



Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan

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Community Charrette Meeting Summary November 3, 2007

INTRODUCTION

As charrette participants arrived they were invited to use colored dots to indicate which of the mounted photographs showed parts of the neighborhood that are favored and which represent things in the area that are not liked. Approximately 300 photographs were submitted by community members as part of a Visual Preference Survey, which included free cameras and a request to memorialize those aspects of the neighborhood which were either positive or negative.

Robert Kramer began the formal meeting, recounting the events that have occurred over the last several weeks and outlining the series of five Work Sessions that would occur starting November 12, and continuing through January.

David Dixon recapped the important points that came out of the five Educational Workshops (Public Housing, Development Allowed under Current Zoning, Retail Feasibility, Historic Preservation, Office and Residential Feasibility, and Transportation).

Robert Kramer introduced the morning charrette activity, which involves facilitated discussion of the seven Community Objectives within five groups (##1,2,3,5,6) of people.

COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

Over the course of last summer, Kramer & Associates interviewed numerous people from and involved in the Braddock Metro neighborhood and from those discussions derived the following list of common Community Objectives:

- Sense of place/Neighborhood identity
- Community-serving open space
- Safe, walkable neighborhood
- Deconcentration of public housing
- Community-serving retail
- Management of traffic and parking
- Appropriate height and scale

The five groups of approximately 12 participants each were asked to discuss the above objectives over the course of 60 minute period, with the goal of determining whether the stated objectives accurately reflected the thoughts and hopes in the neighborhood, whether changes are appropriate and whether any objectives need to be added to the list. At the end of the discussion period, each group reported its findings, as follows:

Group #1 (Lisa)

- The sense of place objective should read to “create a sense of place/neighborhood vitality and identity.”
- The second objective should read: “Provide balance and variety of public open
- Add the word achieve to the objective so it would read: Achieve appropriate height and scale. It was explained that to do so helps achieve the goal of maintaining a sense of place in the neighborhood. One way to do this is to ensure that if there is low scale residential on a street now, a large high- rise is not built next to it. There is a need to respect the spaces.”
- Add the term “Achieve” to the third objective.
- Promote deconcentration by increasing mixed-income and workforce housing, and recognize that each of those objectives, while they may work together, also are important separately. The objective should read: “Promote mixed income housing and deconcentration of public housing.”
- Add “provide” at the beginning and “services” at the end of the stated objective for community serving retail, recognizing that services includes such uses as banks, physicians and insurance companies.
- The objective should include “Improve and promote public transportation (which includes Metro, bicycles and other forms of travel)” and “improve management of traffic, parking and multi-modal transportation,” noting that multi-modal includes buses, bikes, cars, Metro and other forms of transit. The objective should read: Improve and promote public transportation and improve the management of traffic, parking and multi-modal transportation existing residential scale of the neighborhood.

Group #2 (Collin)

The group focused on four things: public housing, transportation, sense of place and retail, recognizing that there is a logical connection and relationship among all of these objectives and that issues of density and open space underlie all of them.

- Public Housing: There is a need for positive dialogue among the City, ARHA, the non-public housing residents and the public housing residents. It is very important to recognize the historic displacement of neighborhoods that took place for the creation of Metro, that the neighborhood gave concessions at that time, and that it is being asked to do that again now. For some people, the idea of dispersing public housing is perceived as being kicked out of their homes. There is a need to find a middle ground. We need a commitment to a specific and fair plan for dispersing existing residents to other parts of the City. We should provide choices and options near transportation facilities. We also need to recognize that a good redevelopment and relocation plan takes a long time.
- Transportation and Parking: There was strong agreement within the group about the need to not decrease the parking for new residential development. If there is residential development, the parking needs to come with it. The road and sewer infrastructure needs to support additional development and density. We need

incentives for bus and Metro riders, and the incentives should not just be financial ones. For example, safety is a factor that is necessary to get people in the neighborhood to stop using their cars and make lifestyle changes. And we need to protect on street parking.

