



**BRADDOCK METRO NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN IMPLEMENTATION
ADVISORY GROUP MEETING #5
City of Alexandria, Department of Planning and Zoning**

**November 7, 2012
7PM**

Alexandria Black History Museum, Alexandria, VA 22314

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting notes are recorded by City Staff to provide a written record of principal items of discussion, key comments, decisions of the Advisory Group, and comments from the public. They are not intended to be a verbatim transcription of the meeting.

Meeting Attendees

Braddock Implementation Advisory Group

Sarah Becker
Bill Campbell
Bill Conkey
Herb Cooper-Levy
Bill Cromley
Heidi Ford
Roy Priest
Wilson Thompson
Heath Wells
Leslie Zupan

Staff

Carrie Beach, PZ
Tom Canfield, PZ
Brandi Collins, PZ
Laura Durham, RPCA
Faroll Hamer, PZ
Steve Kaii-Ziegler, PZ
Pat Mann, PZ
Karl Moritz, PZ

Welcome and Introductions

Steve Kaii-Ziegler, Division Chief for the Department of Planning and Zoning (PZ), welcomed attendees, discussed the meeting's goals, and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. Mr. Kaii-Ziegler invited members of the Braddock Implementation Advisory Group (IAG), members of the public, and City staff to introduce themselves. He also shared that staff is working with Dennis Whitestone, his associates, and USPS Broker, CBRE, to determine a good solution for Mr. Whitestone's parking needs.

Braddock IAG Vacancy Replacement Process

Faroll Hamer, Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning (PZ), discussed the need to create a formal process for filling at-large vacancies on the group. City staff provided to the IAG, in advance of the meeting, a list of six options that are starting points of discussion. Tonight's meeting is an opportunity for the IAG to discuss these options, in addition to any others, and to come to consensus on a process. Staff is impartial to the process that is selected but wants to determine a clear and consistent vacancy replacement process. There are two similar implementation advisory groups within the City - Arlandria and Beauregard – the each have different approaches that have worked for those communities.

Among the options presented are two variables: Who nominates and creates the slate of nominees for the replacement? Who selects the replacement from the slate of nominees? Faroll discussed the six options drafted by staff and facilitated a discussion among the IAG. The discussion included questions about the time efficiencies of a Mayor-selection versus a City Manager-selection, the level of prominence afforded a Mayor or City Council selection, consistency with other City boards and commissions, consistency with the original appointment process, and the benefits or not of the IAG making the selection. It was quickly agreed that due to the administrative aspects involved that staff should compile the slate of nominees and that there should be public process to solicit nominations.

After very good discussion among the IAG, consensus was reached for the following process:

1. City staff will initiate a public process to solicit nominations (via E-News, project webpage, other public outlets).
2. Nominations are to be accompanied with a resume and/or biography of the nominee.
3. City staff will compile a list of nominees from the nomination submissions.
4. City staff will provide the slate of nominees to the IAG, along with their resumes and/or biographies, and request feedback during an IAG meeting.
5. City staff will forward the list of nominees, their resumes and/or biographies, and the IAG's comments to the City Manager.
6. The City Manager will select the replacement from the nominees and appoint the replacement to the at-large vacant slot.

Braddock IAG Role in Future Park Planning

Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator with the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, provided a review of the park planning process and the IAG's charge in the process, as identified in the group's charter. She also reminded meeting attendees that the IAG is asked to ultimately provide guidance on the park's configuration, programming, and design. Ms. Durham suggested that the IAG host the upcoming community park planning meetings. Members of the IAG made no objections to this approach.

Ms. Durham stated that one of tonight's goal is for the IAG to reach consensus on a preferred for park configuration alternative but staff will provide some background information to them prior to a discussion on park configuration options. Among the background information presented will be demographics, needs assessment, and existing and proposed parks in the neighborhood.

Framework for Park Planning

Demographics

Pat Mann, Urban Planner with the Department of Planning and Zoning provided an overview the of neighborhood's demographic profile (PowerPoint Presentation). Mr. Mann used a ¼ mile radius (a kid can walk in 10 minutes) and ½ mile radius (adults can walk in 10 minutes) from the Wythe Post Office block (site of the future community park) to develop the demographic profile. The presentation included population, recent development projects, current and potential development projects, age distribution, single-family detached homes, households with children under 18 years of age, and single-person households.

RPCA Needs Assessment

RPCA conducted a citywide Needs Assessment in June 2011 to determine if the City is meeting the recreational needs of residents. The data includes the recreational amenities residents consider important and desirable. That information is then compared to what actually exists to determine the unmet needs quantitatively. The Needs Assessment is a statistically representative sample of the City's population. RPCA will conduct this analysis every five years. Ms. Durham presented both citywide data and Braddock Neighborhood data (PowerPoint Presentation).

Existing and Proposed Parks

Ms. Durham presented a map that showed existing and planned parks within the Braddock Neighborhood. There are quite a few parks nearby, but few parks that are 1 acre in size or more.

Parks within ¼ mile of Wythe Post Office block: Charles Houston, Pendleton Park, Hunter Miller, and James Bland parks.

Parks within ½ mile of Wythe Post Office block: Powhatan, Buchanan Park, Chetworth, Montgomery Park, Braddock Field, and Metro Linear Parks.

