

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).

Mary Means introduced new Advisory Group member Nakia Johnson, who is the new public housing resident representative. Ms. Johnson indicated that she had been a resident of Alexandria for 10 years, having moved here from San Francisco to raise her family. She likes the neighborhood but feels the public housing needs to be improved. The other members of the Advisory Group introduced themselves.

Advisory Group attendance:

Gwen Menefee: Public Housing Advocate.

Harvey Gray: Person knowledgeable about Parker Gray history.

Salena Zellers: Braddock Neighborhood Resident.

Sylvia Sibrover: Northeast Citizens Association Representative.

Connie Ring: Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority Commissioner.

Leslie Zupan: Inner City Civic Association Representative.

John Komoroske: Planning Commissioner.

Janice Howard: At-Large Member.

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

Advisory Group absentees:

John DuPree: At-Large Member.

Merrick Malone, At-Large Member.

ADVISORY GROUP ACTIVITIES:

Mary Means reiterated the operating covenants for the Advisory Group.

RESIDENT OUTREACH

Rhae Parkes of EJP indicated that she has been engaged in a series of outreach efforts. Her findings indicate that residents are happy with the neighborhood as it has good access to transport, retail and great schools. There are also strong family ties to the neighborhood and residents generally want to stay in the area. Most residents are happy with their unit, especially its size.

Ms. Parkes noted that all residents that she spoke to were in favor of redevelopment. They want some external space that they can own, such as a yard or front porch. They also want open space but this needs to be controlled/defensible. There is no particular preference regarding the type of units but they want these to be good quality design and have good quality management. It is important that supportive services are provided; especially childcare which should be subsidized or free. There also needs to be more services for children, including after school programs. Most of the residents she spoke to were working, retired or disabled.

Residents were okay with the idea of relocation but want to minimize the number of moves and want the opportunity to come back. They need the same amenities in any relocation site as they have now and they want options for homeownership to be available.

ARHA data indicates that there are 333 households in the four public housing sites, housing just under 1000 people. Most are working but they are on very low incomes. Families average just less than 3 per household and most have children. Households are predominantly headed by African-American females. There are currently over 1000 people on ARHA's waiting list and over 60% want one bedroom units.

Q. What is the data for James Bland? I am hearing there is a need for 2/3 bedroom units.
R. *The average household size for James Bland is 2.93.*

BUS TOUR REVIEW

Mary Means and David Dixon facilitated a discussion of the lessons learned from the bus tour of other public housing redevelopment projects on Saturday April 19.

Chatham Square:

- The Community mix is good.
- Public Housing residents are learning new things from their neighbors.
- The early tensions with the use of playground seemed to have been resolved by people talking to each other.
- There wasn't enough "polite separation" between the playground and the housing.
- The integration of different economic classes results in a synergy that improves dialogue which helps training/educational opportunities. As a result of networking, new job opportunities become available.
- The openness of the street/alley through the block may have worked better if it had been designed differently.
- It was interesting that no-one could distinguish between the market rate and ARHA units when asked to do so.
- The ARHA units are on the interior as it is safer for the children.
- The design and the value of the market rate units have held up well.

Quaker Hill:

- Almost everyone was pleasantly surprised by the Quaker Hill development.

- The units on Yale Drive stuck out as being public housing but it was not obvious that there were internal ARHA units.
R. The Yale Drive units were built separately and are not really part of Quaker Hill.
- Are ARHA units integrated with the market rate units?
R. Yes, there are some condos and some town homes. There are 60 ARHA units, which is 20% of the total. They are all built to the same standard. The ARHA town homes can be distinguished by the lack of a chimney. The condos are stacked for ease of maintenance.
- The ARHA residents' comments were impressive. It was clear her life had changed by moving into a mixed income development.
- It was suggested that mothers and children from Braddock East should meet with Quaker Hill residents to learn from their experiences of mixed income living. Perhaps a pool party.
- The facilities were very good. It was nice that ARHA pays for residents to use the pool.