- Retail and Sense of Place: We need to take over whatever potential there is for Old Town overflow. We also need to take care of essentials for the neighborhood, such as daycare. We need neighborhood oriented shops, with a mixture of uses to create activity on the street, which also brings safety. We also need to identify the best practices for mixed use projects and make sure that urban amenities are put in place for high density development (such as landscaping, appropriate height, scale and setbacks). We need to ensure that new development blends in with the neighborhood so as to preserve history, such as the Parker–Gray High School and the Black History Museum. In 40 years, will the Black History Museum look out of place? Even if we do not preserve actual buildings, we need to preserve the history with a heritage trail, with markers and with interpretation. We need to protect Queen Street’s uniqueness.

Group 3 (Heidi)

- The sense of place objective received a lot of attention in this group, and needs to also include a sense of belonging, which includes cohesion and diversity (racial, economic and cultural), and a need to create places of shared interest, whether they are restaurants, activities and gathering spots of all kinds. This will give us an “address.”
- The open space and walkability objectives were discussed together. Open space should be family friendly and hospitable. We could think about a farmers market in summer and a skating rink in winter. The open space at the Monarch and Lofts projects is not good or community oriented. The proposed linear park along the Metro is good. Developers should provide safe and walkable amenities.
- Everyone agreed that the public housing should be deconcentrated.
- Everyone wants community serving retail in keeping with what is realistic. It should be located where it can succeed.
- As to transportation, the neighborhood should be transit oriented, even though the group is not certain exactly what that means.
- The group agrees that height and scale should be appropriate to the neighborhood.

Group 5 (Selena) (there was no Group #4)

- Sense of place relates to open spaces. This group prefers more open spaces even if they are smaller, rather than just one large open space. The spaces need to be cohesive and active and places that bring the community together.
- New construction does not necessarily give us uniqueness, and is not people centered.
- Open space: we need to ask who will use it and make sure it is a place that people will gather. It should be diverse, intimate and well maintained.
- We need walkable places with wide sidewalks, removed telephone poles, and pedestrian friendly lighting, which is bright enough to make walking safe but not too bright so that it is not comfortable and attractive. It would be good to have more police presence walking and biking in the neighborhood as well as living there as community police officers.

- We support deconcentrating public housing and want to integrate it within a continuum of housing types. We do not want just high and low income complexes like Chatham Square. We support ownership because it brings pride of place and community, and that leads to safety and beauty. And the housing should be spread out in the neighborhood.
- As to community serving retail, we need to make sure the new retail also serves the retailer, so it is attractive to them. We need to preserve the uniqueness of retail spaces, including in its construction, which is difficult.
- On transportation, the group wants to encourage bikes and pedestrians so there is a mix of traffic modes. It is imperative that the on street parking not be lost for BRT. And we need to look at traffic globally, including the regional picture.
- As to scale and density, it needs to be people friendly. We do not want a wind tunnel effect with tall buildings located close together. And we need to ensure uniqueness so that everything does not look the same. Having all new buildings built in red brick does not lead to uniqueness.

Group 6 (Herb)

As to each of the objectives, the group considered both broad and specific ideas.

- Sense of place really amounts to “places,” and is covered by two thoughts: retain the existing character of the neighborhood and when redevelopment occurs, ensure that it creates “places.”
- Open space needs to be meaningful and usable.
- Walkability means different things to different people. We struck the word “safe,” not because we do not want safe places to walk, but because we are concerned that the spaces be vital and active.
- For deconcentration of public housing the community needs the “buy in” of the public housing residents.
- The retail objective should be kept broad. It should include personal services, such as daycare and gathering places.
- We made no changes to the transportation objective.
- On the scale of development, we reworded it so that it includes the ideas of “varying and transitional” instead of appropriate height and scale.
- The unique history of the community needs to be recognized.

JACKIE SURRATT PRESENTATION:

Over the lunch break, Mr. Surratt presented some thoughts to the group which were arrived at with others in the African American community. He perceives the African American community to be underrepresented in the Braddock Metro Neighborhood process so far. Without more diversity and inclusiveness, which would represent the neighborhood as a whole, the plan will not be good for all of the community. While the seven objectives are good for the neighborhood, there are additional ideas which should be included:

- the Black community understands the objective of deconcentration
- there is an important distinction between the economic values of redevelopment on the one hand and the more important issue of preservation of culturally sensitive neighborhood history.
- the Black community supports more jobs in the neighborhood, community gathering places for African Americans, and looking at housing options, with more bedrooms, for families.

