

BAR CASE # 2015-0088

City Council
September 12, 2015

ISSUE: Appeal of a decision of the Board of Architectural Review, Parker-Gray District, denying a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate

APPLICANT: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

APPELLANT: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

LOCATION: 699 North Patrick Street

ZONE: RB / Residential



BAR2015-00088



I. ISSUE

The applicant has appealed a decision of the Parker-Gray District Board of Architectural Review (BAR) to deny a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate for four buildings at the site located at 699 North Patrick Street known as the Ramsey Homes. The applicant in this case is the Alexandria Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The applicant based the appeal on the belief that none of the criteria to consider for a Permit to Demolish listed in Zoning Ordinance Section 10-205(B) are met.

The Parker-Gray BAR first reviewed the request for demolition informally as part of a concept review work session that also included the proposal for new construction on February 25, 2015. At the first concept review, the BAR expressed concern about the demolition and recommended that the applicant consider rehabilitation of some or all of the buildings. The BAR then formally reviewed and denied the request for a Permit to Demolish on April 22, 2015, finding that four out of the six criteria in the ordinance were sufficiently met.

The applicant has also done significant community outreach to discuss both the demolition of the existing Ramsey Homes and the proposal for new construction. The outreach meetings have included the following: open community meetings with Q&A, affected area resident meetings, faith-based organizations meetings, presentations to the West Old Town Civic Association and a meeting with local neighborhood businesses.

II. DISCUSSION

Historical Overview

The Parker-Gray District was created in 1984 as its own local district, separate from the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Its original purpose was both as a local historic district as well as a neighborhood conservation district. Many residents at the time advocated for local designation to preserve the residential scale and character of the neighborhood due to increased development pressure associated with the opening of the King Street and Braddock Road Metro stations. The Parker-Gray District has an eclectic architectural character ranging from late 19th-century rowhouses in the core of the district to single-family detached houses in a range of 20th-century styles in the western part of the district. In addition, the neighborhood includes a substantial number of mid-20th-century buildings, including vernacular red brick rowhouses and garden apartments constructed during and after World War II. These varying architectural styles and mix of scales contribute to the diverse character of the neighborhood.

The subject property, **699 North Patrick Street**, currently has four two-story masonry residential buildings constructed **1941-42**. The project includes three quadplexes and one triplex, for a total of fifteen dwelling units. The buildings have a poured concrete foundation and Fabcrete precast concrete panel system for construction of the floors and walls. The exterior walls are stuccoed. While the original design featured a flat roof, typical of the Modern style, a low hipped roof was added in the 1960s. The original building design was in a minimal Modern style, a stark contrast to the Colonial Revival

architecture used for other wartime housing projects. Typical of 1930s and 1940s public housing throughout the United States, and inspired by European housing initiatives that began in the 1920s, the site layout included courtyards, significant open space and landscaping as well as building design that favored access to natural light and cross-ventilation.

The original blueprints show two schemes, one that included a multi-family building in place of the two existing middle buildings, and a revised scheme of the four separate quadruplex buildings that was drawn a few months later and which was ultimately constructed. The second set shows a shift in material from traditional ship-lap siding to the use of Fabcrete panels. These changes reflected the changing needs and a direction to use the latest material technology for low-cost, mass-produced construction. The minimal Modern style, incorporating elements of the International Style, represented a significant departure in architectural character and form from the existing neighborhood and reflected the wartime and post-war architectural vein that explored a more Modern and “Experimental” approach, similar to what occurred across the country. Staff does find that the original design, featuring quadruplexes in a Modern design motif to be interesting, particularly in that they were designed by a local architect who specialized in the Colonial Revival and Federal Revival styles.

The buildings were designed by prominent local architect Delos H. Smith, FAIA, (1884-1963) an inaugural member of the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review, who had formerly worked for the United States Housing Authority and then for the Alexandria Housing Board.¹ In addition to his work designing public housing, Smith was a noted ecclesiastical architect whose work included two annex buildings at St. Paul’s Church on South Pitt Street as well as the U.S. Capitol Building Prayer Room.²

The applicant has prepared a report on the Historic Context and Significance Statement of the Ramsey Homes (Attachment B). The report provides the history of the Ramsey Homes and the site as well as a context for understanding national public housing trends from this time period. It should be noted that the Historic Context Report and Significance Statement that is attached was only recently finalized in preparation for the City Council appeal and was not a part of the applicant’s submission to the BAR. The BAR had only seen a very minimal history report that lacked a broader context or analysis.

Permit to Demolish

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board, and City Council on appeal, shall consider any or all the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-205(B) and noted in **bold** below. Therefore, questions regarding the current condition and maintenance of the

¹ “Architect Delos Smith,” *Alexandria Gazette*, Nov. 9, 1946: p. 9. and “Historic Alexandria Foundation” files at Alexandria Library Special Collections. The Delos H. Smith Collection is located at the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Library at Colonial Williamsburg.

² St. Paul’s Church to Break Ground for New Buildings,” *Alexandria Gazette*, October 27, 1955: p. 1. and <http://research.history.org/library/materials/manuscripts/view/index.cfm?id=SmithDelos>

buildings or the economics of redevelopment of the site may not be considered. A Permit to Demolish must be issued on its own merits and is a separate process from the review of what may be constructed on this site in the future. It should be noted that the City Council's consideration of the zoning criteria is independent of the BAR's decision. While City Council may review and consider the BAR's previous actions, City Council will separately make its own decision based on an evaluation of the previous material and any new material presented at the hearing.

The six criteria to consider when evaluating a Permit to Demolish are not strict requirements but rather they are *considerations* that involve a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of staff, the BAR, and City Council. While a building may meet one or more criteria, that alone does not preclude the BAR's or City Council's ability to approve demolition, though it might inform conditions of approval or foster dialogue about what the BAR and the community value. For example, if the BAR or City Council found that the buildings proposed for demolition were able to provide insights into the study and interest in American history and culture, an expanded historical study may be required as mitigation to place the project within a broader context of public housing throughout the city. Anticipating that there are some circumstances where the BAR may approve demolition of a historic building, the BAR's adopted *Design Guidelines* also outline minimum requirements for documentation (See Attachment E). What follows is staff's analysis of each of the criteria, expanded from the BAR staff report to account for the recent additional information.

(1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?

There are very few buildings whose removal would be to the detriment of the public interest. Ramsey Homes are not buildings whose demolition would be a significant detriment to the public interest within the context of the overall city.

(2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?

Very few buildings can be made into historic shrines. Iconic buildings such as the George Washington Masonic Memorial and Gadsby's Tavern are typically associated with historic shrines, museums and visitor destinations. Ramsey Homes would be an unlikely candidate as a historic shrine. The nearby Alexandria Black History Museum is an example of how a 20th-century building with cultural significance, the former Robert Robinson Library constructed during segregation, was repurposed for memorial and educational purposes as a landmark or shrine.

(3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?

Neither the buildings themselves nor the site design of Ramsey Homes is of such old, unusual or uncommon design, texture or material that they could not be reproduced.

Ramsey Homes features mass-produced materials and modern building technology that were considered “experimental” at the time, many of these building techniques became common in the twentieth-century and could be reproduced relatively easily today. While the use of the “Fabcrete” precast concrete panel system is interesting and possibly unique during that period, it is one of many new materials which were introduced in the middle of the 20th century with the explosive expansion of mass production and innovation in technology. The buildings’ design was intentionally meant to be easily and quickly constructed in order to support the war effort.

The design intention of low-scale buildings within large open spaces, almost park-like settings, was a common design approach during the period before and during World War II. Local notable examples of the garden-style movement include Gunston Hall, Harbor Terrace and Potowmack Crossing, all on Washington Street, as well as Parkfairfax and Fairlington in the middle northern part of the City.

(4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

While these four buildings are by no means architectural masterpieces that warrant a meticulous restoration of form, craftsmanship and material, and were clearly modified over the years, they do play a role in our understanding of the Parker-Gray neighborhood and Alexandria’s involvement with the war effort. While staff does not find that the buildings could be made into an historic shrine, nor that the buildings have an unusual and irreproducible design, these buildings, were constructed specifically for African Americans as part of a nationwide defense housing campaign and feature the less common design approach of using a Modern design vocabulary rather than a Colonial Revival vocabulary. The project was located in an institutional center for African Americans across from the Parker-Gray School (later Charles Houston Elementary School), on the same block as the Robert Robinson Library and near several African American churches (Figure 6). This African American center of life reflects the segregation patterns that existed in Alexandria in the middle of the 20th century.

This small housing project has a distinctly different architectural character than the majority of housing projects in the Washington, D.C. area, which generally employed a minimalist Colonial Revival style and featured concrete construction clad in red brick with gabled roofs. The Ramsey Homes, in contrast, represented modern new housing for African Americans within an established neighborhood. While these may be considered “average” buildings to the common eye today, they are some of the earliest public housing buildings constructed in the City and

when new were starkly different from the simple, wood frame vernacular housing that had characterized the area.

