

Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

June 22, 2007

Advisory Members/Alternates present: Conrad Egan, Co-Chair; Jim Scott, Co-Chair; Pamela Barrett; Marlene Blum; Herb Cooper-Levy; Joshua David; Carson Lee Fifer; William Hanks; Gerald Hopkins; Rodney Lusk; Lee Rau; Michael Scheurer; and Mark Silverwood

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Conrad Egan at 9:10 a.m.

Definition of “Affordable” and “Workforce” Housing--Report of Benchmarking Analysis

Tom Fleetwood, Strategic Planner, Department of Housing and Community Development, made a brief presentation on benchmarking of other jurisdictions' definitions of workforce housing. He particularly noted the recently adopted programs in Suffolk County, New York and Montgomery County, Maryland, both of which are similar in population and median income to Fairfax County.

Herb Cooper-Levy, RPJ Housing, noted that the City of Alexandria has a workforce housing program that serves households earning up to 120% of the area median income (AMI) for homeownership.

Marlene Blum, Alliance for Human Services, expressed concern that the term “workforce housing” implies that people earning below 70% of AMI are not part of the workforce. She asked if there was data about relocations from Fairfax County into other jurisdictions.

Committee Member Jerry Hopkins suggested that all below-market housing could be called “workforce housing” or “affordable housing.”

Lynn Cramer, Community Services Board, noted that the term “workforce housing” fails to address seniors and the non-working disabled who also have affordable housing issues.

Affordable Housing Production Report

Fred Selden, Department of Planning and Zoning, reported on the proposed structure and content of the planned affordable housing production report. He indicated that the report should be produced annually beginning with calendar year 2007. This report is to be presented at the March 2008 Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. Fred Selden noted that one of the key data issues should be used to compare production in any given year. DPZ's recommendation would reflect a five-year average being used to account for any one-year spikes or drops in production. He also described the roles by DPZ and HCD in the development of this report.

Committee Member Lee Fifer recommended the *per year* and the *five year average* be used to measure success against the 12% goal in the Policy Plan.

Co-Chair Jim Scott noted the apartment developments with no elevator, and asked about the expectation of affordable housing. He asked whether the 12% expectation is a floor or a ceiling level.

Fred Selden indicated that the expectation that 12% will be provided and it will be the balance of any required Affordable Dwelling Units (ADU) and workforce housing.

Jim Zook, Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning, reported that the focus on workforce housing has begun, ADU's. The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment concerning workforce housing will give additional force to the staff position on this issue.

Committee Member Jerry Hopkins asked whether the objective in the Policy Plan should be amended to state that the expectation is 12% in each development. Fred Selden indicated there are policies that follow each objective in the Policy Plan and with the recommendations of the High-rise Panel there will be further changes.

Co-Chair Conrad Egan asked that when the annual report comes out, it should include a pie chart similar to that in the Affordable Housing Program and Funding Matrix showing the incomes served by the housing produced. Herb Cooper-Levy asked if the chart could also include the loss of affordable housing. Paula Sampson indicated that HCD is checking with Systems Management to see if this type of reporting can be done.

Lee Fifer feels there needs to be a clear demographics reflecting who is buying or renting these units, such as county employees. Marlene Blum suggested doing demographics of the whole county. Conrad Egan suggested having George Mason University do this study. Paula Sampson said HCD will work with DPZ to develop a base with a report on calendar year 2007 and report to this committee in March 2008.

Status of Advisory Committee Recommendations Concerning the Future Use of the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund

Committee Member Michael Scheurer presented the revised draft recommendations on the One Penny developed by the Special Subcommittee chaired by Kerrie Wilson.

Tom Fleetwood, Strategic Planner, noted that the new recommendation for a goal was based on 50% of the units being affordable at 50% of the AMI and below. Paula Sampson noted that in using this model, the total number of units preserved was lowered to 1750 from the original recommendation of 2200, due to the size of the investment needed to serve 50% and below.

A motion was made by Committee Member Gerald Hopkins to adopt the amended recommendation and seconded by Mark Silverwood. The Advisory Committee unanimously passed the motion.

Status of the Recommendations of the High-Rise Affordability Panel

Commissioner Lee Rau provided an overview of the Panel's final recommendations. Heidi Merkel, DPZ, gave a brief overview of the next steps in the land use process, in terms of implementing the Panel's recommendations.

Conrad Egan noted that at the Planning Commission meeting held on June 21, 2007, the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments had been presented to the Redevelopment and Housing Committee of the Planning Commission.

Committee Member Rodney Lusk noted that he believes the recommendations are headed in the right direction and that a staff report would be available next week to be followed by a public hearing at the Planning Commission. He also noted that defining who we are serving is critical in terms of educating the public on the policy.

Jim Zook reminded the committee that when the recommendation is adopted, it will be a voluntary proffer system. Mr. Zook also noted that 12% expectation stands regardless of whether a developer wishes to take advantage of the density bonus associated with the proposed policy.

Herb Cooper-Levy moved that the Advisory Committee endorsing the Panel's recommendation and Marlene Blum seconded the motion. The Advisory Committee unanimously passed the motion.

At-Risk Affordable Housing Report

Rex Peters, Associate Director, Real Estate and Revitalization, made a brief presentation on the At-Risk Report. Tom Devaney, Housing Community Developer IV, HCD briefed the committee on a potential major preservation action by the county involving the Wedgewood Apartments in the Braddock District.

Gerald Hopkins, noting the continuing loss of affordable units, asked about the possibility of using eminent domain as a preservation tool. He indicated this process was used years ago in the preservation of a portion of Jefferson Village in the Providence District. Al Smuzynski, Wesley Housing, notes that Arlington County has used the threat of eminent domain in preservation. The Committee directed staff to undertake research on this tool and report back to the committee at its December meeting.

Conrad Egan asked that Rick Edson, AHP Representative, provide a brief update on Janna Lee Village and the status of the recent preservation action. Rick Edson reported that the project is going very well and that they are planning a ground breaking event with Governor Kane as a guest speaker.

Preservation Progress and Pipeline Report

HCD Director Paula Sampson provided a brief update on the preservation effort and pipeline. She reported that the current number of units preserved to date is 1412. Jerry Hopkins reported that the Chesterbrook senior development in the Dranesville District is scheduled to open on October, 2007.

Other Business

Next Meeting

September 28, 2007 9:00-11:00 am
Government Center Rooms 9 & 10

The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.