

2c
2-20-10

1505 Powhatan Street

Wade Farris

910 Slater's Lane

The purpose of this presentation is for the residents of the neighborhood in the vicinity of 1505 Powhatan street to inform the members of the Alexandria City Council of their concerns about the proposed use of this city owned property.

I represent a group of neighbors that, after learning of the plans the city has for the property at 1505 Powhatan St, formerly the "Sign Shop", became concerned and decided to get involved. It is our understanding that the plan is to construct a group of around 20 "affordable housing" units on the site. We, the tax paying citizens, have several concerns with this plan.

First, after reading the City's 2004-2015 Strategic Plan, we find that the plan does not meet the mission of Alexandria City Government to be "Financially sustainable providers of excellent services that are valued by its customers and engages the entire community as it plans for the future." Nor does it meet the principles of being, "...friendly to small business, establishing beautiful gateways or urban villages."

Why do we feel this is so?

Because, despite the above statement, the City Council instructed Planning and Zoning to consider the unsolicited proposal from Alexandria Housing Development Corporation (AHDC) to build an affordable housing complex on the 1505 Powhatan St lot.

Our first question for the Council then is why not advertise for a request for proposal to let developers know this lot is available? We have done some research and found that several developers may be interested, including a restaurant group; the developer who built my townhouse; and a businessman who totally re-worked and remodeled a warehouse into an attractive office building on the next block. Next, although we don't have exact numbers, we do know that it will cost the City money to use this lot for

affordable housing. We will potentially lose money by selling the property to AHDC at less than fair market value. We will then lose more money by building units that will appraise for less money and thus bring in less property tax revenue. In fact, the Jones Lang LaSalle Real Property Inventory Study that the City commissioned a year ago recommends that the city should determine what is the highest and best use of properties that are not needed for a public purpose. This proposed use ignores that recommendation and we, as taxpayers don't feel this is the best use of this property. We also feel that the process the city is using to develop the property is flawed and you need to follow normal business practices to get the most out of the property.

Our next point is the statement in the City's Strategic Plan that calls for the City to have attractive gateways and urban villages. The city has worked hard to convert our area from an unattractive, warehouse area to an urban village composed of upscale condos/townhouses, shops and restaurants. We don't think the entrance, or gateway, to this nice area should be a multi-family housing complex. Rather, it should be more upscale shops or a small number of high-end townhouses.

Another objection we have, and perhaps the most important one, is safety. The design of the neighborhood is small streets which are nice for a small neighborhood feel but present obstacles for fire and safety vehicles. 20 more units on the corner at 1505 Powhatan would further exacerbate the situation. In addition, affordable housing is designed for young families, who many times have small children. The Slater's lane environment is not a safe place for young children. Slaters is a very busy street and vehicles are usually going very fast, pretty dangerous for playing children.

Our final point is the location of affordable housing in the City of Alexandria. While we fully support having a supply of affordable housing in the city, we also believe it should be scattered throughout Alexandria and not just in one location. A quick look at our area will show that we have more than our share. In fact a short walk within a quarter mile will find Arbello on Bashford St. as well as the multiple units along Patrick and Henry, all Section VIII, affordable, and public housing.

In summary, we, the taxpaying citizens of the City of Alexandria, more specifically the north end, object to the process the city is using to develop the property at 1505 Powhatan and the location of affordable housing at this location for the following reasons:

- It will potentially cost the city money in lost sales and tax revenue.
- The proposal does not fit with the published strategic goals for the area.
- There are safety concerns with locating affordable, family housing on the site.
- The plan adds more low cost/affordable housing to an area that already hosts more than its share.

Thanks for letting us take the time to present our concerns at this meeting and we look forward to working with you to make the best use of this valuable piece of real estate.

Wade and Kim Farris, 910 Slater's Lane

Dwight Theall and Bob Willis, 915 Bernard Street

Chance and Debra Jones, 900 Bernard Street

John Skinner, 909 Bernard Street

Diane Dubousky, 901 Portner Place

The Concerned Citizens of North Alexandria Group