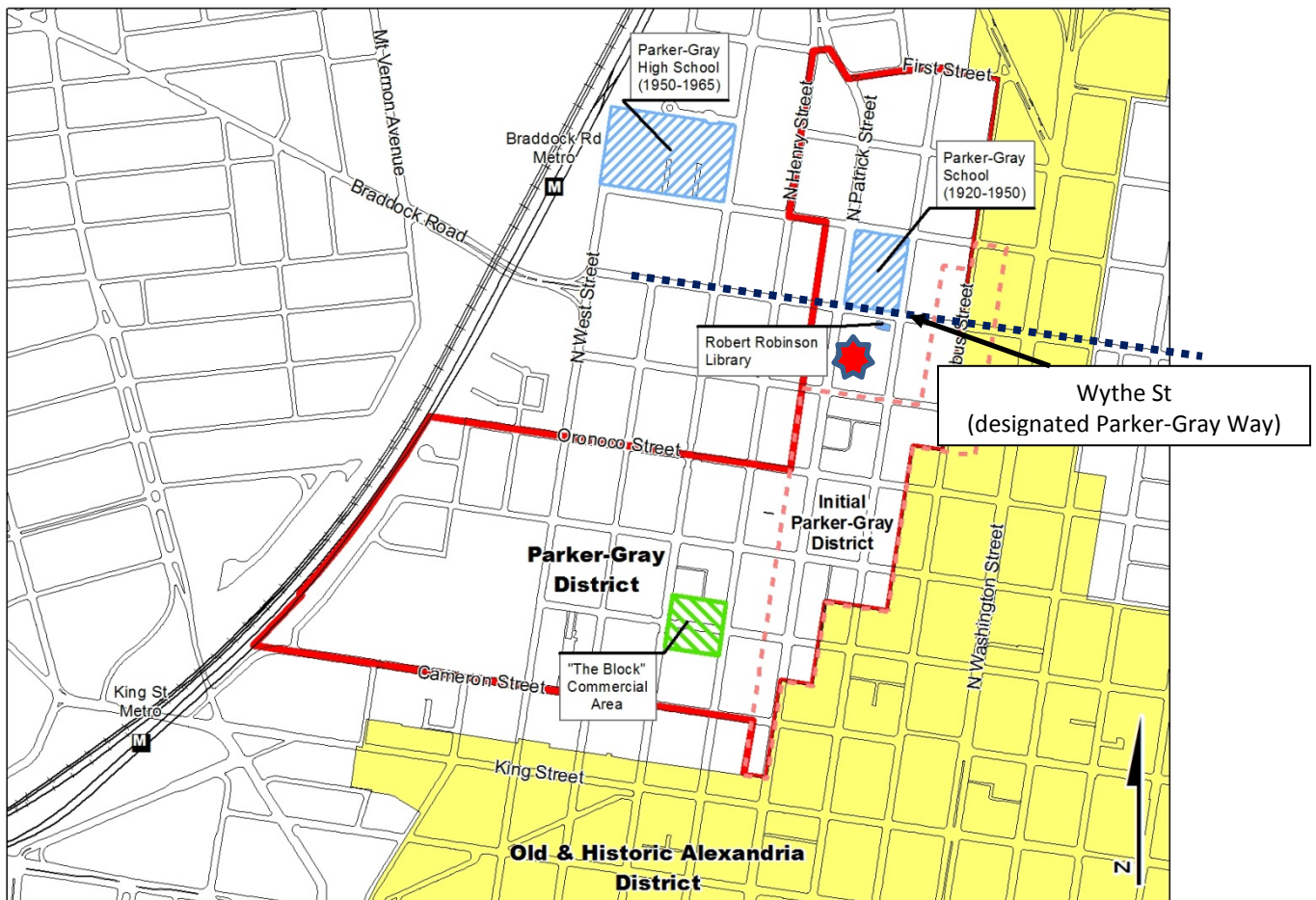


Figure 6. Map showing significant African American sites in Parker-Gray with RED STAR indicating Ramsey Homes site.

When considering this particular criterion, it should be noted that one of the weaknesses of historic preservation around the world is that many of the approaches both at the local and national level – including surveys, resources, ordinances and incentives – favor the constructed or built environment over other forms of historic interpretation. Therefore, we have a number of ways to protect and preserve the physical environment but less concrete ways to preserve and commemorate other equally significant aspects of cultural history. Museums, photographs, oral histories, music, and folklore are all ways that intangible aspects of cultural heritage can be preserved, though they do not have the same physical and visual presence as actual buildings. Should City Council find demolition to be appropriate, the challenge and opportunity will be to successfully interpret the history and convey the cultural significance of these buildings, and what they represented, to the community and visitors.

While retaining one or more of the buildings could be one of many ways to help protect and preserve the history of this area of the Parker-Gray District, it is important to remember that a place need not retain every single building of a certain type to be able to continue to honor and remember an area's historical and cultural significance. While there is always concern about the potential for incremental and cumulative erosion of the significance of a place if demolition were routinely approved, the BAR must evaluate each request individually and weigh each request within the greater context of the district. Vibrant, living cities and towns can successfully mix new and old without losing the cultural significance of a place through many different and innovative ways.

- (5) **Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists, and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?**

This criterion offers a number of ways that a building could contribute to the "general welfare" that, for the most part, are not currently applicable to Ramsey Homes. No specific analysis was conducted to measure any positive impact of Ramsey Homes on real estate values, business generation, creating new positions, or stimulating interest and education in history and architecture, but there is no obvious evidence of it at this time. There is potential, not currently realized, for the Ramsey Homes narrative to educate citizens regarding mid-20th-century history and culture, through additional interpretation and innovative methods.

While the design of the buildings may be unusual, their significance today is primarily cultural and social and there are many ways that cultural history may be interpreted, particularly as the neighborhood gentrifies and the physical history of the African American story in Parker-Gray becomes less visibly apparent. As heritage tourism continues to grow in Alexandria, the story of these buildings, and 20th-century African American public housing in general, could be incorporated into a larger initiative by Visit Alexandria and the Office of Historic Alexandria to promote African American heritage tourism. Therefore, the interpretation of these buildings or recollection of them in an alternate form could promote the general welfare by promoting study and tourism as part of larger initiatives or within a larger context.

- (6) **Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?**

The four existing two-story quadruplex buildings are consistent with the scale and character of this area of the district which is comprised of predominantly two-story buildings with some one-story and three-story buildings. There are buildings

of larger scale in the Braddock neighborhood, but not within the historic district or blocks immediately adjacent to this property. Ramsey Homes is both alike and different from its immediate neighbors; alike in that its immediate neighbors are two-story structures and different in that the immediate neighbors do not have significant amounts of open space on all four sides.

19th- and early 20th-century urban buildings throughout Old Town often featured rowhouse construction on narrow lots with minimal front and no side yards, leaving the majority of the open space at that time at the rear. There are still some examples of freestanding houses from this period that had open space on all sides, such as on West Street. By the 1930s and 1940s, following the Garden City Movement that had begun in England at the turn of the century, the idea of healthier living conditions that included sufficient open space for light, ventilation and vegetation, had taken hold and was incorporated into a range of buildings and styles, such as the garden apartments and garden townhouses found throughout the Washington, D.C. area. Therefore, the concept of more open space around buildings began to transform the built environment of Old Town as more yards and vegetation framed the setting of mid-20th-century buildings such as the garden apartment complexes on Washington Street and the rowhouses and duplexes found in Yates Gardens and the area west of West Street.

During the planning process, the Braddock East Small Area Plan envisioned the potential redevelopment of this site, with a townhouse or townhouse-scale development of 30-40 feet, compatible with the scale and character of the adjacent buildings as well as compatible with the historic district.

III. BOARD ACTION

On April 22, 2015, the BAR *denied the application by a roll call vote of 7-0*. The BAR opposed the demolition finding that criteria 1, 4, 5 and 6 were all met. The BAR generally noted that the significance of these buildings lay in their cultural and historical significance, as opposed to architectural significance, particularly with respect to segregation and African American history. They also noted that retention of the buildings maintained the established scale and character of the neighborhood.

IV. STANDARD OF REVIEW ON APPEAL

Sections 10-205(B) and 207(A)(3) in the Zoning Ordinance describing the criteria for demolition and the appeals process both require that the City Council apply the same standards as are established for the Board of Architectural Review. The City Council “may affirm, reverse or modify the decision of the board, in whole or in part.”

V. RECOMMENDATION

Staff therefore recommends that City Council **reverse** the decision of the Parker-Gray BAR made on April 22, 2015, finding that none of the criteria outlined in Section 10-205(B) of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance are substantially met and approve the demolition of all four buildings.

STAFF

Karl Moritz, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning
Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: BAR staff report with BAR actions from the February 25 and April 22, 2015 meetings

Attachment B: Historic Context and Significance Statement Report on Ramsey Homes prepared by Thunderbird Archeology for applicant

Attachment C: Application for BAR2015-0088

Attachment D: Zoning Ordinance Section 10-205(B)

Attachment E: Design Guidelines for Demolition of Existing Structures chapter

MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 25, 2015:

The Board held an informal BAR Concept Review work session with public testimony to discuss the redevelopment of 699 North Patrick St (Ramsey Homes).

SPEAKERS

Duncan Blair, attorney for ARHA, the applicant, introduced the project and the process for public outreach and review, as well as the limitations of this project.

Roy Priest, CEO of ARHA, provided background on the existing Ramsey Homes site (acquired by the City in 1956) and also explained how this site fit within ARHA's redevelopment portfolio. Mr. Priest also noted that the economics did not allow for upgrading the existing buildings.

Smita Anand, KTGy, project architect, gave an overview of the design of the project and explained how they addressed concerns about height, scale and mass.

Gail Rothrock, 209 Duke Street, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, noted that the existing buildings were a contributing resource to the National Register district. She spoke in opposition to the proposed demolition and believed that four of the six criteria related to a Permit to Demolish were met. She recommended renovation and an addition. She also inquired whether a Section 106 review would be required.

Glen Roe, 920 Pendleton Street, spoke in opposition, finding that the proposal was in contrast to the BAR's adopted policies and that the project would diminish the character of the historic district.

Leslie Zupan, president of the West Old Town Civic Association, expressed concern regarding the proposed height, scale and mass of the project, as well as the canyonization of the Route 1 corridor.

Matt Shuba, 515 North Patrick Street, agreed with the previous speakers and noted that the project should consider the scale of the surrounding buildings.

Susan Nelson, 624 North Patrick Street, spoke in support of the project and revitalization.

Mykhalyo Panarin, 909 Pendleton Street, spoke in opposition, finding it inconsistent with the related master plans and noting the significant impact on immediately adjacent properties.

Katie Springer, 600 North Alfred Street, spoke in opposition, expressing concern about the demolition and also the height, scale and mass.

Gabriel Behr, 622 North Patrick Street, expressed concerns and recommended a lower height and preservation of the green open space.

Ninette Sadusky, 910 Pendleton Street, spoke in opposition to the project and recommended retaining and rehabilitating the existing Ramsey Homes, not demolition.

Mark Mueller, 414 South Royal Street, spoke in opposition of the project finding high-density was not appropriate in this historic neighborhood.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Chairman Duffy noted that the applicant was very early in the process and noted that the consideration of the demolition, the context of the project and the general architectural character were very important to consider at this time.

