

Notes from Housing Group Meeting
(ANC 3/4 Task Force on Racism)
August 25, 2020, 4PM

5 group members attended (Randy Speck, Ron Eichner, Connie Chang, Cal Simons, Libby Martin)

Cal described a training he is participating in to learn about the Racial Root Kit.

Randy thanked Connie for her work on the new Housing Outline.

Libby suggested adding “social interaction” in the wording.

The group discussed the notion of face-to-face interaction vs. digital.

There are some disadvantages (moderators, tone, etc.) to the listserv.

We want to encourage community engagement. A public space is important.

Libby shared part of her write-up (for the Community Group) on the future Community Center. With the right planning, it can expand the ways it serves people, and the groups it serves. We want people to want to go there, interact, and feel engaged in the success of the neighborhood. A welcoming design will be crucial to the center’s success.

Connie recommends our community give Welcome Kits to people who move into the neighborhood. Nice way to help people get their bearings and establish contact.

Cal knows a bi-racial family who arrived and held a big, friendly housewarming party.

The group discusses features and the design of the public space we will have. Fostering informal urban interaction, sidewalk cafés, and greater attention to pedestrians vs. vehicles. No more banks! Public spaces can also have great symbolic value, as seen with BLM Plaza.

Randy notes that the area between the community center and library will be a “town center” and is addressed in the Small Area Plan. Our task is to explain our priorities to the ANC for how this should be done.

Cal says there is a big overlap between the Community Awareness and Housing Groups at the moment.

Connie asks about the Arlington Missing Middle Study. Libby will forward info to the Group. The study will begin this fall.

The group discusses areas of town being developed. Libby refers to the Project Pipeline on Mayor’s website which lists affordable housing and market rate developments by

ward in DC. Ron says there are many hold-ups in these projects. It took 12 years to do Cathedral Commons. Many loopholes in proposals allowed people to stop developments.

The Comprehensive Plan will allow for a greater number of groups to build - and more densely. Ron says we should distinguish between the new projects coming out of this work and those which are going to happen anyway. Connie suggests we describe "Where we stand today" as background in our report and where we plan to go.

Cal, who worked on a Task Force for San Francisco, will share that report with us so we can see how it was organized.

We discuss how the rent for ADUs compare to rent for affordable housing. Randy notes that ADUs cost more, but do add variety and more availability, which can help lower the cost. DC does not give incentives for having ADUs but it does allow for ADUs. We discuss negative perceptions of ADUs. Connie points out a potential criticism: a bit like Air BnB, renters could be seen as "coming and going".

Libby asks how can we ensure that black and brown people actually get a fair shot (or priority) when a unit becomes available? Randy says we can't assume "If we build it they will come". But realtors do actively recruit people.

Cal floats the question of whether people from other socio-economic and racial backgrounds who are closely tied to their communities would actually feel comfortable here. We agree people do want to come here for the schools.

We discuss the complexity of Safeway with its three owners. Proposals will come in from many developers and we'll look for the aspects we want, including a combination of affordable and market rate housing. For upzoning, 20% of housing will be required.

We discuss other spaces near transit such as above Friendship Heights metro, the WUMATA bus turnaround area, and Mazza Gallery. Ron says those are not possible, and people don't like to shop that way anymore. Also, for the Lord & Taylor, there is already a plan.

Libby asks if Chevy Chase could create a Community Development Corporation (CDCs) like some other neighborhoods in DC. Randy says the Main Street org will plan to serve in a similar way by making small grants.

Connie asks how the ANC can be more proactive in showing potential visuals of the areas to encourage developers. Randy says this is the role of the Small Area Plan and will show drawings, ideas, and what the community will support. It will take a long time from A to Z, but we'll have a key say. Ron says the consultants chosen must be able to communicate the vision well.

There will be \$200,000 to get the Main Street org started in its role of funding, etc.

Ron suggests we take action items for homework such as the Missing Middle.
We need a coherent statement and must be ready to face opposition.

Meeting adjourned around 5:25 PM.