INTERPRETATION OF VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

David Dixon summarized the charrette participants choices as shown by their placement of green (like) and red (dislike) dots next to photographs from the neighborhood:

There were positive expressions next to green spaces and edges that created a transition from buildings to sidewalks and negative reactions to blank walls and buildings right at the sidewalk without a green edge. The exception to this idea is if the building front contains retail, in which case having no transition to the sidewalk seems to be okay.

There is unanimous favoring of the low scale and character of the historic blocks and disfavor for blank walls.

People are evidently split about the Monarch; the dots show many views. Again, where retail meets the street, the reaction is more favorable than the street treatment, or lack of it, where there is no retail. The reaction to Colecroft is also mixed, with positive reaction to the townhouse scales and less positive views about the higher components of the complex. At the Meridian, the dots appear to be saying that large scale is not okay without better architecture. There appears to be a very important need for transitions in scale for buildings, in terms of height next to historic blocks.

As to Queen Street, people do not like blank walls, but like sites with activities. When presented with two buildings with similar architecture, one with activity and one without any activity in the photos, the former received positive dots, but the inactive one did not.

Mr. Dixon concluded by noting that what is being shown with the photos and dots is the same thing the participants have just reported in their words regarding the community objectives.

DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK FOR A SUCCESSFUL PLAN

During the afternoon session, each group was asked to discuss the following:

- preservation opportunities, by identifying what “must” be saved, what “should” be saved, and what is “not important.”
- public realm opportunities, by determining ideal places for streetscape enhancement, new open space and retail locations; and
- block massing (location, height and size of buildings) options, using pre cut foam blocks on potential development sites.

The result of those discussions was reported by each group at the end of the afternoon. Each of the five maps was photographed at the end of the session to maintain an accurate record of the results.

Group 1 (Lisa)

Although there was not agreement on what should be saved, there was consensus about areas that should be changed, including James Bland, Samuel Madden, Andrew Adkins (public housing sites), Jaguar, Madison and Metro.

Pedestrian priorities include Fayette Street, which should be a major pedestrian thoroughfare, with its view of the Washington Monument. In addition, Madison, Wythe and North West Sts, as well as First Street from Jaguar to the south end of Potomac

Yard and the Powhatan area. The corridor across from Metro could be a linear park, if it had appropriate lighting and signs, and if it were safer. Queen Street is also important, and should have better lighting to be more walkable. This is a special street which needs to be upgraded while still keeping its cultural importance. Finally, there is a need for an easy way to walk from the North East neighborhood, instead of along Route 1 and it needs to accommodate both walkers and bikes.

As to height and scale, while not in 100% agreement, for the most part the group thought the Jaguar site redevelopment was pretty good, and would help integrate the Meridian into the neighborhood. There is a need to graduate the height as you move south into the existing neighborhood.

The group thought it would be good to redevelop the Andrew Adkins site, along with the houses along West St, but were troubled because it is a place where people now live. If it is redeveloped, buildings should be kept low at the street edges becoming higher in the center.

As to the Madison site, there was some support for retail on Henry, although there was not consensus on this point and participants understood that Henry Street retail might not be a good idea. The proposal for retail to go around the corner onto Madison is good because it will relate to what is now across Madison, and will get people to walk along Madison. We liked the idea of a putting Montgomery Street though the Madison site, although we understand the ownership swap problem. We would also like to see a connection between Jaguar and Potomac Yard.

All agreed that greenspace is very important but could not decide how big the green spaces need to be. There was definite support for open space in the north part of the area, and recognition that it does not have to be green grass; it could be an open plaza. In general, we need better access to Metro, and better green space along streets, for example, from the Post Office to the Monarch. If Queen Street is to be an important street, we need green space there. We also want to enhance Hunter Miller Park near Queen Street.

Finally, there should be more public art, for example, at a redesigned Braddock Rd/Wythe St intersection which sees many pedestrians everyday.

Group #2 (Collin)

While we found it difficult to mark purple/preservation places, because there were so many, we did put blue dots on Jefferson Houston because it is important to concentrate on keeping a strong, improved elementary school. In addition, Durant and the field should be nonnegotiable. We marked historic sites, such as churches, Queen Street (through retail and revitalization).

