

**City of Alexandria
Department of Planning and Zoning
301 King Street, Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314**

List of Issues, Ideas, Options for Hunting Creek

Hunting Creek Area Stakeholders Group

January 25, 2008

Introduction

The Hunting Creek Area Stakeholders Group (“Stakeholders Group”) was established to provide a conduit for communication between the Planning Commission and City Council and the many individuals and groups in the City interested in the disposition and use of the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace properties following their sale by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The Stakeholders Group was not established to make specific recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council on the development proposal.

The Stakeholders Group is composed of volunteers who offered to participate in the Stakeholders Group process. While the Stakeholders Group was intended to include members with a variety of interests, it was not established to create any particular balance among these interests – all who asked to participate were appointed to the group by the City Manager in July and August, 2006. The members of the Stakeholders Group and their affiliations or area of interest they identified are listed in the table on the following page.

This document is a compilation of statements made by individual Stakeholders Group members, statements by members of the public at Stakeholders Group meetings, or statements communicated by Stakeholders Group members to the group as issues raised by others. Some of these statements may directly conflict with other statements in the compilation. No attempt has been made to resolve conflicts between these statements. In some cases, an issue or idea in this document is an abstract or summary by staff based on a number of statements or comments made at more than one meeting. In others, the statements can be identified by a single source in the meeting notes from the group.

Information in brackets [] in the summary has been added by staff as an indication that additional information related to stakeholder comments is now available or that changes have been made in the project that are related to the stakeholder group comment.

Hunting Creek Stakeholders Group

Individual	Nomination Information
Residents of Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace, Porto Vecchio Association	
1. Jim Mercury	Represents Alexandria Coalition for Hunting Towers Also represents Hunting Towers Residents Committee
2. Lewis Simon	Elected as stakeholder representative by Hunting Terrace Tenants Committee
3. Phillip Bradbury	Representative of Porto Vecchio Association. Serves on Woodrow Wilson Bridge Neighborhood Task Force for Porto Vecchio.
4. Charles Benagh	Hunting Towers resident, member of Commission on Persons with Disabilities
5. Caroline Faiella	Hunting Towers resident
6. Maurice Barboza	Hunting Towers resident
7. Ardith Campbell Dentzer	Hunting Towers resident
8. Lisa Henderson	Hunting Terrace resident
9. Colleen O'Shea	Hunting Terrace resident
Civic Associations in the Old Town Area	
10. Townsend A. "Van" Van Fleet	President, Old Town Civic Association
11. Lillie Finklea	Southwest Quadrant Civic Association. Woodrow Wilson Bridge Neighborhood Task Force
12. Maureen Dugan	Old Town/Hunting Creek Civic Association
Historic Preservation Interests	
13. Charles Trozzo	Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission
14. H. Stewart Dunn, Jr.	Representative of Historic Alexandria Foundation Member of Planning Commission
15. Boyd Walker	Historic preservation interest indicated
Affordable Housing Interests	
16. Lee Weber	Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Chair
17. Kerry-Ann Powell	ARHA Board of Directors
18. Danny Abramson	Chairman, Alexandria Housing Development Corporation
19. Nancy Carson	Housing Action
20. Jim Hoben	Housing Action
21. Herb Cooper-Levy	Affordable Housing, Developer/Provider
At-Large Interests	
22. Michael Hobbs	Co- President of Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations
23. Ellen Pickering	Taylor Run Civic Association
24. Ann Glennon	West End Resident
25. David Bush	ParkFairfax Resident
26. Holly Hemphill	Member, Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee
27. Joan Renner	Former Chair, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
28. Marguerite Lang	Rosemont Civic Association
National Park Service	
29. David Murphy	National Park Service
30. Sean McCabe	National Park Service
Group Leader	
31. John Komoroske	Vice-Chair, Planning Commission

Stakeholders Group Charge:

The Stakeholders Group was established at the request of the City Council to provide a conduit for the issues, options and ideas to be considered by the Planning Commission and the City Council in determining how a zone change or zone text amendment can provide for extraordinary affordable housing on the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace sites in exchange for additional height, density or building bulk while complying with the Washington Street Guidelines and Standards, as provided for in the Hunting Creek Area Plan.

