



# **Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan**

City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning  
[www.alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning](http://www.alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning) 703.838.4666

## **Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan Worksession #3: Housing Meeting Summary December 13, 2007**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Robert Kramer opened the meeting, outlining the meetings that have occurred and describing where the community is in the overall process. Tonight's meeting will focus on the issue of the redevelopment of public housing.

### **BRADDOCK EAST PLANNING PROCESS**

Faroll Hamer began the discussion by describing the Braddock East process which will begin in January, is a partnership between ARHA and the City, and will focus on each of the blocks with public housing, including:

- James Bland
- James Bland Addition
- Samuel Madden
- Ramsay Homes
- Andrew Adkins

The Braddock East planning process will explore the housing issues in the neighborhood, and will provide much more detail for the redevelopment on the public housing blocks, including:

- Development standards which will follow the heights and densities included in the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan, as well as the development principles such as building shoulders along the street edges and providing green edges for buildings. The standards will then take those principles further, and will determine for example, the types of housing units (stacked, townhouse, multifamily) that should be built and where parking should be located. The result will be a detailed development plan for each block by which the redevelopment can take place.
- The appropriate mixed income ratios for the new housing, including market, workforce and public housing units.
- The ownership/rental mix of the residential units.
- The identity of replacement sites for existing public housing residents.
- Ways to subsidize low income home ownership.
- An appropriate site plan, with shared common areas, such as playgrounds and parking.

- Management issues.

As part of the Braddock East process, we plan to speak with current residents of Chatham Square to learn what worked and did not work there, and likely will plan a field trip to see new mixed income development projects in the region. There will likely be an advisory group to help guide the work which is scheduled to end in October or November of 2008.

Ms. Hamer introduced Roy Priest, Interim Executive Director, ARHA. He has over 40 years of experience in housing, having started with the D.C. government in its urban renewal program, then working with the D.C. Community Development Department and with HUD as the Director of Economic Development. He has also been the President and CEO of NCCED, which is the national trade organization for community development, as well as a consultant on housing issues.

## **ALEXANDRIA REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY**

Roy Priest, Executive Director, of ARHA, described the background and function of the housing authority. He introduced Melvin Miller, ARHA Chair, Connie Ring, ARHA Vice Chair, and Mary Ishe, its Director of Operations.

Using a series of slides, Mr. Priest explained that ARHA is not a city agency. It was established in 1939 by the state of Virginia. HUD funds all of its annual operating costs and provides capital funding for the upkeep, improvement and maintenance of its properties. The City appoints the nine member ARHA board, but no city funding is provided for ARHA's operations or capital expenditures on a regular basis. City funding has been provided for redevelopment projects, such as Chatham Square, Quaker Hill and Glebe Park.

Any redevelopment ARHA undertakes must conform to all City planning, zoning, licensing and permit requirements and the City must approve all land use proposals.

ARHA owned properties consist of a total of 2,836 units citywide, including public housing, moderate rehab, assisted, Section 8, and tax credit units. In the Braddock area, there are 365 units and they are all public housing units. Of the 3,100 residential units, both public and private, in the Braddock area, ARHA units make up 11.8% and private market units make up 88.2% (2,735 units). In terms of bedrooms, there are a total of 930 bedrooms in the ARHA properties in the Braddock area, which represents a larger concentration of units with more bedrooms (4-5) per unit than elsewhere in the City. Andrew Adkins is the only ARHA development with five bedroom units.

In response to a question, Mr. Priest explained that the Jefferson Village development on North West Street (in the Braddock area) includes 69 units. The units are owned by ARHA but are not public housing units because they now house residents with Section 8 vouchers.

Since 2000, the number of affordable rental housing units in the City has declined radically. Units priced to be affordable by people making 60% of median income fell from 18,218 to 8,456; units for people making 50% of median fell from 10,374 to 583.

In the last 35 years, there has been a shift in the location of public housing units from the east part of the City to the west. In terms of concentration, and including public housing, publicly assisted and private non profit units, the highest concentration are located in the Fox Chase (26.8%) and Arlandria (20.5%) census tracts. The next highest concentrations are in the Tucker School (16.4%), Braddock Metro (15.4%), and Old Town (15.4%) census tracts.