Mr. Moffatt stated that he supported revitalization in the neighborhood but preferred the rehabilitation of the existing buildings as the approach. He found that some of the criteria for a Permit to Demolish were met, including Numbers 1, 4, 5 and 6. He recommended rehabilitating the existing buildings and the consideration of additions instead. He also asked whether a Section 106 process would be required. The applicant responded that they would look into that but did not think it was necessary. He also noted that when an applicant proposes a compromise solution or design, that it should be closer to the target rather than something so extreme. He opposed the height, scale mass and canyonization of Route 1. He noted that this site was in the heart of Parker-Gray.

Mr. Slowik agreed with Mr. Moffatt's comments about demolition and meeting the criteria for a Permit to Demolish. He wanted to hear more about rehabilitation as an alternative. He noted that the James Bland redevelopment site was a different context and could be a larger scale. He stated that a different design was necessary here because this site is closer to historic buildings with a smaller scale. He thought the height and scale were wholly inappropriate and that it was too early to discuss architectural character.

Ms. Irwin agreed that the applicant should first look at what can be done with the existing buildings. She also was concerned about the loss of green space. She noted that the number of units and project viability was not a BAR issue. She said that the applicant needed to provide an analysis of the rhythm of the adjacent buildings. She also thought it was too tall and premature to talk about style but believed the architecture should be of its time and not historic mimicry. She advised the applicant to look at the amount of open space and the importance of free play, and also noted that the BAR encouraged new and untried approaches.

Ms. del Ninno stated that the existing buildings did not have much glamour to them but she understood that they had significance. She recommended studying the retention of at least some of the existing buildings. She found the project too massive. She advised the architect to look at Parker-Gray architecture to understand the characteristics of this area, noting that the buildings historically were simple, featured porches and did not have large mansard roofs.

Mr. Conkey noted that he usually supported additional density but this time agreed with the comments already made by his fellow BAR members. He stated that he would likely support demolition if there were a good enough reason. He noted that the proposed buildings were really big. He differentiated this proposal from the James Bland project, which he supported, by explaining that it became its own context due to the scale of the project. He noted that this project was within a block with historic buildings and that even the Charles Houston Recreation Center was not this big. He found the mass and scale to be too big. He noted that the

architectural character was fighting itself. He thought the townhouses and mansard roofs were too big. He opposed a condo building that tried to look like townhouses, stating a strong preference for an honest architectural expression. He stated that if demolition were appropriate, that a larger building should be at the proper scale and rhythm.

Mr. Owens appreciated the early involvement by the applicant and the comments from the neighbors. He stated that the existing buildings were unique and that maybe at least one could be preserved. He hoped for a satisfying resolution for everyone. He said that the project was not at a point where there could be a meaningful architectural discussion. He thought the project was too big with respect to height, scale and mass. He was disappointed that one third of the site was dedicated to parking. He suggested looking at below-grade parking and retaining more open space. He noted this was a start but there was more to do.

Chairman Duffy thanked the applicant for coming to the BAR early in the process. He stated that it was rare that the entire BAR would be of a similar mind but that the comments indicated the project was very far from the target. He noted that this site was in the heart of Parker-Gray. He said that lots of citizen engagement would be necessary. He advised restudying the height, scale, and mass. He noted that economics were important but beyond the BAR's purview. He recommended bringing more details about the overall context for future work sessions. He recommended that the applicant work with BAR staff to find an appropriate architectural vocabulary. He noted that this block was unique in Parker-Gray with the amount of open space. He advocated for more open space. He concluded by noting that the BAR members were all of a similar mindset on this case and that they looked forward to working on this project.

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2015

TO: CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
PARKER-GRAY DISTRICT
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

FROM: HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

SUBJECT: FIRST CONCEPT REVIEW OF 699 NORTH PATRICK STREET
(ARHA RAMSEY HOMES) BAR CASE # 2015-0029

I. SUMMARY

Concept Review

The material now before the Board is part of a BAR Concept Review Work Session for the residential redevelopment project proposed at 699 North Patrick Street, the site of the present-day ARHA Ramsey Homes. The Concept Review Policy was originally adopted by the two Boards of Architectural Review in May 2000 (Attachment 1). Concept review is an optional, but strongly recommended, informal process conducted as a work session, usually under Other Business at a regular hearing or at a separate work session for unusually large projects. These cases come to the BAR at the beginning of a Development Site Plan (DSP) or Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) application and are conducted prior to a formal BAR application for a Permit to Demolish or Certificate of Appropriateness. The Board's advisory vote and comments at these work sessions are not binding on either the Board or the applicant and may not, therefore, be appealed to City Council.

The purpose of this policy is for the BAR to provide the applicant, staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council with advisory comments relating to demolition of an existing building or the overall appropriateness of the height, scale, mass and general architectural character of proposed new construction. This informal BAR work session is concurrent with the development review process and is intended to minimize professional design fees for the applicant and future architectural design conflicts between what is shown to the community and City Council during the DSUP approval and then later to the BAR for a Certificate of Appropriateness. If the BAR believes that the proposed demolition, or that a proposed building's height, mass or architectural character, are not appropriate and would not be supported in the future, the applicant and staff should be advised as soon as possible.

Site History

The project site currently is comprised of four buildings constructed in 1942 by the Federal Housing Authority to house African American war workers. The project site contains 15 dwelling units in three quadruplexes and one triplex on a parcel of land bounded by Wythe,

North Patrick and Pendleton streets to the north, west and south, respectively, and an unnamed public alley to the east. In 1953 ARHA acquired the site. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource to the Uptown/Parker-Gray National Register Historic District. It has been identified as the oldest extant public housing in Parker-Gray neighborhood and distinguished by its use of the early 20th century “Prairie” architectural style, in contrast to the Colonial Revival style of the majority of war-time and post-war housing in Alexandria. The area was previously the site of Civil War era barracks and other buildings.

It should be noted that the site features an unusually generous amount of open space, more typical of garden apartment complexes constructed during and after World War II. While it is unfortunate that such open space will be lost, it should be noted that the current configuration is an anomaly and atypical of development of the historic district over time which generally limited open space to the rear yards of narrow townhouse lots.



Figure 1. Current site plan.

Site Context

The project site is surrounded by a variety of residential and institutional uses. A significant number of modest two-bay, two-story historic townhouses are adjacent to the project site, including a two-story Mission Revival duplex (constructed between 1921 and 1931), located immediately east of the project site at 907-909 Pendleton Street (Photo 5, Application Sheet 10). Historic two-story, wood-frame townhouses in Italianate and Second Empire styles, dating from the late 19th and early 20th century, face the project site across both North Patrick and Pendleton streets. Opposite on North Patrick Street in the southern half of the block is a three-story brick, late 20th century townhouse development. The north end of this block features the c. 1926 Carpenter Gothic chapel of the Church of God & Saints of Christ (Photo 2, Application Sheet 9).

On the same block as the Ramsey Homes, to the north and east of the site, is the culturally significant one-story Watson Reading Room and Alexandria Black History Museum, two sites fundamental to the understanding of Parker-Gray's African American history. The City's new Charles Houston Recreation Center, located across Wythe Street to the north, serves as a gateway to larger-scale, contemporary construction along and near Route 1, including Old Town Commons, a five-block mixed income redevelopment of the former ARHA James Bland public housing project. One-story garage storage units are located in the center of the block, immediately to the east of the project site.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to completely demolish the four two-story stucco buildings and construct two multi-family buildings with angled parking along the public rear alley. The two buildings will be separated by a central courtyard. The buildings are proposed to be three stories on the North Patrick Street façade and four stories facing the interior of the block. The applicant has employed a traditional townhouse style architectural vocabulary with individual street entrances, dormers, mansard roofs and architectural details derived from Parker-Gray's historic vernacular buildings, though the floor plan of the dwelling units are single level apartment flats.

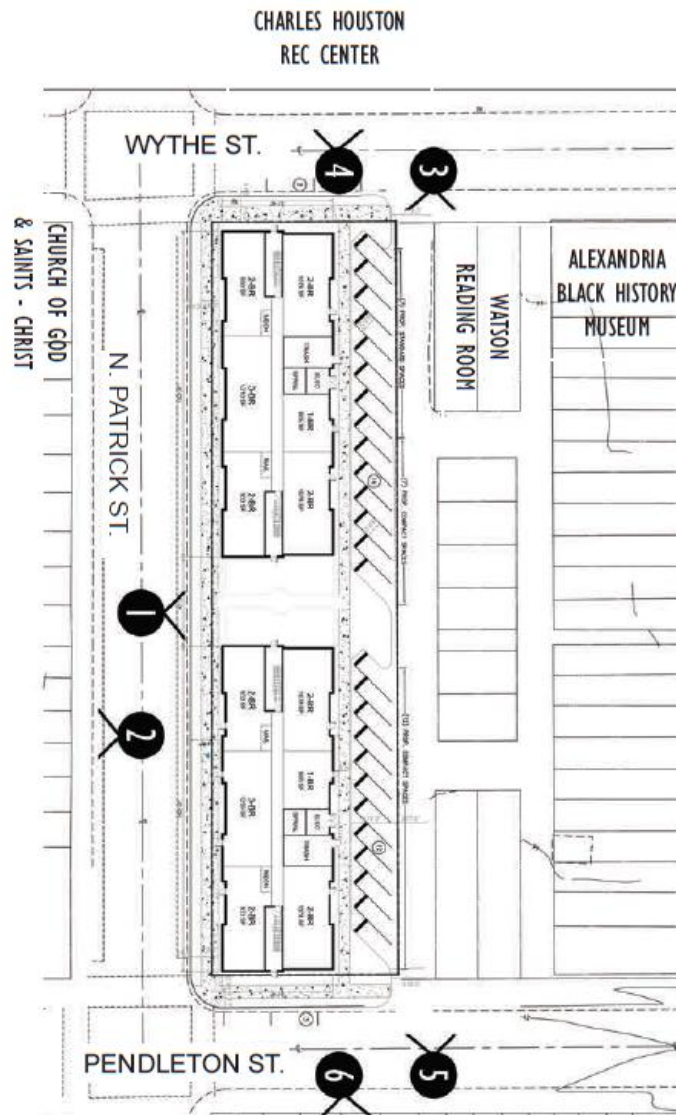


Figure 2. Applicant's proposed schematic site plan.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

As a reminder, many aspects of this development are not within the BAR's regulatory purview and should not be considered by the Board. Issues of use, parking, rezoning, density, affordable housing, compliance with the neighborhood's small area plan and housing master plan, construction costs, and the like are not matters before the BAR. The BAR's purview in this work session is limited to providing guidance on height, scale, mass and general architectural character.