The statements of issues, options and ideas provided in this document are statements of individuals, and unless otherwise indicated are not consensus statements or recommendations of the Stakeholders Group.

Stakeholders Group Process

The Stakeholders Group held meetings nearly once a month from August, 2006 through July, 2007. The initial meetings included briefings by City staff to provide background to the members on the key issues to be considered by the Planning Commission and the City Council. These briefings included sessions on affordable housing, historic preservation and the City's historic districts, the Washington Street Standards and Guidelines, the Hunting Creek Area Plan, site plan review and design guidelines, and environmental and flooding issues. A number of Hunting Towers residents provided the Stakeholders Group members a tour of a variety of units at Hunting Towers, and made a presentation on the history of Hunting Towers. The Stakeholders Group also received presentations on the proposed project for the Hunting Terrace site from the IDI Group (referred to herein as "the applicant"), representing the IDI/Kay interests as owners of the Hunting Terrace site and applicants for development approvals to develop that site.

Each of the Stakeholders Group meetings included time for group discussion. Notes on the Stakeholders Group meetings were prepared by City staff and are available on the Hunting Creek Area Plan page on the Planning and Zoning Department's web site.

Hunting Terrace Proposal

The initial proposal for Hunting Terrace considered by the group provided for 116 affordable and workforce housing units (replacing the 116 units that currently exist on the Hunting Terrace site) along the Washington Street frontage, with 300 luxury condominiums in buildings up to 14 stories tall on the rear of the site, for a total of 416 dwelling units.

During the stakeholders group process, the concept for the Hunting Terrace development was modified by IDI Group in response to Stakeholders Group comments made at the December, 2006 workshop. There was comment at this workshop in a number of breakout groups that the project should incorporate both Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace. The replacement of the 116 affordable units at Hunting Terrace was not

considered sufficient to constitute “extraordinary affordable housing” under the Hunting Creek Area Plan when the future of Hunting Towers was undetermined, and the group felt no confidence that any affordable units at all would be retained at Hunting Towers.

IDI modified the Hunting Terrace proposal to eliminate on-site affordable housing, and instead incorporated a proffer that would result in the provision of affordable housing at Hunting Towers, guaranteed by a \$20 million bond. This proffer was made public at the Stakeholders Group meeting on January 18, 2007. The proposed development on the Hunting Terrace site was modified to incorporate a total of approximately 400 luxury condominiums in a similar physical plan to the original proposal, with 50-foot-tall buildings along Washington Street and buildings up to 14 stories tall behind.

A draft of the Affordable Housing Plan for the Hunting Creek Plaza Project dated September 17, 2007 with prices amended as of December 5 was reviewed at a briefing by the Office of Housing for the Stakeholders Group on December 6, 2007. Some of the stakeholder group comments on the Affordable Housing Plan have been addressed to a greater or lesser extent in subsequent revisions to the applicant’s Affordable Housing Plan.

Issues.

The following issues were identified by one or more members of the Stakeholders Group in the various categories that they discussed during their regular meetings, community meeting, tours and other group discussions.

Affordable Housing

Closely related issues: People, Urban Design

- The specifics of the affordable housing program to be provided in response to the IDI proffer need to be identified in order to determine whether the proffer constitutes “extraordinary affordable housing” in the meaning of the Hunting Creek Area Plan. These specifics include the number of units guaranteed to be affordable at Hunting Towers, the and the target income levels, rents and unit prices of the various categories of affordable and workforce housing. The specifics of what would be gained if Hunting Towers is not purchased and the \$20 million guarantee is forfeited also need to be determined. [Some specifics have now been provided in the Draft Affordable Housing Plan submitted by IDI.]
- None of the “affordable workforce housing” guaranteed in the Draft Affordable Housing Plan falls in the City’s traditional “affordable housing” category used in the City’s density bonus or affordable housing setaside programs since it is made available regardless of household income, and does not require evidence of low or moderate household income to qualify. [The revised Affordable Housing Plan submitted by IDI now includes income limitations on City Workforce and Public Workforce units.]

