



Steering Committee Meeting 2 - Minutes
Tuesday, October 18, 2018
John Hope Settlement House, 8:30-10:30AM

Attendance

- Adam Rosa (Camiros)
- Benjamin Corpuz (Camiros)
- Stacey Wasserman (RIHousing)
- Margaret DeVos (Southside Community Land Trust)
- Emily Freedman (City of Providence, Director of Community Development)
- Kristina Brown (HousingWorks RI)
- Carla DeStefano (Stop Wasting Abandoned Property)
- Teresa Guaba (Neighbors for Revitalization)
- Sabrina Rivera (House of Hope)
- Jazandra Barros (Southside Community Land Trust)
- State Representative Anastasia Williams (9th District of Rhode Island)

Meeting Comments

Community Meeting 2 Recap/Reflection

- The RFP needs to reflect the community needs and characteristics
 - The standards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) do not meet the neighborhood context
 - Incomes in Upper South Providence are way below the regional Providence average
 - RFP needs to include 'Extremely low-income housing' designation of \$21,700 or less for a three-person household
- Increasing the Number of Units was unanimously the number one priority from each of the six tables at Community Meeting 2
 - Increasing the overall number of units makes it more feasible for the redevelopment to include a mix of incomes

- Project still needs to be economically viable for the developer and need to meet all applicable funding requirements
- The second highest priority was improving streets and sidewalks
 - A Community Benefits Agreement tied to the RFP can ensure the developer include improving sidewalks as part of the scope of work
- Open spaces came in third
 - Groups prefer open spaces are geared toward residents
 - No tables included a large public park
 - Use the community garden owned by Southside Community Land Trust as a focal point
- Preservation and rehabilitation of buildings came in fourth
 - More focused on the southern cluster of properties
- Half of groups said we already have enough social services
 - Social services could include laundry, daycare services for residents
 - Some retail elements like a food market or a laundromat were suggested
- The average number of units proposed by all six groups was 103
- Homeless housing was not addressed in the presentation by Camiros or the public
 - This redevelopment project was not designed to address homeless issue.
 - Federal grants may not be available
 - Nearby Amos House is providing sober-living programming; purchasing property, rehabbing/constructing one building at a time
- Priority is still to give the first right of refusal to those who had to move from the BJ-II properties

The following reflect general comments/remarks from steering committee members

- Clarification from RI Housing:
 - None of the 74 units (including the 34 that will have project based vouchers) are required to be replaced with the same unit sizes. Part of this process is to determine the appropriate mix of unit sizes
 - If a former resident that was given a tenant-based voucher returns to BJII, they will NOT lose that tenant based voucher. Ideally they would live in a non-project based unit, and use the tenant based voucher to subsidize their rent
- “The Need does not meet the Demand”
 - The need for extremely-low income housing in Upper South Providence is being pushed aside from the demand from higher earning residents
 - Housing crisis is happening not just for homeless, but for struggling families
 - Should the southern cluster of housing be set aside for homeless/extremely low-income residents?
- Need to think about what resources are available to help make the project economically feasible to include extremely low- and very low-income housing
- Formerly incarcerated people have a much more difficult time in gaining access to quality, affordable housing
- Housing vouchers are managed by Providence Housing Authority
- All 74 units are eligible for 80% or less AMI affordable housing units

- Official nomenclature makes messaging for affordable housing difficult for the general public to fully grasp and support it
 - Some organizations prefer to call affordable housing, workforce housing, to reduce stigma
- Need to be extremely careful with income brackets and how people are slotted. \$50,000 household incomes would be considered gentrification for many existing families in Upper South Providence
- The actual incomes of the community need to be more actively considered. The process is glossing over what the neighborhood incomes actually are
- Messaging could better explain that both federal and state definitions do not necessarily dictate the direction of the redevelopment project
 - Explain these are the income brackets that will be decided upon under HUD guidelines, and we need to work towards making sure that as many extremely low-income and very-low income units are integrated into the project
- Need a commitment from multiple organizations (RIHousing, Providence Housing Authority, HUD, the developer, etc) for additional resources to make the project more economically feasible to give local residents an opportunity to have access to the Barbara Jordan-II units
- Workforce housing designation stated in the community meeting handout is defined as subsidized housing available to households earning between 80%-120% AMI. This income bracket is essentially market rate housing, or at least non-compatible with immediate neighborhood of Upper South Providence
- Clarify definition of market rate housing as non-subsidized housing: What people can afford and are willing to pay. Which in turn pushes people out who cannot pay
- Too much focus on using government-speak/messaging needs to be more straightforward.
 - Needs to explicitly say what people are going to have to pay and earn in order to live there
 - RIHousing clarifies the rates for the redeveloped Barbara Jordan-II units will not be established until a proposal(s) from the developer is submitted to RIHousing for funding
- Market rate integration provides a mix of incomes in one property. Purpose of project is not to gentrify the neighborhood
 - Local forces are allowing gentrification to happen
 - Rents are increasing to the point of displacing community's most vulnerable residents, including those who live at SWAP properties
 - Market rate housing puts an additional strain on displacing households
- Need to consider if we want the development to have price restrictions in perpetuity
 - Language in the RFP would need to be air-tight and allow little room for reinterpretation from its original intent to provide accessible low-income housing even if the community changes over time
- 60 King Street development includes some units in the lowest category of AMI
 - Rent for family with three children was recently reported at around \$1190
- If we do not include market-rate units then the project would be concentrating poverty in one location for the long-term, is that healthy for a community? Is that in violation in right to fair housing? Projects needs flexibility to accommodate mix of incomes