Permit to Demolish

The proposed project requires the demolition of the four existing Ramsey Homes buildings. The applicant will seek approval of a Permit to Demolish when they submit their application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project. At that time the Board will be asked to consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-205(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists, and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

At this time, based on preliminary information provided by the applicant, Staff supports the demolition of the Ramsey Homes. While these public housing units were among the earliest constructed in the City of Alexandria, and they are considered contributing resources to the Uptown/Parker-Gray National Register Historic District because they were over 50 years old at the time the nomination was completed, they do not contribute to the integrity of the district nor do they have individual architectural merit that distinguishes them through uncommon design, material or craftsmanship. If the Board has any hesitation or objection regarding demolition of these buildings, members should let the applicant and staff know at this time. Prior to submission of a Permit to Demolish application, the applicant should complete additional archival research, so that the Board may determine whether this site has any cultural significance to the community such that razing would be to the detriment of the public interest. Additionally, it should be noted that a likely condition of approval of a Permit to Demolish will require documentation of the existing buildings and site.

General Analysis of Plans and Areas for Further Study

While BAR staff can conceptually support the demolition of the existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site, staff continues to have reservations about the proposed height and mass and minor concerns about the architectural character.

In terms of architectural style, the BAR's *Design Guidelines* only require that new buildings be compatible with nearby buildings of historic merit and do not mandate the use of historic styles for new construction. However, they do state that where new buildings recall historic building styles, that the architectural details used throughout the building be consistent with that same

style and that the building should not be a slavish replica of any particular building in the district. Additionally, the *Guidelines* note that “new and untried approaches to common design problems are encouraged and should not be rejected out of hand simply because they appear to be outside the common practices outlined in the guidelines.” Additionally, “there may be better ways to meet some design objectives that have not been reviewed by the Boards in the past.” Finally, the *Guidelines* also state a strong preference for “contextual background buildings which allow historic structures to maintain the primary visual preference.”

Specifically, the *Design Guidelines* chapter on New Residential Construction addresses multi-family buildings and notes that “apartment buildings often exceed the prevailing height of single family houses...but should not overwhelm adjacent buildings” and “façade articulation should be compatible with nearby buildings.”

Height, Scale and Mass

Staff has met several times with the applicant and commends them for reducing the height of the North Patrick Street, west elevation, of the buildings in the present application by one story (the original proposal was four stories tall on all four sides). The rear of the four story element is finished as if it is the rear of a freestanding building beyond, in order to avoid the pop-up addition character of the Hardi-panel top floor appearance of the townhouses at Old Town Commons, and is a much more successful composition.

However, staff still has some reservations about the proposed overall height and mass of the project because of the visibility of the upper floors in this prominent location. While three- and four-story multi-family buildings are generally appropriate and compatible only a few blocks to the north of this site, in this particular location staff is concerned about dwarfing the adjacent historic buildings. Furthermore, because of the relatively low building heights in the adjacent blocks, staff is concerned that a project of this height and mass will be visually prominent from more than a block away in all directions which will result in a diminishment of the historic integrity of this portion of the historic district. Sheet 16 of the applicant’s submission indicates that the four-story components of the project will likely overwhelm the adjacent buildings, although three stories may be acceptable. A wider variety of heights, combined with the narrow rhythm and bay spacing of townhouse façades, could result in an appropriate scale that would be compatible with the range of building forms and uses on the adjacent block faces.

It may be appropriate to have three-story elements on street-facing elevations (Patrick, Pendleton & Wythe) and only permit four-story elements on the interior of the site. Such setbacks have been implemented on a number of recent construction projects both within and outside the historic district, particularly where abutting existing lower-scale buildings. One example is the northernmost multi-family building at Old Town Commons adjacent to the two-story townhouses on First Street and another example is the north side of The Asher apartment complex where across Wythe Street is the two- and three-story Andrew Adkins housing complex (Figures 3 and 4). Such step downs and setbacks at recent projects have led to increased compatibility of new construction while still allowing significantly more density and the use of a variety of architectural styles.



Figure 3 & 4: Three-story elements at The Asher (left) and Old Town Commons Multi-family, adjacent to lower-scale townhouses.

General Architectural Character

The applicant previously explored two architectural vocabularies: traditional and transitional. The applicant has since elected to pursue the more traditional architectural vocabulary, to work within the adjacent area's architectural style and also to utilize a mansard roof form to visually minimize the cornice height on the fourth floors at the ends of the buildings. While staff had originally suggested to the applicant that a mansard is one option for mitigating the impact of overall height of a building, staff finds the proposed proportions to be heavy and, perhaps, not the best option. Therefore, staff recommends either refining the mansard roofs to reflect historic mansard roof proportions or finding a more appropriate expression for the locations where there is a fourth story (Figure 5). Eliminating the fourth story on the street-facing elevations (Wythe and Pendleton) may actually render it unnecessary to include the mansard roof form in these locations. It should be noted that based on other projects both Boards have reviewed, it is nearly impossible to completely “disguise” an added story.



Figure 5: Historic mansard roof proportions at 131 N Washington St., ca. 1821, 1870

Although the majority of new construction in and around the historic districts references historical styles, there have been successful introductions of compatible contemporary or transitional styles and staff recommends that the applicant continue to study that as an option. Such an approach distinguishes and differentiates the new from the old while recognizing modern-day needs and values. Regardless of the proposed architectural character—traditional, transitional or contemporary—staff prefers a focus on proportion, fenestration, rhythm and high-quality materials over historicist detailing such as brackets and ornamented cornices.

Next Steps

At this time, it is anticipated that the proposal may be reviewed by Planning Commission and City Council in autumn 2015 in order to meet application deadlines for Low Income Housing Tax Credit funding. Due to the scope and scale of this project, it is likely that the applicant will work with the BAR at multiple work sessions prior to the formal DSUP application. Following City Council approval, the applicant would then return to the BAR with a formal application for Permits to Demolish and Certificate of Appropriateness.

Summary

Staff believes that context is the most important issue in this proposal and that this is the metric that must be used for evaluating the proposed scale and mass. As noted above, a project that would be an appropriate scale a short distance away can be overwhelming when surrounded by buildings half its height. Staff has no objection to the traditional architectural character proposed but believes that the project can be compatible with its surroundings by using either a traditional or more contemporary style and this is something that can be studied through the Certificate of Appropriateness process but that guidance for the design direction should be given now.

At this time, staff recommends general support for redevelopment of this site with a larger scale building than what exists now. However, staff recommends that the applicant continue to explore a reduction in height, particularly adjacent to lower-scale buildings on the existing block faces and to also explore a more transitional architectural character. It is recommended that the applicant continue to meet with BAR staff to study the architectural character, larger planning considerations and context as the design evolves before returning to the BAR for another work session.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the applicant return for another work session with further study on the following:

1. Reduce height from four stories to three stories on all street-facing elevations, at a minimum;
2. Continue to explore a townhouse architectural vocabulary; and
3. Explore a “transitional” architectural character or, if the “traditional” format is pursued, restudy the mansard roof form.

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C- code requirement R- recommendation S- suggestion F- finding

P&Z Zoning

The property is currently zoned CL and is developed with 4 multi-family buildings containing a total of 15 dwelling units. The applicant proposes to rezone the subject property to CRMU-M and redevelop with two multi-family buildings and a total of 52 dwelling units. The property is located within the Parker Gray Historic District and within the Braddock Road Metro Station Small Area Plan.

- C-1 The CRMU-M zone refers to the Small Area plan for maximum height. The Braddock Road East plan has conflicting info for this block. The map on page 46 show the height at 30- 40', but the chart on the next page indicates the max height is 45'. The buildings are proposed to be no taller than 45 feet.
- C-2 Show the 75' vision clearance triangle on future submissions or see BAR approval to modify/reduce the vision clearance triangle.
- C-3 Proposed floor area is 1.83. A residential/SUP allows floor area up to 2.50
- C-4 Provide an open space exhibit. Open space required is at 40 percent of the lot.
- C-5 Provide proposed unit mix and parking requirements (section 8-200(A)(2).
- C-6 Comply with section 5-309(A-D) of the CRMU-M provisions is a special use permit is being requested.
- C-7 Request a rezoning and a master plan amendment.

P&Z Development Applications

1. The following applications will be required for this project as currently proposed:
 - a. Master Plan Amendment to the Braddock East Plan;
 - b. Rezoning from RB to a higher density zone;
 - c. Development special use permit, with site plan, to increase the floor area ratio;
 - d. Parking Reduction Special Use Permit;
 - e. Transportation Management Plan Special Use Permit; and
 - f. Modifications to the open space requirements, crown coverage and landscape breaks within the parking lot.

General Comments

2. The following goals and recommendations of the Braddock East Plan and the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan must be considered with this proposal.
 - a. The creation of mixed-income communities, specifically as referenced in Recommendation 6A which states that all sites should include a mix of public housing and market rate housing, and affordable and/or workforce housing where possible.
 - b. The deconcentration of public housing units, as stated in Recommendation 9: "The public housing units should be integrated throughout the new development and not concentrated in any one location."
 - c. A variety of open spaces should be provided to meet the needs of the residents. The concept plan, as currently proposed, provides very little opportunity for open and usable space for future residents.

