



Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan Meeting Summary September 24, 2007

Introduction

Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning and Zoning, welcomed the audience and began the meeting, by noting that P&Z had been busy over the summer preparing for the planning process that would re-start this fall, and introducing Kramer & Associates (KA) as the facilitation team, and Goody/Clancy as the design and planning team. Ms. Hamer discussed the stakeholder interviews conducted by KA, and introduced Bob Kramer.

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews Report

Bob Kramer discussed the contents of the Stakeholder Interviews Report (Stakeholder Listening Tour Report). He identified two editorial corrections in the stakeholder report, found on pages 10 and 15, corrected in the copies available at the meeting and updated on the City's website. Mr. Kramer reported that he and his team had interviewed a broad cross-section of Braddock neighborhood stakeholders, then discussed the contents of the report.

He noted that the report is a starting point, not an end point, and that there was no polling or quantitative analysis. The report identifies key themes and messages. He indicated that an ongoing role for KA will be to work with the City and the neighborhood stakeholders to ensure that all ideas, even competing ones, are considered. It is not KA's role to find solutions, but to get diverse views on paper. Key themes from the interviews can be grouped into four categories, which he discussed in more detail: Process, Plan (areas of shared agreement and contrasting views) Stumbling Blocks and the Keys to Success.

Process

- Frustration that process lasted too long.
- City did not answer/respond to questions and concerns of community.
- Distrust flowed in multiple directions.
- Lack of faith in the process.

Plan Content—Areas of Shared Agreement

- Sense of Place—vitality, eyes on the street, identity, walkability, architecture, etc.
- Safety, both personally and for community— lighting, street design, public places, etc.

- Diversity is valued—in age, household type, race, type of housing, socio-economic groups, etc.
- Community-serving amenities—usable greenspace, retail, restaurants and others.
- Transportation must be addressed in the plan.

Plan Content—Contrasting Views

- How much height/density is too much v. amount needed to get amenities we want?
- How to address concentration of public housing—address needs of residents in public housing, but accommodate what larger neighborhood desires.
- What should be done with the property at the Metro (WMATA property).
- How to address transportation needs when the causes and solutions to transportation problems are not always local to the plan area.

Stumbling Blocks

- Fear that “we” will give, but not get— make compromises but not get what was promised in return.
- Difficulty people have with visualizing the future—what would the community look like when the plan is built?
- Confusion on what “by-right” development means and what it would produce.
- Concern from the development community—they need predictability.
- Fear that process will continue forever—disinclined to participate.
- Confusion as to how much influence the plan will have on future developments—what can/cannot the plan control/produce.
- Fear that the plan will be rendered moot due to delay.
- Personal attacks on character may prevent people from participating.
- Will the key groups that need to participate be involved? (Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority (ARHA), etc).

Keys to Success

- Willingness of people to communicate with people who have differing views and all sides to be open to compromise—if people modify their stances, will they get something they want in return?
- Plan needs to be visual in nature, with laymen’s summary— vision for the area, easy to understand design principles, guidelines and standards, sense of what will actually be built.
- Need for involvement of all major stakeholders in community, including coordination with T&ES and ARHA.

- Political will—elected officials need to give full consideration to the plan and once adopted stick to it.

Mr. Kramer explained that the stakeholder report does not present a silver bullet or panacea, but a starting point to move forward to develop a plan that articulates issues to be addressed. The Stakeholder Listening Tour Report is available at:
http://alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning/pdf/braddock_stakeholderlisteningreport.pdf

Update on Planning Process and Introduction of Planning and Design Consultant, David Dixon, Goody Clancy & Associates

Ms. Hamer introduced Vice-Mayor Pepper and City Council members Smedberg, Krupicka and Wilson, as well as Planning Commission member Komoroske. She then discussed the planning process going forward and identified two main goals:

1. Create a truly interactive participation process that is iterative by building on educational worksessions at the beginning of the process..
2. Provide an end date to the process.

The schedule will be intense but quick, and will end in March 2008 with public hearings. Ms. Hamer explained that she decided not to create an advisory group in favor of creating a process by which the community decides who will participate. She urged meeting attendees to participate and stressed that those who choose to participate:

- Commit to attend all meetings or else catch up by getting materials from web or staff. There will not be time to revisit discussions or issues for those who have missed meetings.
- Express views and goals now, rather than waiting until the public hearing. This will be a mutually beneficial process where participants can help each other achieve goals.

Ms. Hamer addressed a number of questions that have come up, including:

- How will all of the various city initiatives impacting Braddock be coordinated? All department heads of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RP&CA), and Housing have been asked to designate someone to attend and make decisions at all meetings, and she introduced those in attendance that evening. Planning and Zoning (P&Z) will be keeping up with other departments plans/initiatives as well.
- What is happening with the Parker-Gray National Register nomination? The original schedule was overly ambitious, but staff is progressing on track. A work session with the Planning Commission is scheduled for November, and will include more information on tax credits.