- However, there is already a mix of incomes on the Southside. There are individuals/households who make between 0%-120% of the regional AMI in Upper South Providence which may be the widest range of incomes for any community in the state; Income mixing is already here
- Rental units inherently incentivizes a transient population

Homelessness and homeownership

- Homeless issue is not being addressed
 - Homeless population includes those who have been displaced from rent increases, to others who are not skillfully or mentally able to enter the job market
 - Barbara Jordan-II in of itself is not going to be able to solve the problem, but the project presents an opportunity to address it if there is sufficient sources of funding
 - A lot of families are also not considered homeless because they live with relatives or friends. Houses are doubling up. Sometimes families do not eat or skip meals because they cannot afford to do so
 - Market rate is displacing people throughout the neighborhood
 - Gentrification is a real issue in this community
- Homeownership was not brought up in the meeting. People left that meeting without seriously considering it
 - People in the neighborhood don't even know home ownership is even obtainable
 - Other homeownership models need to be seriously considered (i.e. housing land trusts, cooperatives)
- RI Housing wants to reiterate that the project will be both economically viable and reflect what the community wants

The community engagement process

- RI Housing states there is no plan already in place
 - No design considerations have been seriously explored
 - The number of units has not been decided upon nor the type of units
 - This is a bottom-up process. RFP Process will be strongly informed by community feedback. As of now, community feedback has dictated that the redevelopment should have more units on site than there were previously and should accommodate tenants in the lower end of the income bracket to reflect the characteristics of the immediate neighborhood
- Still concern that the voices of those who need to benefit most from BJ-II are not being heard
 - Too many representatives from the community in at both Community Meeting 2 and the Steering Committee and not enough local residents
 - Feeling that the "train has already left the station." Those who were 'left behind' should have had more of a voice and more involvement
 - Need to personally invite people to the table. Sometimes community meetings are not feasible for parents and such to attend. Camiros needs to go out and speak directly to residents where they are at (i.e. community events) and base their involvement on the community's schedule not our own
 - Davey Lopes is hosting a community meal during Thanksgiving

- Depending on our budget, a cost-efficient way to reach a lot of people in a short-time is through a mobile tour. Example: N4R had a medical screening bus, invited people inside which included data, information, handouts, and giveaways. Able to reach almost 1,000 people
- Entering this process, residents are already discouraged about being left behind so when they are given the opportunity to meet and speak their mind they can hardly believe it. Community engagement / RFP process should continue to build off on that
- Raymond Neirinckx (RI Office of Housing and Community Development) follow-up email reflecting on CM2
 - The distinction between listening and voice. BJ-II appears to be a listening model. There is no assurance that once a developer is selected by RIHousing they will translate the findings from the community engagement process into a plan of action for BJ-II.
 - People at his table were appreciative that someone/anyone was willing to hear them out, express their frustration that it took over a decade for HUD to directly intervene, how a family development could not include sidewalks, and wanting a neighborhood to thrive and provide social and economic opportunities from newborns to elders. There was a feeling of passion, drive, and empowerment
 - Concern that we confuse transformative methods into transactional practice. The community will not be selecting the developer so that transaction involves other parties that may not have been in attendance at CM2. Hopes to be proven wrong and that the listening work underway becomes a platform for the community's voice to not only be heard but respected and acted upon
- Grace Cemetery was brought up during the presentation as a potential early action project identified at Community Meeting 1. In a separate email from Raymond, Camiros has not recognized previous funding initiatives tied up in Grace Cemetery:
 - Illuminating Trinity project from 2015: City of Providence Department of Art, Culture + Tourism awarded a \$300,000 grant to Rhode Island LISC in collaboration with RISD and SWAP to conduct community engagement and implement physical and programmatic strategies to improve safety and cultural life of Trinity Square, a neighborhood gateway with Grace Cemetery at its center that connects downtown Providence to Upper South Providence
 - Reinforces Camiros' lack of understanding of local conditions and the need to draw off local work before embarking on something new
 - <https://www.artplaceamerica.org/funded-projects/illuminating-trinity>
 - <http://www.providenceri.gov/providence-rhode-island-lisc-receive-2015-artplace-america-grant/>

Next step items

- Community Meeting 3 will occur on Monday, January 14 at the Southside Cultural Center from 6-8PM
- Camiros is developing three different design concepts based on the results from CM2 which will be presented at CM3

- Camiros is working with the Leaders in Training (Innocence Gumbs and George Lindsey Jr) on a Youth Summit Event scheduled for Tuesday, January 15
- Collectively, Steering Committee and RI Housing need to explore funding solutions to ensure BJ-II is able to accommodate lower-income tenants