Park Configuration Options

Ms. Durham and Tom Canfield, City Architect with the Department of Planning and Zoning, presented four park configuration options for the Wythe Post Office block. The goal is for the IAG to reach consensus on the preferred park configuration alternative. Before the options are presented, they provided a list of questions to consider when evaluating the four options:

- Is park phasing addressed?
- Does the option create an Interim Park or Phase 1 Park?
- Should the existing building remain (in whole or part) or be demolished?
- What is the impact of solar orientation?
- What is the relationship of the park to existing and proposed buildings?
- Does the option create a well-defined separation between public and private zones?
- What is the park's visibility and access to/from Route 1?
- Does the option buffer the traffic and street noise of Route 1?
- Does the option impact your feelings or perception of public safety?
- Are there any impacts to park programming possibilities?

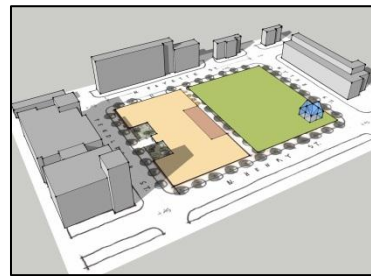
Tom Canfield presented the four options using SketchUp. All options include a 1-acre public park and a private building that can include both residential and retail uses. Also, all schemes assume that the underground parking that is needed is located under the new construction, not under the park. *Concept A* includes a 1-acre park to the west (Fayette Street) and south (Pendleton Street) of the site with a building on the north (Wythe Street) and east (Route 1) sides. *Concept B* includes a 1-acre park entirely on the southern half of the block and a building on the northern half of the block. Also, a 3,000sf building is located within the park. The building can serve as retail or civic and is located on land in excess of the 1-acre park. *Concept C* includes a 1-acre park entirely on the northern half of the block and a building on the southern half of the block. In this concept, a smaller civic building (less than 3,000sf) is located on the parkland but on land in excess of the 1-acre park. *Concept D* includes a public park running the length of the western half of the block (along Fayette Street) and two private buildings running the length of the eastern half of the block (along Route 1).



Concept A



Concept B



Concept C



Concept D

The IAG engaged in an active discussion. The following discussion points were raised:

- Safety
- Buffering from Route 1 noise and traffic
- Park's relationship with surrounding buildings
- Viability of retail in the buildings based on the building's location
- Consistency with the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan
- Phasing
- The ability to have an interim or phase 1 park in the near term
- Retention/preservation of the existing building on 600 N. Henry Street

The IAG reached consensus on the following:

- Do not preserve the building at 600 N. Henry Street but encourage the integration of those architecture elements within the new development.
- Concept D is the preferred alternative of the IAG due to its relationship with existing buildings, ability to buffer noise and traffic from Route 1, retail would be more successful along Route 1 than on the other streets, most consistent with the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan, and has the possibility to allow an interim/phase 1 park in the near-term.

There was discussion on the process of the park planning effort and concerns with duplication in efforts if there are community meetings in addition to Braddock IAG Park Planning meetings. Also, the park is for the immediate neighborhood and was an amenity offered as a tradeoff in exchange for new development during the planning process for the Braddock Metro

Neighborhood Plan. Ms. Durham stated that the next series of meetings (two) would be community meetings *hosted by the IAG*. The last meeting would be a hearing of the City Parks and Recreation Commission.

There was discussion on the existing underground parking and new underground parking. Mr. Canfield and Ms. Durham stated that an underground parking garage under a park would significantly limit the planting and programming options of the park. Also, it would make the park more expensive to build and maintain. The concepts that were presented anticipated all of the underground parking to be located below the new building footprints.

Additionally, there was discussion about a ¼-acre interim or phase 1 park located at 600 N. Henry Street. Concept D permits such an interim or phase 1 park. Such a park would not be a permanent solution and therefore would include basic site furnishings and landscaping.

In response to questions related to the USPS site and their cooperation in facilitating the location of a community park on the block, both Ms. Hamer and Mr. Kaii-Ziegler asserted that USPS is heavily in debt and may be changing its pace in redeveloping its properties. The City is best positioned by having a plan when that happens. Current discussions with the City and the USPS and their broker CBRE occur on a regular basis over the last 6-9 months and have been progressing well. Staff is working with the right USPS/CBRE people to identify potential sites for relocation of the distribution facility. USPS is constantly looking for opportunities to improve their operations and efficiency. Although, exact timing of redevelopment is impossible to predict, staff is very optimistic.

Lastly, there was discussion about the relocation of an existing tenant on 600 N. Henry Street, Dennis Whitestone. Mr. Kaii-Ziegler shared that staff is in discussions with CBRE to expand Mr. Whitestone's lease at the Edsyl Company site across the street (601 N. Henry Street). There should be resolution within the next 30-60 days. If that does not work, Mr. Whitestone can formally approach the IAG for a solution. Currently there is not timeframe for demolition of the building at 600 N. Henry Street.

Next Steps

Mr. Kaii-Ziegler stated that there was IAG consensus on the IAG Vacancy Replacement Process and on the preferred park configuration alternative. The next meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2012. It will be an IAG-hosted community meeting for parking planning.

Ms. Hamer reminded meeting attendees about the November 15, 2012 Civic Engagement meeting. *What's Next Alexandria* initiative is a democratic dialogue on improving and expanding the community's role in City planning efforts and decision making processes.