- d. The proposed parking ratio is below the ratio identified in the Braddock East Plan, which was 0.75. The Plan specified a parking ratio of 0.75 spaces per public housing unit, and noted that the spaces could be provided either within the development or on the streets immediately adjacent to the development site with the approval of a special use permit for a parking reduction. However, the Plan further states that all new development is required to provide underground parking. Street parking along the two street frontages is limited as parking along Route 1 is subject to restricted hours.
 - e. The Plan also states that the Ramsey Homes site should be rehabilitated as part of the overall redevelopment program for the area, with some potential for infill, or be redeveloped with townhomes or townhouse scale buildings.
 - f. The Braddock East Plan also emphasizes the importance of appropriate transitions in scale and massing and specifically states that the character of development on the site will be “compatible with the scale and height of the adjacent townhomes.”
3. The Design Guidelines of the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan specify the following requirements for the adjacent streetscape.
 - a. Wythe Street is a designated walking street, with a requirement for brick sidewalk paving;
 - b. The intersection of Wythe and Patrick is a “targeted intersection” and a priority location for enhancement – “deserving special attention to pedestrian convenience, safety and investment in quality materials.”
4. As the building design advances, please refer to the design guidelines included within Appendix A of the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan. The proposed building(s) shall comply with the design guidelines included within Appendix A.
5. Please depict and label the 75-foot vision clearance triangles in the next submission.
6. Please provide sections to demonstrate compliance with the height to street centerline ratio requirements of Section 6-403 with the next submission.

V. ATTACHMENTS

~~1 – BAR Concept Review Policy~~

~~2 – Supplemental Materials~~

3 – Application for BAR2015-0029: 699 North Patrick Street

REFERENCE ATTACHMENT C
OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2015
STAFF REPORT

BAR Meeting
April 22, 2015

ISSUE: Complete Demolition of Four Buildings

APPLICANT: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

LOCATION: 699 North Patrick Street

ZONE: RB / Residential

BOARD ACTION on April 22, 2015: Denied, 5-0.

On a motion by Mr. Moffat, seconded by Mr. Slowick, the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review voted to deny BAR Case #2015 0088, as submitted. The motion carried on a vote of 5 to 0.

SPEAKERS

Duncan Blair, representing the applicant, introduced the proposal to demolish the existing buildings. He noted that there had been a lot of conversation about the history of the site and that their historian consultant was in attendance. He also explained that they were awaiting confirmation on whether Section 106 review was required. He stated that the buildings were substandard.

Roy Priest, President of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA), explained that in the current condition the Ramsey Homes were operating at a loss every month. His desire was to provide higher-quality new housing for the residents. He stated that they treated this project delicately because it was located in a historic district.

Sarah Traum, project architect at John Milner Associates (JMA), gave a presentation regarding the history of Ramsey Homes. She cited the repositories and materials used to prepare their history: Alexandria Archaeology, the Black History Museum, City Archives, Alexandria Library Special Collections, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, deed research, 1941 blueprints and the Uptown/Parker-Gray National Register District. She noted that the roof form had been altered and canopies had been added to the front porch. Her opinion was that these changes meant that the buildings no longer conveyed their original design intent, as the changes were outside the period of significance of the district, and the buildings had lost their integrity. While JMA wrote the National Register nomination several years ago stating that these were contributing structures, she thought that these buildings should not be considered contributing buildings to the National Register district. Ms. Traum then went through the six criteria in the zoning ordinance to consider for a Permit to Demolish and stated that the buildings in their current condition did not meet any of the criteria. She also responded to questions posed by BAR members.

Chairman Duffy reminded the BAR and the public that the six criteria listed in the zoning ordinance were important for the deliberations and reminded everyone that the discussion should focus on these criteria.

Judy Noritake, representing the Braddock Metro Civic Association, supported the request for demolition. She stated that the existing buildings were not significant. She encouraged an architectural style that looked more to the present time.

Salena Zellers, 1122 Madison Street, spoke in support of the demolition and noted that this site was envisioned to be redeveloped as part of the Braddock East plan.

Boyd Walker, 1307 King Street, spoke against the demolition, finding the buildings to be a significant resource in the Parker-Gray District, similar to the Carver Nursery School. He stated that the Parker-Gray District was largely supposed to represent African American history and that putting up plaques after demolishing buildings was not significant enough. He cautioned that demolishing too many contributing buildings could potentially lead to de-listing the National Register district.

Andrea Cochrane Tracey, 712 Wolfe Street, supported both historic preservation and affordable housing. She spoke against the proposed demolition and stated that it would be detrimental to the public interest to demolish the buildings.

Charlotte Landis, 433 North Patrick Street, spoke in opposition to the demolition because it was important to preserve these buildings and retain open space.

McArthur Myers, 3610 Valley Drive, spoke as a native Alexandrian, a representative of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, and member of the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of African American History. He read into the record a letter on behalf of HARC opposing the demolition. He noted that many buildings were now gone that told African American history. He mentioned that he thought he had read that Jackie Robinson had lived here before going to Fort Hood during World War II but he was now unable to find that reference.

Gail Rothrock, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, spoke in opposition to the demolition and stated that the history provided by the applicant was incomplete. She also noted that there had been no exploration of the option to rehabilitate the existing buildings. She said HAF disagreed with the findings in the staff report and thought that the buildings were significant and met several of the criteria. She noted that Ramsey Homes was constructed as permanent housing, not temporary housing, and that a noted local architect designed the buildings.

Michael Ford, 1022 Oronoco Street, spoke against demolition and noted that this was an important historic preservation decision. He said that ARHA should be held to the same standard as private property owners.

Edward van Court, 618 North Patrick Street, spoke against demolition.

Elizabeth F. Jones, 3 West Del Ray Avenue, spoke against demolition and stated that they should be rehabilitated, as they represented a simple modern vernacular style.

Charleenian Walker, 619 North Patrick Street, spoke as a current resident of the Ramsey Homes and noted that the condition of the properties was substandard. She wanted a safe and quality place to raise her son. She supported demolition of the properties and also suggested that there may be a compromise design that could keep portions of the buildings.

Glen Roe, 920 Pendleton Street, wanted redevelopment to occur but thought that the proposal should be deferred until there was more information. He noted that the Section 106 process should be initiated early in the process and that it would not be acceptable for the BAR to approve demolition without considering mitigation alternatives that might be required as part of the 106 process.

Ninette Sadusky, 910 Pendleton Street, spoke against demolition but supported adequate standard housing. She did not think the two were contradictory. She was concerned about the precedent that approval of demolition of these buildings would set and whether the BAR's adopted rules and guidelines would remain relevant.

Dino Drudi, 315 North West Street, spoke in opposition to the demolition and noted that the BAR only reviews the exterior so the applicant can modernize and upgrade the interiors however they like. He also stated that allowing demolition would send the message that there were different standards for government and private requests at the BAR.

Mark Moses, 708 North Patrick Street, spoke in opposition to demolition and thought the buildings should be rehabilitated.

BOARD QUESTIONS

Chairman Duffy asked for Ms. Traum to speak to demolition criteria 1, 4, 5 and 6 of the zoning ordinance. Ms. Traum reiterated the reasoning in her previous presentation why each criteria was not satisfied. She specifically noted that the buildings had been altered and no longer conveyed their significance. She also stated that other buildings in the area told the African American story and that Ramsey Homes was not essential to that.

Ms. del Ninno asked for the response to the BAR's previous request to study rehabilitation of the existing buildings or to retain one or more of the buildings. Mr. Blair responded that the existing buildings did not lend themselves to additions or reconfigurations. He also stated that they were proposing underground parking in the new proposal which would not be possible to construct beneath the existing buildings. Mr. Priest noted that reducing the number of units would reduce their ability to obtain financing.

Mr. Moffatt asked the applicant what other methods could tell the history of the site. Ms. Traum stated that interpretive signs and public programs could tell the history of the site and noted that the existing buildings did not convey any significance as they stood. Mr. Moffatt then asked if the changes made to the buildings were reversible. Ms. Traum stated that they possibly were but her analysis was based only on the current conditions. Mr. Moffatt also asked whether the existing buildings contributed to the scale and character of the district. Ms. Traum explained that

the larger neighborhood had a different scale and attached townhouse character and if you considered that area, then no, the Ramsey Homes did not contribute to the scale and character.

Ms. del Ninno inquired about the size of the dwelling units in the existing quadruplexes and whether there were minimum size requirements. Mr. Priest responded that the units were 720 square feet each and that HUD had no minimum size requirements.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Chairman Duffy thanked the public for their comments. He noted that a range of topics had been discussed but that they BAR would focus entirely on the six criteria outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. del Ninno appreciated the comments made and stated that she felt the weight of the importance of these buildings. She acknowledged that it was not the building façades that made these buildings unique but their plan, siting and cultural significance. She observed that Ramsey Homes was strikingly different from the surrounding homes when it was constructed. She said that a change to a roof form did not remove the significance and pointed out that the most significant buildings of antiquity no longer had roofs. She noted that, although the buildings were not beautiful, they were contributing buildings and in scale with neighboring one and two story buildings. She also thought their differences contributed to the character of this area of the district.

Ms. Irwin also appreciated the public comments, particularly from a resident of Ramsey Homes. She hoped that they could find a middle ground to preserve a portion of what exists now, as well as move forward.

Mr. Slowik explained that he represented the average homeowner and had no professional preservation or architecture background. He said he lived in a 1940s rowhouse, the same age as the Ramsey Homes, and that he understood and accepted that the district was created, in large part, to prevent demolition of these smaller scale buildings. He recognized the need for affordable housing but also noted that the BAR's purpose was historic preservation and that to be legitimate, the BAR needed to support preservation. He said he opposed demolition, finding that the buildings met criteria #4.

Mr. Moffatt noted that public participation was very important and he had no desire to retain substandard living conditions. He supported denial of the proposal observing that four of the six criteria were met. He believed that the African American history in Parker-Gray had largely been erased, though when he tried to understand who the "public" was whose interest was being protected in this case, he noted that a large portion of the public who came to oppose demolition this evening did not represent one single demographic but rather a broad representation of the population. He thought that African American history should not be confined to just museums. He also thought that the City should be held to a higher standard with respect to preservation and should be a positive example.

Chairman Duffy agreed that criteria 1, 4, 5 and 6 were all met. He was impressed by Mr. Slowik's comments and reiterated that the BAR's most important role was in matters of preservation and to advise Council regarding preservation. He thought that the story of

segregation was important to convey as well as African American history. He noted that presenting this history was a strong public interest. He thought the site demonstrated a strong cultural and social history. He noted that the entire BAR agreed that the buildings retained the scale, character and diversity that is found in Parker-Gray. He asked the other BAR members which criteria to cite for reasoning to oppose the Permit to Demolish. They all concurred that criteria 1, 4, 5 and 6 were met.