With the hope of redeveloping the James Bland and James Bland Addition public housing, ARHA has been working with EYA developers to find a plan that will mix income levels in a residential redevelopment project. Currently there are 194 units there and they are all for low income residents. In the future the desire is for a mix of 134 (42%) low income, and 184 (58%) market rate units for a total of 318 units. This outcome is based on an EYA plan that was used to support a HOPE VI application submitted to HUD. By Comparison, the Chatham Square development contains 52 public housing units, and 100 market rate units for roughly a 1/3 – 2/3 income mix.

ARHA has a series of requirements before it can redevelop any of its properties. In addition to obtaining City approval of the land use application, HUD must approve any demolition of existing public housing units. HUD must also approve a relocation plan for the existing residents.

ARHA also complies with the City's Resolution 830, which requires a one for one replacement of 1150 public housing units citywide. While the Resolution states the policy in terms of housing units, ARHA is committed to replacing units with similarly sized units, including the number of bedrooms. It is a further policy of the Board that it will not demolish any unit until it can identify the location for every replacement unit. With the Chatham Square redevelopment, there were originally 100 public housing units on the site; 52 were rebuilt on the same site as part of the new development; the remaining 48 units were replaced on three scattered sites elsewhere in the City.

In terms of financing, ARHA must look to a series of sources and must identify them at the start to ensure a successful project. The private developer will provide some funding. There is no more money from HUD. Money from the Housing Trust Fund has been used in the past, particularly for loans, but there is very little available now. Today, we must be very creative and find funding from a number of sources. It used to be that a new housing project might have three sources of funding; today it is not unusual to have 15 sources on one project.

Typically, and in general, it will be the value of the land, which is achieved by selling market rate units as part of the redevelopment, which will support the whole project, including the public housing units both on and off site.

Any plan for redevelopment must be approved by the ARHA Board, and they are involved throughout the whole project.

There are great challenges to redeveloping public housing into mixed-income housing, including:

- relocation issues
- replacement of every unit (Resolution 830)
- appropriate site plan (balancing needs of current residents and future residents)

- creating a successful mixed income community
- financing
- managing expectations and balancing diverse community and resident needs
- finding alternative sites to develop replacement units not accommodated on existing site
- large bedroom units at Bland and Adkins complicates capacity to rebuild them
- providing existing residents the opportunity to return after redevelopment

One of the most difficult challenges is determining the right mix of incomes within a project, given the economics and financing requirements of the project.

In response to a question regarding the market value of ARHA properties, Mr. Priest explained that appraisals are done on a regular basis, although none were done in the last year. HUD requires it periodically, and ARHA has to pay real estate taxes on the non-public housing units it owns.

The principles that guide ARHA's work as we move forward to redevelop the Braddock East properties are:

- conform to HUD's directive to create mixed use developments to replace obsolete public housing
- upgrade existing and proposed property inventory to current housing standards (e.g., to include air conditioning, washer/dryer, garbage disposal, energy efficient appliances)
- preservation of affordable housing for low income persons/families in the city
- support economic mobility programs for residents to increase the opportunity for home ownership
- collaborate with the City in all redevelopment efforts in areas that impact ARHA properties
- select developers sensitive to the unique requirements to create mixed income projects including housing for low income residents.

## **SUMMARY OF PLANNING PRINCIPLES**

David Dixon, Goody Clancy, lead the next part of the presentation, explaining at the outset that from his point of view, there was nothing more important, more challenging, or more exciting going on anywhere this year than the prospect of redeveloping concentrated public housing into mixed income communities. Also, tonight's is the most diverse audience group attending a Braddock planning meeting, and that is good because the subject is one for which the group will benefit greatly by discussing it together. Although talking together over the next year will be difficult because the topic touches deep convictions and feelings of people, it is necessary and important if we are going to meet this incredible opportunity to redevelop the Braddock East properties.

Mr. Dixon summarized the work of the prior meetings, including the list of principles the community has established and reiterated throughout, what the plan should accomplish and strategies to achieve them, and the distinguishing characteristics of the neighborhood the community would like to emphasize. He also summarized the work from the last meetings with regard to a major new neighborhood park, community retail spaces, and heights and densities of new development.

The discussion on November 29<sup>th</sup> was about four potential major park sites: 1261 Madison, the Metro site, Andrew Adkins, and the Post Office site. There was clear consensus about the Post Office block being the preferred location, although there was also unanimity in the discussion about removing only the distribution function and parking lots, but not the actual post office function from the site. The idea that part of Andrew Adkins could become a community park was a second choice. There is no question that this is an expensive proposition, and just the land for the park could cost at least \$15 million.