“Affordable Housing” has an official City definition used by the Office of Housing based on qualification of residents by household incomes below a threshold based on metropolitan area median income and family size. The threshold is traditionally 60% of area median income for a family of four for rental housing and qualification for the Moderate Income Housing Program (MIHP) for home ownership programs. A substantial part of the affordable housing to be provided in this project should fall within this traditional definition of “affordable.” This affordable housing should include a range of unit types suitable for different household sizes. [MIHP qualification for a family of three is approximately 110% of median income. Under the Affordable Housing Plan, a number of the units at Hunting Towers would be priced so that they would be affordable to households with incomes that qualify them for the MIHP. Specifics are outlined in the revised Affordable Housing Plan and staff analysis.]

- The up to 100 units of housing at Hunting Towers offered for sale to a City-designated nonprofit agency to be used as affordable rental housing would require a substantial subsidy if such an agency is to acquire it at the offered price. Nonprofit housing agencies typically use the federal affordable housing tax credit program to rehabilitate housing, with the sale of tax credits used to finance the

bulk of rehabilitation. [The potential for using tax credits with this project is problematic and uncertain at this time. Even with tax credits, an additional subsidy from the City or another source would be required to ensure provision of these 100 rental units working through an affordable housing provider.]

- “Workforce Housing” should be defined similarly in terms of median household income and family size, including low- and moderate-income households, but also including households with incomes up to 100% or possibly 120% of the metropolitan area median income. Only a limited portion of the housing units counting toward “extraordinary affordable housing” should fall in the workforce housing range of incomes that are above the traditional affordable housing range. “Workforce housing” as used by the City refers to housing for all people working in Alexandria, and is not limited to housing for City and school or other public agency employees. The “affordable workforce housing” proposed in the Affordable Housing Plan is priced to be affordable to those with household incomes within upper portion of the workforce housing range of up to 120% of median income.
- “Extraordinary Affordable Housing” should mean that affordable housing units constitute a percentage of total dwelling units substantially greater than the amount of affordable housing that is typically achieved through the City’s voluntary affordable housing guidelines and density bonus program.
- “Extraordinary” should involve providing as affordable and workforce housing a substantial share of the 630 units that existed on the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace sites after demolition for the Capital Beltway. All of these existing units should be considered to qualify as market-rate affordable or workforce housing today.
- A quantitative citywide goal for affordable and workforce housing should be established against which to test performance in achieving the City’s affordable housing objectives. No such goal exists today except with respect to public housing. It is difficult to evaluate the importance of the affordable housing component of this project without relation to such a quantitative goal.
- Conserving existing moderately-priced rental and ownership housing, and managing it in a system in which its price is stabilized in relation to incomes over a long period of time, appears to be the way to maintain the share of affordable housing units in the City with the minimum expenditure of public funds. To the extent that the existing housing provides suitable housing in a suitable environment, and that it can be operated and maintained economically, conservation is cheaper than construction of new affordable housing in most cases.
- There should be more emphasis placed on maintaining affordability over time. After this much effort, we should not be losing these units from the affordable

inventory in 15 or 30 years. [Controls to ensure affordability of City Workforce and Public Workforce units over time are included in the applicant's revised affordable housing plan, subject to approval of mortgage lenders and insurers as applicable.]