- Why is the area west of Metro not included in the planning area? The Braddock Metro area is a defined area in the Master Plan. Enlarging the area could add another year or two to the planning process as the plan would need to be completely revised. Although many have found that the Braddock area has been unjustly treated in the past, Braddock has a phenomenal opportunity now and it's a great time to be living in the neighborhood. It is a time to focus on the planning area and decide what the neighborhood should look like.

Discussion of the New Planning Process, Content and Schedule

David Dixon, of Goody Clancy was introduced and he shared his email for anyone that would like to contact him with comments at any time (david.dixon@goodyclancy.com). He stated the Braddock neighborhood represents an immense opportunity with a multitude of choices available. He would not provide suggestions on what the community should do, but rather present the options. The following summarizes his presentation, which is available at:

http://alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning/pdf/braddock_presentation_092407.pdf

How is American changing? From the end of WWII until very recently, many households (70%) included children in the household. Currently, only 25% have children. This creates a demand for different types of housing. Baby boomers and “millennials” will keep growing—we are at the beginning of this housing trend. People do not think that suburbs are the healthiest place anymore—they are looking for walkability. There is a growing awareness that compact communities are healthier. Traffic congestion is affecting housing selection, and people are choosing a shorter commute over larger backyards, more square footage, etc. Suburbs are not necessarily safer because death and serious injury due to traffic accidents is far greater than death and serious injury due to violent crime in urban neighborhoods. Sustainability has become personal—green building and infill development are important in sustainability. Households with access to transit save up to \$700/month on vehicle expenses. Walkable neighborhoods attract people who attract jobs and development. There is increased demand for housing that supports alternatives to the car—71% of the demand for housing in the next 10 years will be for housing near transit. The era of choice is unparalleled. The Braddock neighborhood is a great neighborhood in which to create a great community. How does one create community? Through civic engagement—a collaborative process of knowledge sharing. Investment is present to create mixed income neighborhoods. Cabrini Green in Chicago is an example of a rebuilt public housing project, with the goal of making a better community both for low-income residents and the larger community. A discussion and visualization of density is a part of the process. Parks are more important today, with multiple roles of honoring people in the community and providing safe and inviting connections.

Mr. Dixon reviewed the new planning process, beginning with the Community Building Toolbox Knowledge Exchange, to consist of the following topics:

October 16, 2007:

- Using urban design to create a more livable/walkable community
- Opportunities and challenges with public housing—transforming public housing into mixed income housing
- Shifting the transportation paradigm

October 20, 2007:

- Using retail to translate growth into lively streets— neighborhood/main street retail
- Real estate economics to fund community building
- Preservation, character and culture. What is the story of the neighborhood? Where is change/preservation appropriate? – Walking Tour

A charrette will be held on November 3, followed by working sessions with the community. (See attached schedule for future meeting dates).

Questions and Comments (Q/C):

Q/C: The scope of the plan should be expanded to include a metro station that should have been built between National Airport and Braddock

Ms. Hamer: The Braddock area is a designated planning area, and redrawing the boundaries would require starting the process over again.

Vice Mayor Del Pepper:

All thought that the Potomac Yard Metro Station would be installed. However, it was only a part of the 2030 plan that was never approved. The City is being told that there won't be the ridership necessary to support a station at that location.

Mr. Kramer: The community may decide to pursue the issue, but it is not an issue that will be discussed as part of the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan.

Q/C: The presentation did a good job of selling development, but what does the city believe the breaking point is? When is there too much development for the area?

Mr. Dixon: The presentation was not intended to sell development, but to present opportunities for the community to consider through the planning process. The questions should be: is the community getting back what it wants out of the development? Is it contributing to your neighborhood? Is it possible to manage traffic? Is the development creating walkability and increased ridership? There are many ways and criteria with which to measure development. It won't be a number, such as floor area ratio (FAR) or height, but a criteria and judgment that determines whether development is good for the community.

Ms. Hamer: It is easy to argue philosophically about numbers, but it is better to talk about how blocks look block by block. There is often more room for agreement in the look and feel, rather than floor area ratio (FAR) and dwelling unit per acre numbers.

Q/C: Assume the planning process keeps dragging out—what can the developers do right now by-right?

Ms. Hamer: The first item discussed at the next meeting will be by-right development. There are different levels of discretion. For a rezoning there is a lot of discretion, and City Council can deny projects easily. For site plans under zoning that meets the standards of review, there is very little discretion to deny a project.

Q/C: Is there a list of topics that will be discussed at each work session?

Mr. Kramer: This document will be on the website in 48 to 72 hours.