In terms of the best location for community serving retail and neighborhood “squares,” the area near the Metro at Wythe and West Streets is the preferred site. There is also the opportunity for a major retail site in the vicinity of the Madison development. And there is continued interest in retaining and enhancing the businesses along Queen Street.

Mr. Dixon’s presentation included maps showing the areas of agreement on heights and massing, with only two areas in the plan, the Jaguar and Metro/Adkins sites, requiring height increases above what is now allowed under current zoning. Each of the break out group’s maps was shown with dots indicating where proposed heights were supported, and where they were a concern. Several people have concerns about the appropriate height on the Adkins block; there was also some question about appropriate heights on the Metro site and the block west of the Monarch. On the other hand, there is continued strong support for the urban design policy of 3-4 story “shoulders” along walking streets: Fayette, Wythe and Madison, with lower levels being ideal for retail space and for townhouses, and with taller buildings allowed after setting back 10-25’ from the lower/shoulder portion. There is also support for buildings to be set back from the sidewalk with green areas at the base. We will need to establish detailed guidelines to achieve these concepts.

## **PLANNING FOR MIXED INCOME HOUSING**

There are many complex issues involved with planning for mixed income housing, and Roy’s talk, about all the things ARHA does and should do, is a perfect start to the discussion we all need to have. We all need to plan for this together. The financing question is the biggest one initially, and we will look more closely at that as part of the Braddock East planning process.

In addition, mixed income housing can mean a lot of things. Here, we are using the term to mean a combination of:

- low income residents who make up to 30% of median income, which in Alexandria is likely income up to \$25,000;
- moderate or workforce income residents who make between 30 -80%, which would be \$35,000 to \$70,000; and
- market rate, which can mean residents with no limits on their earnings.

We need to discuss the appropriate mix and ratios of income that make up a good community. As public housing residents, make no mistake, we want to also enable people to move into ownership housing

In addition, we need to determine how many existing residents want to return. Experience shows us that some of them will not want to, although there are likely 50%-66% with deep roots in the neighborhood. We also need to determine what social services are available and which would really help them best with child care and jobs. With this information we need to come to a vision about peoples' lives

Last night, there was a meeting with public housing residents, and several people have returned tonight. We have asked those attending to become more involved in both Braddock and Braddock East because we need to plan together for the future. The people attending last night discussed their past frustration with being planned FOR, rather than with. They appear to be excited to be part of the process. There is a strong commitment to remain in the neighborhood and a broad interest in a major new park, neighborhood retail and more walkable streets. They are concerned about safety just as much as others are. There is also a very strong desire for home ownership opportunities within the neighborhood. There are very strong common aspirations.

Mr. Dixon showed and discussed a number of mixed income project analogs, or examples of development projects elsewhere, including

- Quinnipiac Terrace, New Haven CT
- Franklin Hill, Boston MA
- Tent City, Boston MA
- Hismen Hin-nu Terrace, Oakland CA
- Langham Court, Boston MA
- Auburn Court, Cambridge MA
- Ellen Wilson townhomes, Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.
- Maverick Landing, Boston MA
- Cabrini Green, Chicago IL

[Goody Clancy has separately provided a chart indicating for each development, the size of the project, the number of units, the mix of incomes and other data, which is being posted on the P&Z web site and available for review.]

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Q: Each of the developments includes public space. Was that just an accident?

A: No. You have to design to match who will live there, and you need different types of open space. Market rate units here will likely not have kids; but public housing units may. And you need to manage the open space well.

Q: Some of the Boston examples lack a grid system of streets.

A: True, especially where industrial land was being redeveloped. In others the grid was put back.

Q: On much of the ARHA land there are mature trees and significant open space, which was lost, for example, at Chatham Square.

A: True, increasing density to make these developments economically viable as mixed income communities may require larger buildings.

Q: How do we unlock the value from the land, especially with the reductions in funding from HUD, and especially to cover maintenance and condo fees? What is

the real status of ARHA's ability to manage and fund operations and good maintenance?

A: We should not proceed if we cannot get a positive answer to the question of how we will maintain these developments over the long term. The secret of really successful mixed income projects is finding the right management companies to do it.