Mr. Moffatt asked about the appeal process and it was noted that an appeal to this case was anticipated.

On a motion by Mr. Moffatt, seconded by Mr. Slowik, the Board voted unanimously to deny the Permit to Demolish by a roll call vote.

REASON

The BAR found that four of the six criteria listed in Chapter 10-205(B) of the zoning ordinance were met. Specifically, the BAR found that demolition of Ramsey Homes would be detrimental to the public interest because the buildings were representative of African American wartime housing and contributed to our understanding of that history in the middle of the 20th century. They also noted that preserving Ramsey Homes would preserve and protect an important area of the Parker-Gray District that emphasizes 20th century African American history and that it would promote the study of and interest in American history, wartime housing, African American history, and segregation, therefore educating a range of students, visitors and residents. The retention of these buildings and their open space would maintain the low-scale character of this area as well as the unique character of Parker-Gray that features a mix of architecture and styles.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall provide a written history of the Ramsey Homes project, which at a minimum contains information of the date of construction, any major alterations, information about persons or events associated with Ramsey Homes, general architectural characteristics, background on the architect and contextual history on early public housing in Alexandria. The history should be prepared by an historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications and approved by Historic Preservation Staff.
2. The applicant shall provide archival quality photographic documentation to HABS/HAER Standards (Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record), consisting of large scale prints and digital files.
3. The applicant shall provide to the City measured drawings of the two building types in the Ramsey Homes development to HABS/HAER Standards (Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record). The drawings should include floor plans and elevations at a minimum scale of 1/4" = 1'. Drawings may be in pencil or ink on vellum or mylar on sheets with maximum dimensions of 30" x 42". The applicant shall also submit digital files.
4. Prior to the issuance of the Demolition Permit, the two sets of the photographs together with digital copies and the measured drawings shall be completed, approved

- by Historic Preservation Staff and deposited at the Alexandria Black History Museum and the Special Collections of the Barrett Library.
5. Hire an archaeological consultant to complete a Documentary Study and an Archaeological Evaluation. If significant resources are discovered, the consultant shall complete a Resource Management Plan, as outlined in the City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards. Preservation measures presented in the Resource Management Plan, as approved by the City Archaeologist, will be implemented.

NOTES TO THE APPLICANT

1. **ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS AND PERMITS TO DEMOLISH:** Applicants must obtain a stamped copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness or Permit to Demolish PRIOR to applying for a building permit. Contact BAR Staff, Room 2100, City Hall, 703-746-3833, or preservation@alexandriava.gov for further information.
2. **APPEAL OF DECISION:** In accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, if the Board of Architectural Review denies or approves an application in whole or in part, the applicant or opponent may appeal the Board's decision to City Council on or before 14 days after the decision of the Board.
3. **COMPLIANCE WITH BAR POLICIES:** All materials must comply with the BAR's adopted policies unless otherwise specifically approved.
4. **BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.
5. **EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.
6. **HISTORIC PROPERTY TAX CREDITS:** Applicants performing extensive, certified rehabilitations of historic properties may separately be eligible for state and/or federal tax credits. Consult with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) prior to initiating any work to determine whether the proposed project may qualify for such credits.



BAR2015-00088



I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish to demolish the four two-story buildings that collectively comprise the Ramsey Homes site. The applicant intends to demolish the buildings to construct two larger buildings that the BAR is currently reviewing in concept (BAR #2015-0029).

II. HISTORY

The Ramsey Homes project began construction in November **1941** as part of the wartime housing effort.¹ Today the site is comprised of four buildings—three quadruplexes and one triplex—two-stories in height with a low hipped roof. The buildings are stucco with one-story covered front porches. The project architect was the local firm of Smith, Werner and Billings, who had offices located at 220 King Street. The three architects—Delos H. Smith, Sheldon Werner and J. M. Billings—were selected to work for the housing authority to create plans for hundreds of wartime housing units. Smith had formerly worked for the United States Housing Authority before being selected as the local architect, working for Executive Director of the Alexandria Housing Board, R. S. Marshall, Jr. Smith was one of the inaugural members of the Alexandria Board of Architectural Review, appointed in November of 1946, as well as a charter member of the Historic Alexandria Foundation.² Smith was a noted ecclesiastical architect and his local work included two annex buildings at St. Paul’s Church as well as the Capitol Building Prayer Room.³

ARHA located an early set of blueprints that indicate the project was constructed differently than it was originally designed. The blueprints described the project as an “Experimental Housing Project for Alexandria, Virginia.” The original blueprints showed two quadruplexes, each flanking a large rectangular footprint barracks-style center building. The buildings had a decidedly modern architectural character and horizontal emphasis with a flat roof with central monitor. The blueprints included a few study variations with different window arrangements and materials, within the same standard block form. Historic aerials indicate that the buildings have had a hipped roof since at least 1962.

¹ Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949 National Register Nomination; A Historic Context, Vol. I, Appendix IV – Federal Public Housing Projects 1933-1949.

² “Architect Delos Smith,” *Alexandria Gazette*, Nov. 9, 1946: p. 9. and “Historic Alexandria Foundation” files at Alexandria Library Special Collections.

³ St. Paul’s Church to Break Ground for New Buildings,” *Alexandria Gazette*, October 27, 1955: p. 1. and <http://research.history.org/library/materials/manuscripts/view/index.cfm?id=SmithDelos>

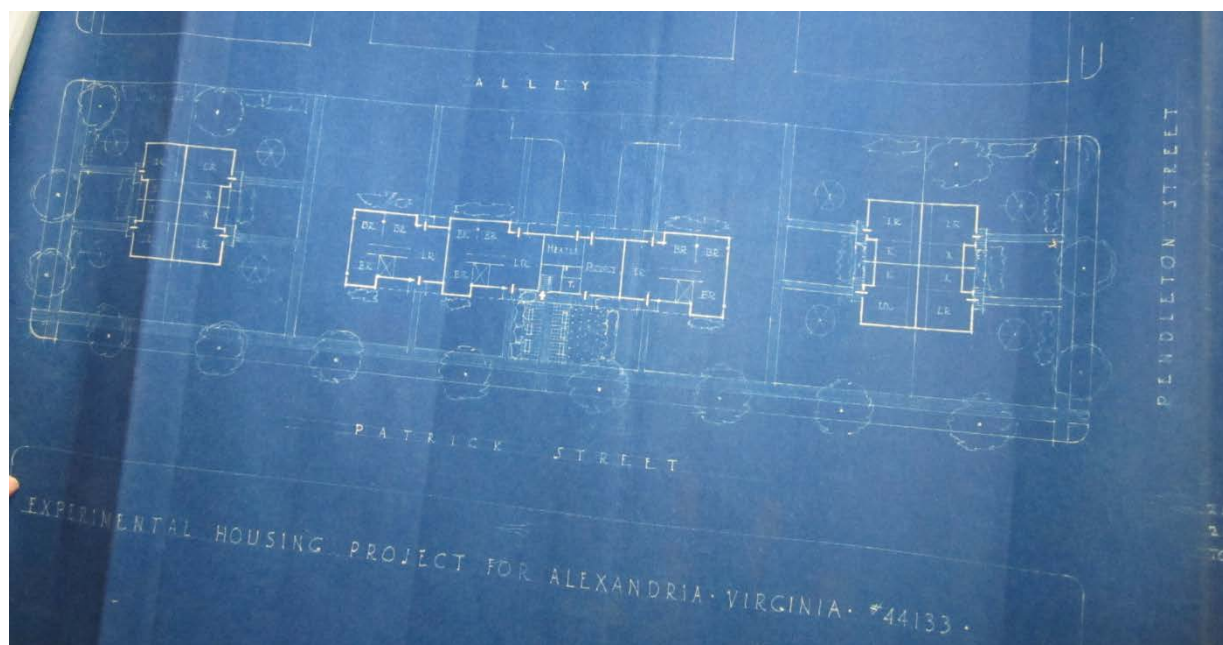


Figure 1. Original plan for Ramsey Homes site showing larger central building and end quadruplexes. Source: ARHA Archives.



Figure 2. Original design that was constructed, 1941. Source: ARHA Archives.

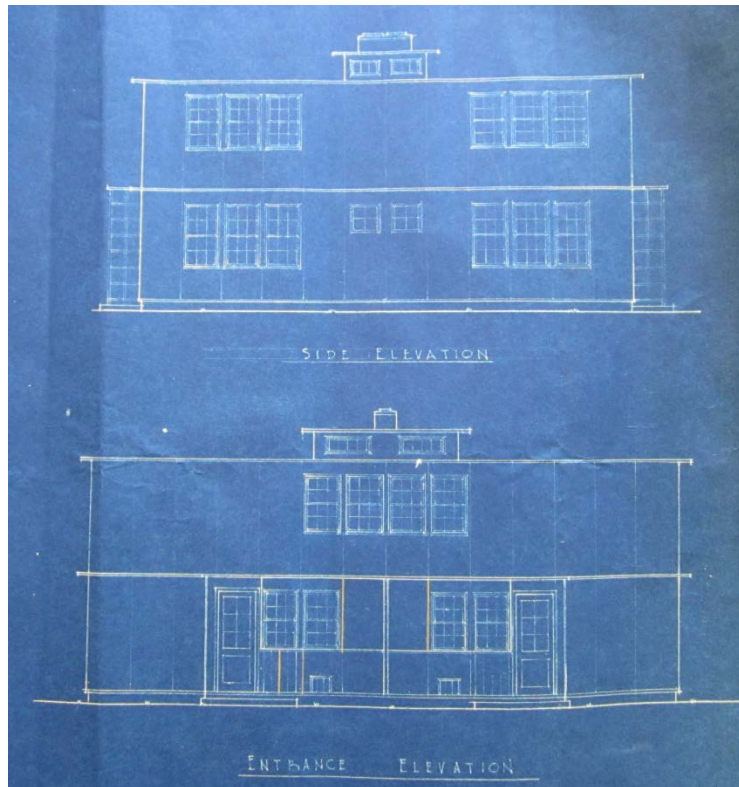


Figure 3. Alternate scheme featuring triple multi-pane windows. Source: ARHA Archives.