Q/C: Will the Mayor's Economic Sustainability Task Force be involved in this process? Will part of the approval of the plan involve binding agreements on implementation from other departments?

Mr. Dixon: Part of the plan will be to create implementation measures to count on. There needs to be a compelling connection between the dollars earned and the dollars spent in amenities. Part of the workshops will explore the real tax benefits of various development types. No one has told us that we have to meet a certain agenda – transit oriented development (TOD), office development, or anything else.

Hamer: There is an established relationship with the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP), and an implementation plan will be part of this and all P&Z plans, followed by the political process, and the need for the community to continue to be vigilant.

Q/C: If this land is as valuable as you say, then developers need to pay for it in more than dollars. They need to plan in amenities. It seems like the community always gives and never gets. If we are talking about something other than floor area ratio (FAR), there is a need to figure out in each block the number of cars being generated, (particularly on the street on a Saturday afternoon).

Mr. Dixon: The second workshop will be for everyone to understand the value of land, and how can that value be protected and spent in the neighborhood. It is better to bank development dollars and coordinate spending for larger, community-wide items like a park. (Citizen suggested that the Eisenhower East open space fund may be a good model for this).

Q/C: Will affordable housing be part of the plan?

Ms. Hamer: Affordable housing will definitely be part of the planning process.

Q/C: Is there a good model of plans completed for mixed use and mixed income housing?

Ms. Hamer: Silver Spring is a good example in the region of a place that was blighted and is now a great place to go, although it is not like Braddock.

Mr. Dixon: His firm spent two years working on the west side of Baltimore in Uplands, a very diverse community now with 1100 new housing units. They worked with churches and neighbors in the process, and the product is 50% market-rate, 20% low-income, and 25% median income, with parks and retail.

Q/C: Will any development projects in the pipeline come in for approval before the Plan is adopted in March, and why is there no interaction with this plan and the Braddock East group?

Ms. Hamer: Braddock East is housing specifically related to the Bland project. The Braddock East area includes two blocks that are not in the Braddock Plan area. The focus of that plan is different—a smaller area with reinvestment opportunities. Regarding the development projects, it is possible that they will move forward before plan

adoption, but nothing is set in stone. The Jaguar project needs a rezoning.

Q/C: Who is the self-defined group that will participate in this process?

Ms. Hamer: The group participants will be those willing to come to all eight meetings. No one will be prevented from attending if they miss meetings, but the process will be more effective if participants come to all meetings.

Q/C: What will the work sessions be?

Mr. Dixon: The topics to be discussed during the work sessions will be identified through the charrette process.

Q/C: What will be done differently from what has been done before, like in Chatham Square? Will there be interactions among groups? What happens to grievances? There is a concern about flexibility and a need to have concepts in layman's terms so the public housing residents can understand and participate. There is concern that public housing residents were only just informed, are behind, and have missed opportunities to participate over the past several months.

Mr. Kramer: The past several months have consisted of interviewing community stakeholders – no work on the plan itself. As a result, no one has missed opportunities to participate. Meetings with public housing residents took place as part of the stakeholder interview process over the summer, including six residents at the stakeholder interview, and a follow-up meeting with 40 residents.

Mr. Dixon: Housing can be designed to work for the community's needs. For mixed income developments, everyone needs to manage and participate in the selection of the property manager, including the residents of the public housing. The project needs to be large enough to attract a management firm that specializes in managing mixed income developments. Spaces need to be designed to accommodate the different users – it doesn't work to have kids playing and making noise next to the yuppy units. They learned at Cabrini Green that low-income residents felt many benefits from mixed use, but felt like they were under a microscope. Through this process, we can look at lessons from others of what worked and what hasn't.

Q/C: Will residents be included on the home owners association board?

Mr. Dixon: In the most successful mixed income projects, everyone has a voice, and there is a high-quality management company.

Q/C: How can the plan proceed without transportation and housing? It is uncomfortable to move ahead with timelines without more transparency and clarity on these issues. The plan should be right; it should not just move forward with arbitrary dates.

Ms. Hamer: Transportation and housing will be included in the plan. Regarding the dates, many think the time is too long, and some too short.

Q/C: Is there assurance that community and service amenities will be culturally sensitive?

Mr. Dixon: The process will rely on residents to provide information on what a culturally sensitive amenity is to the community. We need to learn what expresses the way you want to live.

Q/C: Why is Braddock East being planned under a separate umbrella? Chatham Square should not be a model. There are several HUD and Hope VI examples that are better. To some extent, we are already getting it wrong. We are already living in a diverse, mixed-income neighborhood, and need to look at how we can live together.

Mr. Dixon: Agreed.

Q/C: There is a danger of losing the area's K-3 school. Need to include elements in the plan to keep families in the area.

Ms. Hamer: Sign up to come to the next meeting to share/discuss.