Q: But what about the reduction in HUD funding just for normal operations?

A: (Roy Priest) We have this issue now, and ARHA is committed to finding the funding for the units we maintain. At Chatham Square, we pay HOA and condo fees. If we have a problem, we have to arrange financing. There is also no reason why some residents cannot come together and bid to manage these properties. And we have to make sure that public housing residents are increasing their ability to live in mixed income housing.

Q: Do you believe this vision is possible within the time frame of the Braddock redevelopment?

A: Yes. People may not have been exposed to self sufficiency models, but it can be done.

Q: How do we link the developers' bonus density and provision of money or on site units to what ARHA is doing?

A: The land values we are talking about here dwarf the Housing Trust Fund contributions.

## **BREAK OUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

The participants were asked to break into three groups in order to consider and discuss the following question:

*What are the factors that most contribute to a successful, mixed-income community on the public housing sites in the Braddock Metro area? What are the issues that are going to make it work?*

Individuals in each group were then asked to place three green dots next to the three factors in the group's list that are the highest priorities.

At the end of the exercise, each group reported the results as follows:

### **Group 1 (Fred Harris)**

<u># Dots</u>	<u>Issue</u>
6	architectural distinctions between income levels should be blurred
6	need diversity of open space for all household types
5	through design, policies and good management, maintain a safe and crime free environment.
5	income mix needs to be 30% public/20% assisted/50% market
4	affordable housing should be in townhouse format.
4	maintain cultural and community identity within low rise environment
4	distribute the income mix throughout the community
2	community facilities (ARC, learning center, etc)

- 2 maintain respect for everyone's privacy
- 2 consideration of trade offs between density and dispersal of affordable housing
- 1 low income residents should participate in the process
- 1 buy in on concept
- 1 consider impact of new mixed income development on surrounding property values and taxes
- 0 underground parking for everyone

## **Group 2 (Lenny Harris and Stewart Schwartz)**

<u># of Dots</u>	<u>Issue</u>
4	promote retail for business opportunities, reduced rents and subsidies on Queen Street, so developers do not just push existing tenants out
4	develop a task force to meet regularly – a core group composed mainly or solely of public housing residents – during the whole process; they will identify both non negotiable and negotiable issues.
4	aggressive city action creating incentives for developers to provide for community goals
3	mixed income housing should be included on all sites throughout the neighborhood, not just on public housing sites
3	non-negotiables: no displacement; retain 194 Bland units
2	city should work with ARHA residents to move to home ownership, education
2	must not overly deplete ARHA assets for neighborhood
2	provide place and opportunity for resident cultures to maintain cultural traditions, ie, informal gatherings; mutual understanding of different cultures
1	negotiable: community serving amenities
0	need residents to buy in to process
0	question premise of mixed income housing
0	public housing resident leaders must be able to participate in HOA
0	past mixed income scenarios in Alexandria (Chatham Square) have not involved residents in design enough
0	must physically camouflage units for all income levels
0	non public housing residents need sensitivity training; management and rules that sensitize all residents to each other
0	things that draw different people together, ie, retail shops, parks; retail possibly owned by ARHA
0	need full spectrum of income levels, not just public housing and market rate as at Chatham Square
0	need functional open space within each block; existing open space is heavily used
0	counteract exaggerated fear of crime
0	hopefuls – harmonious neighborhood with friendship across differences
0	reassure low income residents they can return; low income does not equate with lack of opportunities
0	disclosure of facts and goals by planners, developers, etc to community; open, transparent process



### **Group 3 (Ray Anderson and Carolyn Nash)**

- 4 current public housing residents able to stay and have a choice
- 4 economic sustainability
- 3 find proper mix of income levels
- 3 defined open space which is controlled and protected
- 2 community retail
- 2 social interaction; a community
- 2 full representation in governance by residents
- 2 save history appropriate to the area
- 2 underground parking
- 1 alternative systems of self governance
- 1 design public housing and market rate units to look the same
- 1 mix of occupancy
- 0 subsidize utilities for low income residents
- 0 traffic impacts
- 0 open space
- 0 unit types should be integrated
- 0 recreation areas
- 0 planning for kids

### **NEXT STEPS**

- January 7 – Community Work session #4: Transportation
- January 24 – Community Work session #5: Review plan strategies
- March 4 – Planning Commission Public Hearing
- March 15 – City Council Public Hearing