Pedestrian streets: Both Fayette and Alfred Streets should be made more green, with more street trees. They frame the community and provide access through it. Fayette has the view of the Washington Monument, and Alfred makes more sense than Route 1. In addition, North Columbus, Wythe, Madison and First Streets are good pedestrian corridors.

Public housing: We expect something will be done like Chatham Square, but what we care most about is stretching the income groups to include the middle class as well as the rich and the poor. Redevelopment on these blocks should keep the TH look and feel, and there should be a ¼ - ½ acre park added in front of Charles Houston to draw people into the community center. We were unanimous about the townhouse feel along the streets.

Madison Street should have a retail theme, with brick sidewalks and trees. And Payne Street should be extended through Andrew Adkins, with a T intersection at Madison and with redevelopment and open space at Madison Street opposite 1261 Madison. This area could create a civic anchor and activity amenity. Today, there is a lack of community amenities, and you need that to help people have a sense of place. Without a real node, you have people filtering out into Old Town and elsewhere. Something like our idea of Payne and Madison will help keep them here and serve them. I

Jaguar site: There is agreement about redevelopment but a strong vocal minority against increased height and density, although several people are in favor of it. We do not want the feel or scale of Ballston. Therefore it is important to scale down from the northern end, but there was disagreement about how tall a building at the northern end should be. What is needed is more information from the developer and his lawyers in order to know what we do want. We like how the Prescott came out. When we asked Bud Hart for information, he showed us something that looked like a wind tunnel. We want city staff to come back with a briefing on what exactly urban amenities are planned to make the area more livable. We want to take a middle ground but we need help to do that. In the end we are skeptical about the Jaguar site about density bringing livability. .

As to Queen Street, we support keeping the heritage but encouraging retail, and were not sure how best to do this.

Metro: increased building height and density is okay if safe and balanced with what is there now. One person advocated a hotel, and there was interest in office and retail in order to animate a public plaza. The existing parking lot is not an effective use of land and does not serve the community well. The pedestrian access to the Metro needs improvement. The crossing at Braddock/West/Wythe is poor. Any new open space at the Metro needs to be safe. Two traffic lights are needed on Route 1 at Henry and First Street as well as at Fayette Street. We also need bridges or tunnel over the railroad tracks to open up the area to people from Del Ray and neighborhoods to the west.

The Metro, Andrew Adkins site and the individual houses along West St should all be planned together. In terms of scale for redevelopment, we like the scale of the Lofts because it steps up only slightly and we have concern about the density of redeveloped public housing being too big. It could grow in scale as it moves toward the Metro, especially west of Payne Street, but still should not include 12 story buildings.

We would like an answer from either the city or the developers or both to the question: What is livability?? Need better idea about what are the tradeoffs to make more informed decisions.

Group #3 (Heidi)

Preservation: The group came up with specific places to preserve, as it had long term residents at the table, and expects there are still others with which it is not familiar. Preservation locations include Samuel Tucker's house, Queen Street (at least preserve the character, even if it changes) and Black Rosemont across from Metro (again, even if it is not saved, need to consider its history.)

Pedestrian priorities (and for bikes too): Fayette as a major walking route and connection with Queen Street. Other walking routes are West, Montgomery, Madison, Wythe and First Streets.

Green space: The group used tracing paper to find the walking radius of Metro, the Charles Houston Recreation Center, and the Jefferson Houston school, and found overlapping circles along Fayette Street. The focus on additional open space should be along Fayette Street, because it is a natural pedestrian corridor and can connect up to the open space in Potomac Yard. The uses in open space should not be passive. In addition to green areas and trees, there should be vital community activities, such as open air concerts, skating, and Sunday farmers market. We want active uses and vitality.

Retail: should be located along Fayette Street and also across from the Metro where it would relate to the retail now at Colecroft, and with Madison and Wythe close enough to create a network. Although we are unsure about the type of retail needed to make it work, we do know it needs to be viable retail.

Scale: We ran out of time, so only discussed this briefly. There was agreement about having a mix of housing, office and retail at Andrew Adkins, but disagreement about density and height. We would like more information about what density you need for parks and to do trade offs. In addition, with regard to public housing, how much does it cost to buy land for relocation units elsewhere in the City? There was general agreement that lower scale around the perimeter of blocks, with heights in the middle, was okay, but there was no final agreement.

