

Notes Housing Group Meeting
(ANC 3/4 Dismantling Racism Task Force)
August 4, 2020

Eight group members attended (Libby Martin, Sarah Remes, Ron Eichner, Cal Simons, Judith Mays, Randy Speck, Connie Chang, and Chris Fromboluti)

Randy suggested four questions:

- 1) What are the housing problems we need to address?
- 2) What do we need to know in order to address these problems?
- 3) How are housing issues currently being addressed in the District and our neighborhood?
- 4) What additional actions should be taken to address housing issues?

Randy described the Office of Planning's Comprehensive Plan (CP), which he emailed to group members. Not yet approved, the CP is before the Council now but could be bumped into next year. The CP is the plan for the District's development over the next 20 years. So ANC 3/4G can provide more input, it proposed preparation of a Small Area Plan (SAP) for the area along Connecticut Avenue between Chevy Chase Circle and Livingston Street. The Office of Planning is amenable to development of this plan, and, with Councilmember Cheh's support, the Council has budgeted \$150,000 for this work in FY 2021. As the ANC has agreed in its comments on the CP, this area would permit development of low density retail and moderate density residential units.

Ron provided additional background: The Housing Equity Study done by Mayor Bowser showed there are fewer than 400 affordable units in Ward 3/Rock Creek West. From this small number, the Mayor set a target of 2,000 units by 2025. This increase was a controversial part of the Comp Plan Amendments.

Items that may be considered in the SAP include a possible "unified campus" combining the Community Center and the library (with \$20 million allocated for the library and a similar amount for the Community Center, with both projects deferred for the time being until FY 2024). The ANC has suggested the possibility of affordable/workforce housing on this publicly-owned site. Additional housing could be developed at the Safeway parking lot site, Wells Fargo bank, and the WMATA bus depot.

Another possible source of affordable housing is Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), attached to or on the same lot as current single-family homes, that could be rented out.

Rent Control: Randy says the rental apartments south of Livingston are not formally designated as affordable housing. But they are low rent and could be considered affordable housing. The deciding factor for one's eligibility is his/her income level vs. the

median area income. Ron says rent control does not necessarily conform to the Mayor's definition of affordable housing.

Randy notes that many of these units in our ANC are not currently rent controlled but are low rent. We don't want to lose them to gentrification.

Judith asks about seniors and the proposed seniors development at the site of the church at Tenley Circle. Chris remarked that those units are expensive, not affordable. Ron says a lot of senior housing is financed through tax credits; the neighborhood vehemently opposed the Tenley Circle development as "not in character with the neighborhood, which he said was a "dog whistle."

Ron says the less we build in our neighborhood, the more pressure there will be for rents to increase.

Randy says some of the housing above the library could be perfect for seniors and workforce housing (people such as police, librarians, etc. who work in our neighborhood but cannot afford to live here.) Judith asked if it is possible to target workforce housing candidates. Randy says yes; some units will be for families.

Some units have been designated "affordable" but they are too small to be rented easily and have led to vacancies. It is necessary to make sure the units will be used by the people who need them the most.

Randy said that the District's Housing Production Trust Fund has been funded at an annual rate of \$100 million, and it might be available for affordable housing projects in our neighborhood.

Sarah points out that it is important for people to feel welcome when they move into these units.

Randy said that the problem with renting is that it does not build equity. He mentioned Habitat for Humanity as a good model that helps people to not feel isolated. Suzanne Slater, HFH's President and Chair of the Housing Protection Fund Board, assures Randy our neighborhood would likely be a high priority.

Cal pointed out that the City can't have it both ways. Developers want to make money and will not produce affordable housing unless required to. Ron described the "inclusionary zoning" program, first used in Montgomery County. Any new development must include a certain percentage of affordable units. In exchange, the developers receive a relaxation of certain regulations (e.g., on density). One rule is that affordable units must be of comparable size as the other units in the building.

Ron said that getting tenants into some of the affordable units here has not been handled well by the city. The developers are providing them but they are not being filled due to bureaucratic mismanagement. Libby asks if we should learn more about this problem in order to address things going forward.

Connie asked what is City's position on purchasing private property such as the Wells Fargo bank? Randy says City doesn't have the money. Wells Fargo is owned by Jamal.

Libby said that we want to maintain character and help small businesses. Randy says the advantage of the SAP is that it can define what future development will look like, though it will not dictate what kind of businesses might be built.

Ron raised the issue of Single Family Zoning. There is a movement to allow duplexes, etc. in areas where there have been single-family homes. Studies show permitting development of multiple homes on traditional single-family lots can increase opportunities for the neighborhood without major change to the neighborhood. Ron will supply info to our group.

Judith asked whether we going to address the issue of larger units for families. Chris agrees as most new places being built now are just one bedroom. Ron agrees that if we are not providing housing for families, then we are not meeting goals of improving educational benefits for kids.

Connie asks about housing vouchers and says people don't often take advantage. Randy said that the use of Section 8 vouchers has been very complicated because voucher recipients typically require a lot of social service support, which the City has not provided. Randy mentioned maybe that we could probably get someone from Anita Bonds 'staff to speak to our group. But we might want to focus on other potential ways to create affordable housing.

Randy tables meeting after one hour. We agree to have additional weekly meetings to nail down our topics and action items to present in October. Tuesday at 4PM will be the standing meeting time.