- Consider the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace sites as a single project. Far more affordable and workforce housing units seem likely to be retainable on these two sites if the Hunting Terrace and Hunting Towers sites are combined in a single project in which affordable housing, density and height bonuses can be worked out between the two sites.
- The size of units provided should be considered in determining whether units provide affordable housing.
- The number of bedrooms is important in local needs for affordable housing.
- Rental Housing. Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace before demolition for the Capital Beltway widening provided nearly 1000 units of market-rate housing at rents affordable to many moderate-income households. The applicant proposes only ownership housing, of which up to 100 units would be made available for purchase by a city-designated non-profit agency to be operated as long-term affordable rental housing. The plan does not guarantee that these units would be purchased, and their purchase by a nonprofit housing provider may require a subsidy. Rental housing is an important part of the need for affordable housing, and a substantial number of rental units should be a requirement in any affordable housing proposal for these properties.
- Because of the importance of this location in relation to the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Old and Historic Alexandria District, offsite affordable housing should be considered toward the project's affordable housing contribution.
- If the 530 existing units at Hunting Towers can be saved and renovated, and a substantial share of these units preserved as affordable and workforce housing, this is an "extraordinary affordable housing" contribution that justifies the development of buildings of up to 150 feet in height on the Hunting Terrace site. A number of tall buildings in Alexandria provide examples of how such buildings can be designed in a manner that is compatible with the character of the City, visible from and near Old Town.
- The City should consider non-profit participants to help provide affordable housing.
- If the project for Hunting Terrace cannot guarantee what happens at Hunting Towers, then there is substantial concern about saving affordability at Hunting Towers, where it appears to be more feasible. Plans for Hunting Terrace should

not be approved until the Hunting Towers site is controlled through a purchase agreement so that its use for affordable housing can be assured.

- Replacement of the existing 116 units with affordable units as part of the project for Hunting Terrace was considered a good aspect of the original mixed-income proposal for the Hunting Terrace site.
- The City should conduct an economic analysis to determine the tradeoff between luxury units in the high-rise buildings and the number of affordable units that can be provided.
- If the purpose of providing a density and height increase at Hunting Terrace is to enable the preservation of affordability at Hunting Towers, then any profit from Hunting Terrace that is not needed to provide affordable units at Hunting Towers should be donated to the City's Housing Trust Fund. IDI has cited its previous work at ParkFairfax, Parc East, Belleview and Dominion Terrace as examples of workforce condominium conversions. These projects did not require a subsidy to provide workforce condominiums.
- A parking reduction should be considered for the affordable units to reduce the cost.
- This is an exceptional project from an affordable housing standpoint and it deserves an exceptional process for consideration.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Closely related issues: Aesthetics, Urban Design. Height issues are discussed primarily under urban design.

- The Washington Street Standards and Guidelines should be applied to all buildings on the Hunting Terrace development site, including those buildings not fronting on Washington Street.
- Development of the site must consider the City's commitment to the National Park Service to manage the development of Washington Street so that it respects the historic and memorial character of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (George Washington Memorial Parkway).
- 14-story buildings as proposed by the applicant are not compatible with the character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway at any location within the Hunting Terrace Site. They are substantially out of scale with all buildings in this part of Alexandria and conflict with the historic and memorial character of the Parkway.

Development of buildings not significantly higher in maximum elevation than the existing Porto Vecchio and Hunting Towers buildings may be considered for a

project that provides extraordinary affordable housing. Buildings taller than the 50-foot height limit should only be considered if they are substantially shielded from view from the Parkway by buildings that meet the Washington Street Standards and Guidelines for scale and massing and the 50-foot height limit of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, and if they are developed in a style and with scale and massing compatible with the Parkway, with views from Old Town and the Parkway to the south, and with the other buildings on the site.

- There is a strong separation of the Hunting Creek area from the rest of the Old and Historic District as a result of the widening of the Beltway at the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. It is less important to consider the Guidelines and Standards here because of that distance and the lack of historic buildings within the Hunting Creek area
- The precedent-setting nature of approving a taller building within the 50-foot height limit in the Old and Historic District should be considered. If tall buildings are approved here, others may consider that the height limit will be readily lifted for other public benefits within the Old and Historic District.
- There are other choices of location where affordable housing can be built, but there is no choice about where a historic district can be located – the history determines it. Therefore historic preservation must take precedence when there is a conflict between the two.
- There are substantial economic benefits to Alexandria that result from maintaining the historic character of Old Town, including history-based tourism and the attraction of the old town retail and restaurant district. Tall buildings dilute this character and threaten these economic benefits.
- While the Hunting Towers buildings were found ineligible for the National Register, there is a strong social history to the Towers that deserves recognition and should be considered in evaluating the historic value of the Towers buildings.