Urban-Wrap Building:

The tour stopped en route to view an urban-wrap building to see how a parking lot could be wrapped by buildings.

- This was not a particularly good example as parts of the parking garage were clearly visible.
R. It was recognized that whatever we do in Braddock East has to be better than that.

Town Homes on Capitol Hill:

- You could not do this type of HUD funded development today.
R. It should not be ruled out. The real estate market is much stronger today than it was when this site was developed.
- The differences in architecture/articulation were good.
- Four-story next to two-story buildings worked in scale terms and it breaks up the streetscape.
- The four-story element in Bland is bigger and the massing is greater, i.e. it is not individual town homes but one whole block.
- Initially the neighborhood was afraid of the development but now it fits in well.
- It was interesting when the tour guide said that people were asking for directions because they could not identify the site as public housing "projects".
- This is late 19th Century architecture which seems to fit with the area. Hope EYA doesn't over articulate the architecture at Bland.
- It managed to blend with the adjacent neighborhood which is two-story scale.

Capitol Quarter:

- Liked how the products blended architecturally and the relationships between the 4/5 story buildings and the senior buildings transitioning to 3 storey buildings. We will need to address transition in Braddock East.

- They had a lot of funding to work with residents to prepare them to return.
- As they were moving them back in they were coaching them in appropriate behavior, e.g. not to drop trash, respecting other people's property. This should be happening anyway.
- From the pictures of the model it looks monotonous.
R. *There will be more articulation with the final product but not as much as they would do in Alexandria as it is not a historic district.*
- Impressed by the social services that were available for residents. This was provided by HOPE VI and City funds. What will we do here without this funding?
- Would have like to have seen more variation in building type and more diversity in design.
R. *The overall HOPE VI site contained multi-family, offices, retail, 4 story mixed income and a 4 story seniors building. It is over 23 acres. This x acre site is just a component.*
- But should you separate unit type by block or within blocks.

JAMES BLAND DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL USE PERMIT UPDATE:

AJ Jackson of EYA gave a summary of the presentation from the Bland community meeting the previous evening (see PowerPoint presentation).

Relationship with Glebe Park – there was an RFQ to redevelop Glebe Park. This was extended to include James Bland as the land value from the sale of James Bland pays for the redevelopment of Glebe Park.

The redevelopment proposals for Bland need to take into account ARHA and City criteria, including Resolution 830 one for one replacement policy; improved living conditions; phasing redevelopment to limit relocation; Section 3 employment opportunities; replacement site for 16 units; all of which has to equate to a financially feasible development without Hope VI funding.

The Community's criteria includes respecting sensitive edges; respecting Parker-Gray historic neighborhood; creating defensible open space; appropriate height, scale & massing; marketable mixed income design and incorporating input from the community.

Economic viability depends on sufficient market rate units to fund the public housing; a marketable ratio of public housing to market rate housing; phaseable construction; public housing design consistent with ARHA requirements; affordable parking and subsidies for any required workforce housing.

Parking surveys have been undertaken and show that there are fewer cars per ARHA unit than for a market rate unit – about 0.75 spaces per unit.
It costs \$250k to build an ARHA unit, exclusive of land.

Site Design – it is proposed to build two and a half stories on Columbus Street, to reflect the existing properties on Columbus Street. This will transition to three/four stories on Alfred Street. The interior units will be three and a half stories and will be styled on Braddock Lofts. On the east side of Alfred Street the units will have a loft area which gives a fourth story but with the appearance of three stories. The multi-family on Patrick Street will be four stories. There will be integration of ARHA units in every block.

ADVISORY GROUP QUESTIONS/ COMMENT/ REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Q: Isn't ARHA taking a risk with homeownership assessment increases in these new developments?

R. *ARHA put in safeguards to ensure it wouldn't get out of hand at Chatham Square.*

Q: What are the statistics on upward mobility for public housing residents in mixed income communities?