The land was acquired in 1941 by the United States government for defense housing. The 1958 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map describes the site as a United States Housing Authority project constructed specifically for African Americans. The Sanborn map describes the building construction as pre-cast concrete slabs and walls. After World War II, the Federal Public Housing Authority divested itself of several defense housing projects. It was at that time, in 1953, that the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority acquired the property. At the time of construction, the Ramsey Homes were located across the street from the first Parker-Gray School (after 1950 it became the Charles Houston Elementary School which later burned and is now the new Charles Houston Recreation Center, Figure 4) and on the same block as the Robert Robinson Library (now the Alexandria Black History Museum). Figure 5 shows the condition and design of nearby existing housing around the time of construction. It appears that the roof form was changed circa 1960 and staff believes there are two explanations for the change. First, flat roofs notoriously presented ongoing maintenance issues and in the interest of cost savings for maintenance, converting from a flat to a gable roof was a logical solution. Additionally, being a more modern design at the time of construction, it is quite possible that the addition of multi-paned windows and a more traditional roof form enabled the project to better fit in to Old Town, particularly once under the City's control. ARHA altered other projects as well, such as the addition of door surrounds at the former James Bland Homes, to make them more Colonial Revival and compatible with nearby buildings.



Figure 4. Directly north of Ramsey Homes site on Wythe Street was the Parker-Gray School (1920-1950) which later became the Charles Houston Elementary School until desegregation. It is the current site of the Charles Houston Recreation Center. Source: Alexandria Library Special Collections.



Figure 5. North side of 800 block of Wythe Street, adjacent to Ramsey Homes, circa 1950. Source: Alexandria Library Special Collections.

The Ramsey Homes, as well as several other housing sites in the City, including the demolished Chinquapin Village, the demolished John Roberts Homes, the mostly demolished Cameron Valley project, and the partially extant George W. Parker Homes, were constructed under the Lanham Act in the early 1940s. The Lanham Act was broad and encompassing legislation that provided for the construction of various types of housing that included: low-rent or slum clearance housing, temporary war housing and permanent war housing that would be converted after the war emergency ended. It was intended that temporary housing constructed under the Lanham Act would be removed and dismantled within two years of the end of the emergency. The Lanham Act also funded the construction and operation of wartime nursery schools, including the Carver Nursery to provide subsidized childcare for African American children whose parents worked for the defense effort. The Ramsey Homes project was constructed initially as permanent family housing.⁴ Additionally, it would appear that the Ramsey Homes may have been one of the better quality family dwelling unit options as they had the second highest rent of all ARHA properties with only Chinquapin Village having higher rents by the mid 1950s when ARHA operated the properties.⁵

The property has only been reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review since 1984 when the Parker-Gray District was established. In 1995, the BAR approved replacement metal fencing, replacement stucco, replacement of coping on the porches, addition of canopies over the front doors, replacement windows and doors, and new shutters (BAR 95-35PG, 12/13/1995). In 2008, a National Register nomination was prepared for the Uptown/Parker-Gray National Register District and identified these buildings as contributing resources, noting their unique “Prairie” style architecture. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

At a BAR concept review work session on February 25, 2015, the BAR discussed the possible demolition of these buildings as well as reviewed a concept proposal for new construction. The majority of the BAR members noted that the existing buildings had some significance and did not support complete demolition. They requested more information on the existing buildings and advised looking into retaining and rehabilitating at least some, if not all, of the existing project.

III. ANALYSIS

As the BAR is well aware, the applicant is requesting demolition in order to construct two new buildings that the BAR is separately reviewing through the BAR concept review process. As a reminder, the BAR should not consider what might replace an existing building when evaluating the criteria for a Permit to Demolish. Staff also reminds the BAR that they cannot consider financial matters, master plan requirements, parking issues or the like as they are beyond the BAR’s purview. The condition of a building does not justify demolition.

For background, ARHA has initiated a process to redevelop several housing sites that they manage throughout the City. ARHA intends to jointly redevelop the sites with a private developer. While four of the five sites proposed for redevelopment are located within Old Town, only one site is located in a local historic district. That site is Samuel Madden and is comprised

⁴ “Scheme of NHA Involves 26,206 Units in 6 Groups in Metropolitan Area,” *The Washington Post*: Sep 12, 1943: R4.

⁵ “Alexandria Facing Some Rent Boosts,” *The Washington Post*: Nov. 29, 1957: D4.

of two blocks of Colonial Revival garden apartments located between North Henry and North Patrick streets. The project before the BAR at this time is not part of this larger public-private redevelopment effort. More information can be found here:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/planning/info/default.aspx?id=83919>

Additionally, it is important to understand the larger context of these particular buildings in both the Parker-Gray neighborhood and the City as a whole. Many of the wartime housing projects that were later acquired by ARHA and the City in the past have been demolished or are proposed for demolition in the near future. While beyond the scope of the BAR's purview, staff provides this background information to the BAR on housing in the City to understand how this particular project fits in. City Council approved a Housing Master Plan in late 2013 that had a number of goals, including the replacement of redeveloped public housing units on a one-for-one basis as well as to increase the amount of safe and affordable housing for all income levels. Additionally, many initiatives have sought to create mixed-income communities. The approved Housing Master Plan can be found here:

<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/housing/info/Housing%20Master%20Plan%20Final.pdf>

Whenever an applicant proposes complete demolition of a building that is historic or potentially historic, staff requires that a comprehensive history report be prepared as part of the submission requirements. The applicant submitted a brief historical overview but has since located early blueprints. Staff has also done some preliminary research, including research at City Archives, Special Collections, and the Alexandria Black History Museum in order to better inform our understanding of this site. There could likely be additional research done to present a more comprehensive understanding of the significance, or lack thereof, of this property as well as its broader context.

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-205(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists, and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

These six criteria to consider when evaluating a Permit to Demolish are not strict requirements but rather they are *considerations* that involve a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of the BAR and staff. While a building may “meet” one or more criteria, that alone does not preclude the BAR’s ability to approve demolition however it might inform conditions of approval or foster dialogue about what the BAR and the community value. For example, if the BAR found that a building proposed for demolition were able to provide insights into the study and interest in American history and culture, an expanded historical study may be required to place the project within a broader context.

Based on comments made at the February 22, 2015 meeting by the BAR and the community, as well as from additional research and information, Staff finds that at least three of the criteria should be considered. Specifically, staff thinks that Criteria 4, 5 and 6 should be considered and will review each criterion individually.

(1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?

There are very few buildings whose removal would be to the detriment of the public interest. Ramsey Homes is not one of these buildings whose demolition would be a significant detriment to the public interest.

(2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?

Very few buildings can be made into historic shrines. Iconic buildings such as the George Washington Masonic Memorial and Gadsby’s Tavern are typically associated with historic shrines, museums and visitor destinations. Ramsey Homes would be an unlikely candidate as a historic shrine.

(3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?

Ramsey Homes features mass-produced materials and modern building technology, typical of a mid-twentieth-century building.

(4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

While these four buildings are by no means architectural masterpieces that warrant a meticulous restoration of form, craftsmanship and material, and were clearly modified over the years, they do play a role in our understanding of the Parker-Gray neighborhood and Alexandria’s involvement with the war effort. While staff does not find that the buildings could be made into an historic shrine nor that the buildings have an unusual and irreproducible design, these buildings, constructed specifically for African Americans as part of a nationwide defense housing campaign. The project was located in an institutional center for African Americans across from the Parker-Gray School (later Charles Houston Elementary School), on the same block as the Robert Robinson Library

and near several African American churches (Figure 6). This African American center of life reflects segregation patterns in Alexandria in the middle of the 20th century.

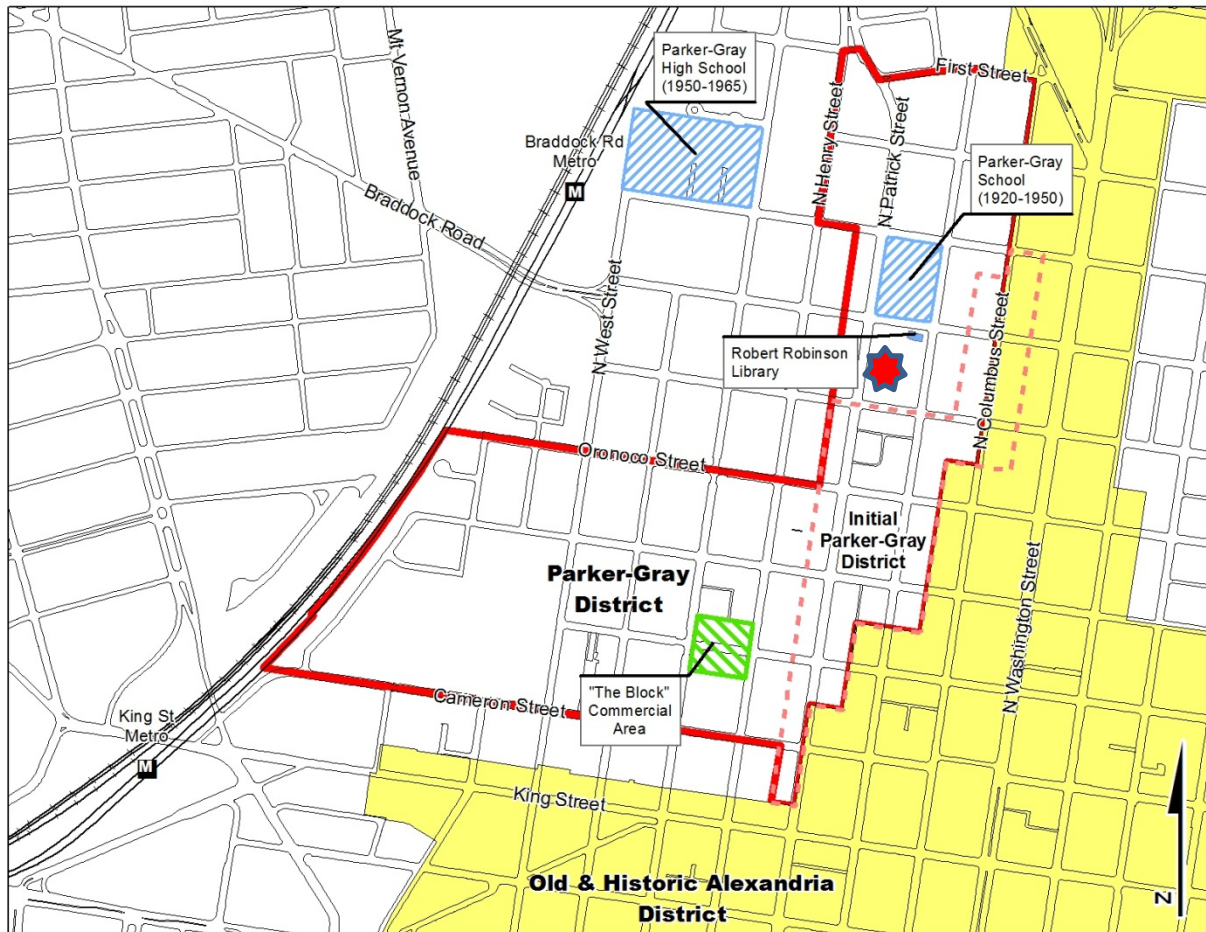


Figure 6. Map showing significant African American sites in Parker-Gray with RED STAR indicating Ramsey Homes site.