Environmental Impacts

- The Hunting Terrace site should not be developed in a way that people are exposed to substantial project-specific or cumulative additional hazards from flooding either on the site or in other locations.
- The documentation provided by the applicant to support the development of the Hunting Terrace Site should provide information on subsurface hydrology to indicate what effect the development, particularly if subterranean parking is provided, may have on groundwater flows in and around the site and in adjacent areas of Old Town.
- The City should consider green building as a public benefit of development here.

- General environmental effects of the project are of concern.

Traffic

- The City should consider the traffic impacts of this large number of additional units on Washington Street. This area is already highly congested.

People

Closely related issues: Affordable Housing

- The effects of dislocation of existing residents should be considered in any plan to demolish units or renovate them for condo conversion. Many low- and moderate-income residents, and a number of elderly residents in particular, would be particularly adversely affected. IDI has offered to make special provisions for elderly residents including continuing to allow them to rent if they wish to. These offers, and other offers to make units available to existing tenants with limits on price related to current rents should be made conditions of approval of the project. [Long-term leases of three years are required by law for tenants who are elderly or disabled; IDI's Affordable Housing Plan provides long-term leases to these groups plus long-term (20 years or more) tenants, for as long as they wish to remain in the property.]
- The original IDI proposal for the Hunting Terrace site that incorporated both affordable housing and luxury condominiums provided separate buildings and separate common facilities for the two groups of units. It is more appropriate to integrate the affordable housing and luxury housing units and the common facilities.
- Are there enough vacancies at the Towers to accommodate the relocation of residents from Hunting Terrace?
- The displacement of existing residents at Hunting Terrace should be delayed to the last possible moment necessary for construction.

Urban Design

Closely related issues: Historic and Cultural Resources, Aesthetics. Height, bulk, scale and massing of buildings is discussed in general under urban design. The Washington Street Standards and Guidelines provide specific guidance for these aspects of development. These specifics are discussed under Historic and Cultural Resources. Urban design also deals with the organization of urban activities and land uses at the scale of the neighborhood, block and development site. At this level it considers patterns of movement, intensity of development, and the organization and character of urban spaces including the relations among streets, buildings, and public and private open spaces, and natural features of an area.

- The base against which height is measured is lower on the east side of Washington Street. When comparing buildings on both sides, we should be comparing the elevation of the tops of buildings, not their height above grade. If the east side is not redeveloped and the west side is, the difference in base elevation on the two sites may be even greater than it is today.
- Height must be considered in relation to the importance of this gateway to the City and to Old Town.
- A physical model should be constructed to investigate the height, setback and building placement issues on this site. The model should include Hunting Towers, Porto Vecchio, and the Beltway showing the distance to the nearest structures in Old Town north of the Beltway.
- The proposed building height of 14 stories is an undesirable characteristic of the original proposal for the Hunting Terrace Site
- The height and bulk of the IDI proposal for 14-story towers are out of place in this part of Alexandria, and in particular along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The height above sea level of the Hunting Towers and Porto Vecchio buildings that already exist in this area are a more appropriate limit to consider if the height is permitted to exceed the existing 50-foot height limit in exchange for extraordinary affordable housing. Buildings taller than 50 feet if considered should not be permitted to front on Washington Street, but should be substantially set back and shielded from view from the Parkway by lower buildings.
- The front buildings in the Hunting Terrace proposal offer little undulation of the façade, no building breaks, and no entries on Washington Street. The front buildings also do not provide variation in height and appear as two solid blocks. These characteristics do not comply with the Washington Street Standards.
- The height of the IDI proposal for Hunting Terrace is acceptable considering the guarantee that the 530 units at Hunting Towers will be saved as affordable and workforce housing.

Site Plan

- Underground parking is a good aspect of the proposal for Hunting Terrace
- Landscaping, setbacks, and open space are good aspects of the proposal for Hunting Terrace
- The site plan should retain public access to the waterfront on all sides.
- The green space should be more accessible to the general public.