Concluding Remarks

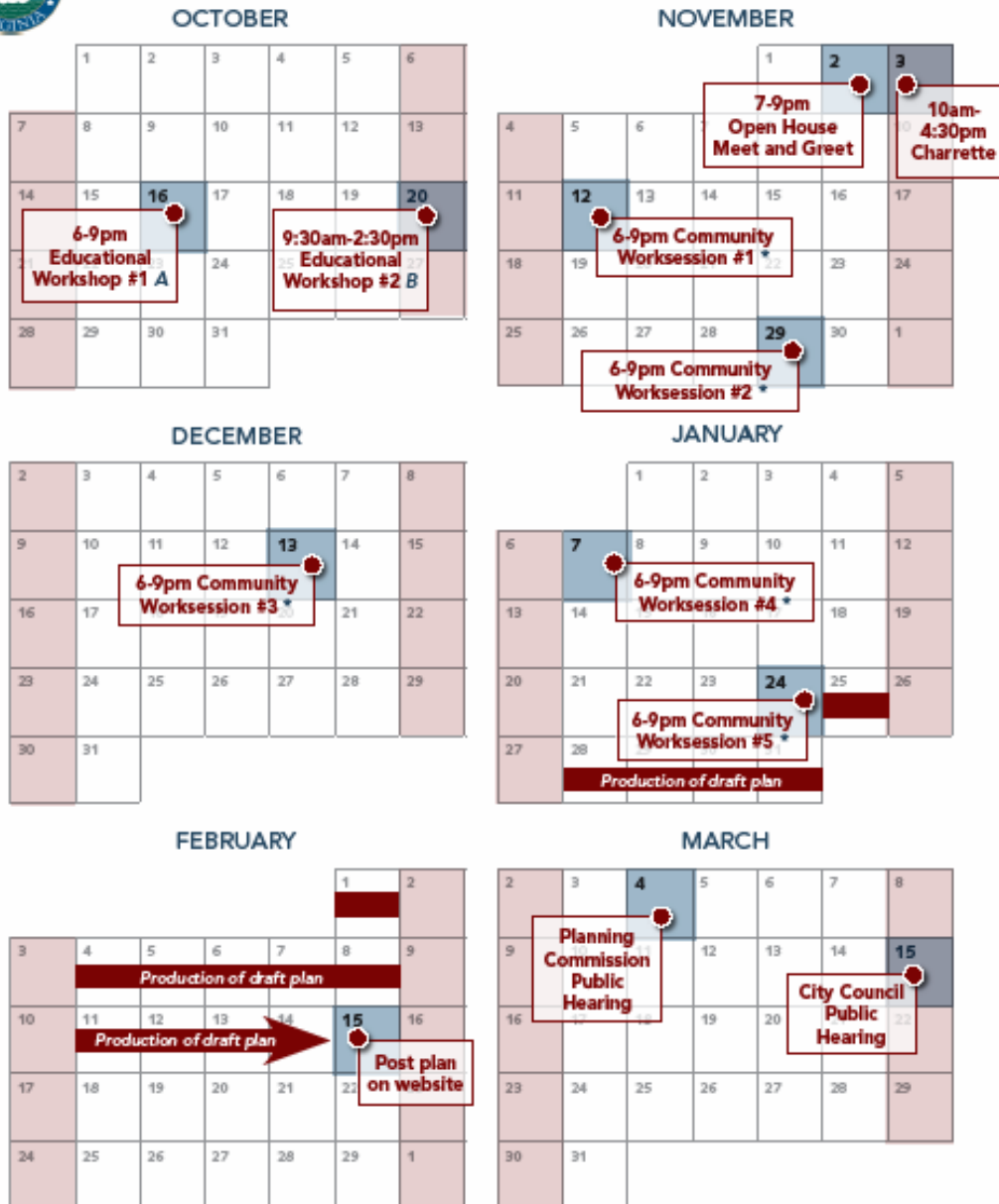
Ms. Hamer asked people to take a disposable camera on the way out to take pictures of things they like and don't like, both in the neighborhood and other locations, and any special interests. Bring the camera back to the meeting on October 16 for P&Z to develop. Digital photos can be taken, but please develop them yourself, or burn a disc, and bring to the meeting on October 16.

Ms. Hamer also asked participants to sign up for the upcoming work sessions, so that

P&Z can get an approximate number of the people attending. The dates for the next three sessions are: October 16, October 20, and November 3. The meeting locations will be posted on the web.



Braddock Metro Neighborhood Planning Process Fall 2007 – Winter 2008
Town Meeting – September 24, 2007



Note A: Sessions covering public housing, transportation, and residential development feasibility.

Note B: Walking tour and sessions covering retail development feasibility, neighborhood history and preservation, walkability and environmental sustainability.

* Worksession date is subject to change.