Q: You said the public housing would be integrated in every block. Is the architecture the same on the inside for the market rate and public housing?

R. *The external architecture will not distinguish but there will be a different internal layout and fixtures.*

C. In talking to the people who live in Bland, the kids had a lot to say. They want play areas and basketball courts (for under 14s).

C. People want the redevelopment but some have already moved three times; they don't want to move again.

C. We need to have information from the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) about what the Charles Houston rec center facilities and programs will be and how it will integrate with Braddock East.

C. The recreational facilities need to be available at the right time of day.

C. Still need other open spaces for kids to play in when they can't use the recreation center due to age groups being restricted at certain times.

C. Need clarification as to why there are only certain times for certain kids at the recreation center.

R. *The City will get someone from RPCA to provide information on these issues.*

R. *EYA has heard what is needed and will have to work with RPCA to see how this can be provided.*

C. The symmetrical design and alleys are good. It matches the existing area.

C. Concerned about making the existing alley at the back of Columbus into a street. It may create a visual impact issue, i.e. back yards facing the street.

R. EYA has met with the Columbus Street residents and to address this it is proposed to replace the existing fencing (if the owner is willing), provide new planting, increase the width of the street and introduce on-street parking.

Q. Are there any market rate stacked units?

R. No. The market rate town homes are fee simple. The ARHA units that look like town homes externally are all stacked flats internally.

C. Could you turn two market rate units into three market rate condos to make up the numbers?

R. No, because of parking. It would limit what you could do. That's why the end units are ARHA units because there is no access to parking.

C. It should be recognized that the end units would be the most valuable market rate units but these are being proposed as ARHA units.

Q. Where are the public housing units in the multi-family blocks?

R. The first and second floors are a mix of public housing and market rate units with individual entrances off the courtyard or via internal stairs. The third and fourth floors are market rate units only, due to the inability to provide individual entrances.

R. Individual entrances increases the comings and goings from the units, which creates more activity/getting to know neighbors, which in turn leads to greater security.

Q. How much variation on parking is needed?

R. EYA has commissioned a parking study to assess this and the initial findings suggest that a parking reduction for the ARHA units of about 0.5 will be needed.

C. Need to ensure there is adequate sound insulation between units so there is no neighbor disturbance.

C. Need more relief on the corners to soften the edges of the blocks.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/ COMMENT:

C. One of the James Bland blocks would be a good place for a public park.

C. There is no housing plan in Alexandria for taking care of those who can't afford housing.

C. Ellen Wilson – the benefits of co-operative form of development should be investigated for Braddock East.

C. Disappointed that ARHA has not done anything with Madden.

R: Market rate units in a co-op are not as valuable as market rate fee simple, so this is a limited opportunity when relying on market rate units to fund the redevelopment of public housing.

C. The streets in the area are very busy. Consideration needs to be given to traffic.

R. Not looking at traffic as a separate subset of the Braddock East Plan as this was addressed in the Braddock Metro Plan. There were many strategies in the Braddock Metro Plan for traffic management.

R. The Bland DSUP process requires a traffic analysis.

C. There needs to be additional activities for the youths in the area. Should go to the Durant center to talk about the recreational facilities needed.

Q. Is all the public housing being displaced or will there be one for one replacement?

R. 134 units will go back onto Bland; 44 units will go to Glebe Park and 16 units will go elsewhere in the City; it is undecided where.

Q. Need to take into account families not wanting to change schools when considering relocation.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff and the consultants will review the questions and requests for more information and respond to the Advisory Group at future meetings. Staff will arrange for a briefing from the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities to discuss the program and facilities for the new recreation center.

Future meetings:

BEAG Meeting 4, May 15

BEAG Meeting 5, June 19

BEAG-sponsored community meeting June 26 (suggested)

Revised September meeting dates – Sept 3 and 16

BEAG-sponsored community meeting Sept 16 (suggested, combined with BEAG meeting 8)