- The proposal should provide some retail and service uses on the site.
- The site plan should provide more informal gathering places and seating areas for the public in the landscaped area.

Aesthetics

Closely related issues: Urban Design, Historic and Cultural Resources

- The overall aesthetics of the project is of concern.
- Visibility of the project from the Potomac River, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Route 1, Old Town, and Hunting Creek should be considered.
- The simplified computer-generated massing diagrams presented by the City staff are misleading. The visual impact of the buildings is substantially different when the texture and articulation of real building facades is shown. More detailed and appropriately shaded and textured diagrams should be used for evaluation by the Planning Commission and City Council.

Expenditure of Public Funds

- The City should encourage the transfer of this property to another state agency with a different mission so that affordable housing considerations can be incorporated in the state's use or sale of the property. Windfall profits from the increase in value of this property should not go to VDOT for highway purposes, but should go to the funding affordable housing to replace that lost to the bridge project and lost as a result of the forcing of the properties onto the market at this time in a way that encourages redevelopment.
- A cost-revenue analysis should be conducted. The high-value housing proposed here should be fiscally beneficial to the City.

Options

The Stakeholders Groups discussed and one or more members offered the following options

- The Hunting Terrace and Hunting Towers properties should be considered as one combined site in order to maximize the flexibility of providing affordable housing while also maximizing compatibility with the historic character of the Parkway under the Washington Street Standards and Guidelines. Additional development and conservation of existing affordable housing should be considered on both sites.
- Permit an increase in height up to the existing elevation of Hunting Towers and Porto Vecchio (or somewhat greater per some comments), but only on the rear of the Hunting Terrace site, with a 50-foot limit on the front part of the site.
- Look at the potential for additional development on the Towers site in order to provide the revenue to the developer that would result from the height on the Terrace site.

Consider the possibility of developing luxury river-view condos (“third tower” or other form) on the Towers property that would provide a return similar to that of the highest of the units on the Terrace site, and permit reduction of the height on the Terrace site.

- The option of saving all or part of the existing Hunting Terrace buildings for affordable housing should be considered.
- If the Hunting Towers affordable housing cannot be saved as part of a development project for the Terrace, the City should purchase the site for affordable housing.
- A win-win option should be developed that both saves Hunting Towers for affordable housing and provides a design acceptable to historic preservation interests.

Other Options

- **Community Benefit Agreement.** Consider using a community benefit agreement to provide assurance and a potential cause of action to third parties at interest in the event of failure of the applicant or the City to follow through on conditions or commitments. Such interested parties may include existing Towers and Terrace tenants, Porto Vecchio owners, historic preservation interests, community groups or others.
- **Affordable housing development on city-owned site.** Consider providing an opportunity for the developer to utilize a city-owned property to develop affordable housing rather than increasing the height on the Terrace site.

Summary

The Hunting Creek Area Stakeholders Group process provided an opportunity for identification and exploration of a number of issues related to the development of Hunting Terrace and Hunting Towers. It provided an opportunity for members of the community with differing views and priorities to become more familiar with the history, the regulatory context and the issues, opportunities, challenges and available options for these sites.

The list of issues, options and ideas generated by the group is the result of a substantial investment of time and energy of the participating stakeholders group members over a period of nearly one year since their first meeting in August, 2006. It is provided to the Planning Commission and City Council with great respect for the complexity of the issues presented by this important project, and the difficulty of finding a resolution of conflicting issues that results in the best for the future of Alexandria.

There was one issue in particular on which the members of the Stakeholders Group found substantial consensus:

The future of Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace should be considered together as a single project in order to maximize the potential for and certainty of preservation of affordable housing, while minimizing conflicts with the historic character and aesthetic values of Old Town and the Hunting Creek area.

In order to make it possible to consider these projects together most productively in an atmosphere of certainty, the City should continue to strongly encourage VDOT to sell Hunting Towers as soon as possible at a price that realistically reflects the potential for rehabilitation and redevelopment of this site.