Table #5 (Selena)

Preservation: Queen Street should be preserved as to its scale, fabric and street trees. But we should also invest in it and provide economic incentives for reinvestment.

Public housing: There was agreement that all the public housing should be redeveloped and that as to the Hope VI blocks, workforce housing should be included.

Pedestrian priorities: Fayette Street, with new lighting and trees, and Madison Street which provides a connection all the way to Washington Street.

Open Space: preserve 1261 Madison in addition to providing more open space. The existing space at 1261 should be improved, and should provide better access to Madison Street so the space is more usable. It should also be complemented with additional green space across the street where Andrew Adkins is now. There should also be a park at the NW corner of Wythe and Fayette.

Streets: Extend Payne Street through Andrew Adkins up to First Street.

Scale: Around Andrew Adkins, it should be low on the edge with good sidewalks and green space on Fayette Street. There should be no more than 3-4 stories on Fayette St, but heights can rise moving toward West St. On West Street across from Metro, the use should be retail with residential above and underground parking. Heights can be taller here.

Metro: There could be redevelopment with office and residential on the site, plus a green plaza. The bus lanes need to be redesigned.

Jaguar: The proposed bike and walking path to the Metro is good pedestrian access, but also need bridges across tracks as well as access from and across Monroe St bridge.

The Braddock Wythe St alignment needs to be redesigned, and could include park space and retail.

As to height, open to different heights and no agreement...but make sure you can see the Metro from Madison and Wythe St.

Some would like to see the warehouse sites preserved, with the idea of converting to lofts; others are okay with redevelopment if the warehouse character is maintained.

Madison: like green space there, a connecting road through the project and retail, although some concern about viability of retail on Henry Street. Need to have a good view of the green space and deemphasize the garage entrance.

Like the quirky buildings at Wythe and Henry Streets. They are part of the neighborhood and we should keep the long term businesses and the character of the neighborhood.

Jaguar. Like the proposed plan. It angles height down and creates a walkway to Metro. The group would prefer to see the BRT going over First Street to the side road along the tracks and then to Metro instead of down Fayette Street as now proposed. We like the idea of bike/pedestrian access at the bridge and will have to do something about the Metro wall.

There was no consensus about the height and density around Metro, and a big concern about scale. There was some concern about a Payne Street extension allowing cut through traffic.

Group #6 (Herb)

The group spent much of its time on preservation and talked about what could be preserved in addition to buildings.

Jefferson Houston Elementary School should be retained as an important element in the neighborhood. It needs to be improved and preserved. Other specific sites to be preserved are the ice company, the swimming pool and Samuel Tucker's home. In addition to specific sites, there was consensus about preserving history throughout the neighborhood. There was also recognition of the historic elements throughout the area and that they should be retained even if the buildings and neighborhood changes.

There was less agreement about redevelopment. All agree about redeveloping the WMATA site with mixed use and open space, and about providing a pathway along the rail corridor towards Potomac Yard. There was also agreement about redesigning the intersection at Braddock Road and Wythe Street.

However, there was little consensus about redeveloping the Jaguar site, especially because of the concern from the Northeast neighborhood. They prefer to stay with the existing zoning for now, entering into negotiations about more. There were also diverse opinions about appropriate development levels at the Madison site.

Across from the Metro, there was concern about the people who live there now and forcing them to lose their houses if the street is redeveloped. If there were a way to allow change but keep the people there, that would be the best solution.

On Fayette Street, there should be pedestrian improvements to keep and embellish the view of the Washington Monument.

DAVID DIXON SUMMARY COMMENTS

At the end of the charrette, Mr. Dixon gave some quick, summary comments about what he had heard in the group reports:

1. There is a need to expand the definition of livability, to see how it is defined elsewhere, but also to determine how we want to define it.
2. There is a need to know how to determine what is possible when negotiating with developers.
3. There were many consistent thoughts among the groups, such as providing only for realistic amounts of retail space and needing additional public green spaces.
4. No one challenged the need for preservation generally, and the importance of Queen Street to the area's cultural history was common among the groups.
5. We need more information before we can move on and we need to borrow examples from elsewhere.
6. Everyone is concerned about traffic.
7. Everyone who talked about public housing said we should start by considering the people who live there.