voiced by meeting participants, as well as the responses provided by the ARHA-City team.
- If participants have additional questions they can submit them through the City’s “ClickConnect” feature and ARHA’s “Response Now” feature on each of their websites. Each entity will respond within 24 hours.

Maintaining Affordable Housing

Question: If Andrew Adkins was built in 1968, why would you redevelop a site that isn’t that old?

ARHA Response: Roy Priest (ARHA CEO) explained that this site doesn’t have amenities that are compatible with the current market standard (e.g., no air conditioning, unable to add washer/dryer hookups, no dishwashers). ARHA also receives declining amounts of operating subsidy from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); not enough to cover all its operating cost. ARHA fears that if it does not act now, it will continue to lose its HUD operating subsidy for not meeting minimum standards. ARHA also believes that there are more very large units than are needed due to multiple generations living in the same household. In addition, because HUD subsidies are decreasing, ARHA needs to diversify the income profile for the property in order to better capture the value of the land inherent in its location adjacent to a metro rail station.

Recommendation: Affordable housing should be a stated principle for the project and ARHA should commit to letting all residents move back to the redeveloped site.

Recommendation: Maximize the number of units affordable at 30% of Area Median Income.

Comment: I understand the need to provide housing for lower income residents, but I would like a description of the benefits of building a mixed-income community.

ARHA Response: In the affordable housing component that is built, the proposed income mix will range (depending on the sources of financing) from 30-60% of Area Median Income (AMI), or affordable to households earning incomes ranging from \$33k to \$82k, and could include market rate units that are unrestricted. The properties can’t be sustained at the current make-up of 100% extremely low income level so ARHA needs to diversify. This will also improve the quality of life



at the site and increase diversity and housing choice for community residents. There will also be market rate units build that don't have income restrictions at all and will reflect fair market rents or sales values for comparable transit-oriented development.

Comment: Will you split the lease for households currently living in 4 or 5 BR units? If ARHA can't guarantee the same situation (i.e., breakdown of bedroom size), it's hard to understand why the redevelopment is necessary.

ARHA Response: If ARHA can rebuild the site with the same number of affordable housing units and increase the density to allow for additional units for higher income households, the project can generate reasonable revenue, and we will have retained more affordable housing than if we did nothing and lost all public housing units over the next several years as the HUD subsidy is decreased or is lost.

Comment: Who came up with the concept of changing these communities?

ARHA Response: We are trying to provide a higher quality of affordable housing to residents. HUD is providing less money for housing authorities to operate public housing. ARHA is trying to protect the public housing it has while it still can by taking advantage of very favorable market conditions that currently exist.

Open Space

Recommendation: Include as much open space as possible where children can play and the community can gather, and/or include structured space for recreational use.

Comment: There are 3 examples in our neighborhood of projects with failed open space plans. An effective plan for open spaces needs to be part of this plan. Just putting a little patch of grass on the site is not an open space.

Recommendation: Open space doesn't have to stay on the sites. Develop a hierarchy of open space. For example, in lieu of green space on the sites, build a large central park or other assets that build community, in close proximity. It is important to think about the whole neighborhood when rebuilding to help build community rather than planning only on and for those sites.

City Response: The City believes that a development has two roles: to be the best it can be for its residents, workers, visitors, but ALSO to be the best possible neighbor and contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood.

Building Design

Recommendation: Use environmentally friendly materials in new buildings.

ARHA Response: All ARHA developments completed to date have achieved LEED or Earthcraft certification. Developers will have to meet green building standards for these projects.

Building Management

Question: Will the sites continue to be owned by ARHA?

ARHA Answer: ARHA may retain ownership of the land but an owner entity created for this effort would own the units. ARHA would continue to manage the publicly assisted housing units.



Relocation

Question: What happens to the current residents? Who pays for their relocation expenses? What's the typical rate of return for redevelopment projects like these?

ARHA Response: Everything ARHA does is subject to relocation requirements. ARHA will pay for all relocation expenses. ARHA will apply to HUD for tenant protection vouchers so that current residents have the choice to take a voucher to move wherever they choose, or to relocate to another ARHA property. Residents will have the first right to return to the new site. This right, their options, and other information will be described in the relocation plan that ARHA is required to develop to address temporary and permanent relocations. ARHA will also hold meetings specifically for residents to explain these issues and will provide one-on-one counseling for the affected households.

The national return rate for public housing redevelopment projects ranges from 20-40%. Many relocate and after 2 years decide not to move back. If residents don't return, ARHA still has to replace the original number of publicly assisted housing units.

Comment: One participant expressed concern about ARHA only allowing a portion of original residents to return to the redeveloped site.

ARHA Response: ARHA clarified that it is anticipated that every publicly assisted housing unit will be replaced at the redeveloped site or at an off-site location. Typically, not all original residents choose to return, so ARHA will make the remaining publicly assisted housing units available to other eligible families on their waitlist.

Comment: A participant expressed concern that residents in other redeveloped sites haven't been able to move back while new families on the waitlist have.

Question: When will relocation start?

ARHA Answer: Relocation activities will not begin for more than 2 years as demolition of the first development site will not occur before winter or 2017-18. After development partners are selected and land use approvals are received through the development review process, ARHA must also obtain approvals for disposition of the properties from HUD (through which it obtains the tenant protection vouchers for impacted residents) as well as secure financing to construct the projects. No households will be relocated until all of these steps are complete.

Bedroom Mix

Question: Will the new development have large units?

ARHA Answer: ARHA doesn't know the bedroom mix yet. ARHA will do an analysis based on the needs of the households living there now and waiting list applicants to inform the proposed unit mix. If large bedrooms are not built back on site, ARHA will find another site that can accommodate large bedrooms (as needed).

Comment: The City Master Plan doesn't identify a need for housing for families. City of Alexandria is focusing development on housing that appeals to childless families (i.e., 1 and 2 bedroom units). People were concerned with Old Town Commons that units were smaller so where are the larger family units being placed in Alexandria?

City Response: In some cases the City has worked with developers to combine two units to create larger units but the City is usually limited to what is being built. Right now, market demand is for efficiencies and one and two bedroom units. The City's Housing Master Plan and ARHA's



Strategic Plan both focus on opportunities to expand the total number of affordable units. ARHA's first obligation is to satisfy the needs of the households it currently serves. In order to expand the number of affordable units in Alexandria, the City has to invest resources to make that happen.

Other

Comment: ARHA has helped me a lot in moving toward self-sufficiency – building credit, sending me to nursing school.