- (5) **Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists, and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?**

This small housing project has a distinctly different architectural character and orientation than similar housing projects in the Washington, D.C., area which generally employed a minimalist Colonial Revival style and featured concrete construction clad in red brick with gabled roofs. The context photograph in Figure 4 shows what would have been a typical frame construction dwelling in Parker-Gray in the 1940s. These buildings represented distinctly modern, new housing for African Americans within an established neighborhood. The original blueprints—which were never fully constructed as drawn—represent a significant departure in architectural style and form from the existing

neighborhood as well as reflect the predominant wartime and post-war architectural trends in Alexandria, reflective of the “Experimental” nature of this project.

While the original design has been altered over the years, the site is physical evidence of a strong cultural and social history, not unlike the former Carver Nursery School at 224 North Fayette Street. Staff and the BAR had initially supported demolition of the Carver Nursery School finding that it was not architecturally significant. However, some members of the community responded that the building did possess cultural significance and therefore should be saved. Additional research and understanding of the context was necessary to determine the significance of that particular building which was architecturally undistinguished. Similarly, the current condition of these buildings is not architecturally unique or significant but the buildings could possess cultural and social significance that promote the history of Parker-Gray, particularly as the cultural history of Parker-Gray has become less visibly apparent. Staff does find that the original design which featured quadruplexes in the International Style to be interesting and unique, particularly coming from a local architect who specialized in the Colonial Revival and Federal Revival styles. Additionally, while these may be considered “average” buildings to the common eye, they are some of the remaining early public housing buildings constructed in the City. Heritage tourism continues to grow in Alexandria and, if retained, these buildings could be incorporated into understanding 20th-century African American history as part of a larger initiative by ACVA to promote African American heritage tourism.

(6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

The buildings maintain the scale and character of this area of the district which is comprised of predominantly two-story buildings with a fewer number of one-story and three-story buildings as well. There are buildings of larger scale in the Braddock neighborhood, but not within the blocks immediately adjacent to this property. The existing buildings maintain a significant amount of open space and open setting that has come to characterize many of the 20th-century residential buildings in this area of the district. However, when City Council adopted the Braddock East Master Plan in 2008, the plan envisioned an appropriate height of 30 to 40 feet with a maximum of 45 feet for roofline variation; a master plan is an indication of the community’s understanding of the scale and character of that community.

Summary

Although the existing Ramsey Homes buildings may meet some of the criteria that the BAR must consider when evaluating a Permit to Demolish, staff supports the demolition request with the conditions noted above, noting that the current condition of the buildings is compromised and there is not enough information presently available to determine such cultural or social significance that would warrant preservation of these buildings.

STAFF

Catherine K. Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C- code requirement R- recommendation S- suggestion F- finding

Planning & Zoning Development Division Comments

No comments on Permit to Demolish application.

Code Administration

No comments received.

Transportation and Environmental Services

1. Comply with all requirements of DSP2014-00035 (TES)
2. The Final Site Plan must be approved and released and a copy of that plan must be attached to the demolition permit application. No demolition permit will be issued in advance of the building permit unless the Final Site Plan includes a demolition plan which clearly represents the demolished condition. (T&ES)

Alexandria Archaeology

Open Space and Landscaping

1. Hire a professional consultant to work with staff and the landscape designers to incorporate and interpret elements of the historical character and archaeological findings into the design of the open space and to prepare interpretive elements, which shall be erected as part of the development project. The site plan shall indicate themes and locations of interpretive elements. Prior to release of the final site plan, the consultant shall provide text and graphics for the signage subject to approval by the Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology and the Directors of P&Z and/or RP&CA.* (Arch)(P&Z)(RP&CA)

Archaeology Comments

2. Hire an archaeological consultant to complete a Documentary Study and an Archaeological Evaluation. If significant resources are discovered, the consultant shall complete a Resource Management Plan, as outlined in the City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards. Preservation measures presented in the Resource Management Plan, as approved by the City Archaeologist, will be implemented. (Archaeology)
3. The Final Site Plan, Grading Plan, or any other permits involving ground disturbing activities (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of the Zoning Ordinance) shall not be released until the City archaeologist confirms that all archaeological field work has been completed or that an approved Resource Management Plan is in place to recover significant resources in concert with construction activities. * (Archaeology)

4. Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-746-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds. The language noted above shall be included on all final site plan sheets involving any ground disturbing activities. (Archaeology)
5. The applicant shall not allow any metal detection and/or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology. Failure to comply shall result in project delays. The language noted above shall be included on all final site plan sheets involving any ground disturbing activities. (Archaeology)
6. Certificates of Occupancy shall not be issued for this property until interpretive elements have been constructed, interpretive markers have been erected, and the final archaeological report has been received and approved by the City Archaeologist.*** (Archaeology)

V. ATTACHMENTS

~~1 – Draft Minutes from February 25, 2015~~

~~2 – Supplemental Materials~~

3 – Application for BAR #2015-0088: 699 North Patrick Street (Ramsey Homes)

REFERENCE ATTACHMENT C
OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2015
STAFF REPORT

Ramsey Homes

City of Alexandria, Virginia

WSSI #22386.02

Historic Context and Significance Statement

August 2015

Prepared for:

Ramsey Homes, LP

401 Wythe St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

Prepared by:

David Carroll, M.A., Anna Maas, MUEP, and Boyd Sipe, M.A., RPA



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thunderbird Archeology, a division of Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc., of Gainesville, Virginia conducted archival research and developed a property history and historic context for Ramsey Homes, located on North Patrick Street between Pendleton and Wythe Streets for Ramsey Homes, LP of Alexandria, Virginia. The Board of Commissioners of the Alexandria and Redevelopment Housing Authority (ARHA) propose to redevelop the study area consistent with the Braddock East Master Plan (BEMP) at a density high enough to sustain a critical mass of low-income residents in order to maintain the strong social and support networks that are essential in low-income communities. The increased density is a key goal of the BEMP, the ARHA 2012-2022 Strategic Plan and the City-adopted Housing Master Plan. In a memo to the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review (BAR CASE #2015-0088), dated April 22, 2015, city staff recommended demolition.

The Ramsey Homes (the “Project”) is located in the City of Alexandria “Parker-Gray District” (Zoning Ordinance Article X. Sec. 10-200); therefore, the development review process requires the Parker-Gray BAR approve a Permit to Demolish. According to Sec. 10-200, the Parker-Gray District was established “to protect community health and safety and to promote the education, prosperity and general welfare of the public through the identification, preservation, and enhancement of buildings, structures, settings, features and ways of life which characterize this nineteenth and early twentieth century residential neighborhood”. Note that the establishment of this district emphasize resources that predate or date to the early twentieth century (1900 to the early 1930s), not the mid-twentieth century (late 1930s to late 1960s), thus the local district’s Period of Significance ends before the homes were built in 1942 and should be the guiding factor in decisions made by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and the City Council. Additionally, much of the language in the local Historic District guidelines emphasizes respecting the scale and setback of historic resources that pre-date the mid-twentieth century and are dramatically different from the Ramsey Homes.

The Project also contributes to the “Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District” listed to the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) in 2008 and the National Register of Historic Place (NRHP) in 2010. The Period of Significance for the NRHP district is ca. 1810 to 1959. Frequently, the boundaries and Period of Significance of a local zoning district is different from a NRHP district. They may overlap, but have different priorities, standards for eligibility, and associated laws. The NRHP often includes longer Periods of Significance, does not dictate changes to the exterior of buildings, and has a low bar for eligibility, particularly for buildings contributing to a district or associated with minorities. The Project as a whole has significance in social history rather than architecture, and while they contribute to the NRHP-listed district and will be part of a federal undertaking, their listing does not preclude them from demolition if the disposition and demolition is approved and the loss is properly mitigated.

Since settlement, the Project area’s land use has constantly evolved from vacant land to farmland (pre-1849) to Union Army military housing and hospital during the Civil War

(1861-1865) to affordable tenant housing for European immigrants (1865-1914) to vacant land (1914-1941) to military housing during World War II (1942-1945) and finally to affordable public housing (1946-present).

Continuous alterations to the Project have compromised the integrity of the building and landscape design. They were designed in 1941 and constructed with flat roofs in the vernacular Modernist style in 1942. Between 1964 and 1979, ARHA removed skylights and constructed hipped roofs, altering the buildings' style to vernacular Prairie. In 1995, the addition of Colonial Revival elements were approved by the BAR, and by then, significant components that had contributed to its integrity and helped convey its social history were removed, including original chain-linked fencing, clothes lines, paved playground, and plantings.

The integrity and Project's ability to convey the depth of their history is not evident and does not meet the City of Alexandria Board of Architectural Review (BAR) six criteria for protection. 1) The buildings are not of such architectural or historic interest that their removal will be a detriment of the public interest. The buildings and landscape were altered so dramatically after 1964 that they do not reflect their period of significance (1941-1942), the Modernist economy with which they were built, or for what they were built. 2) The buildings do not merit becoming a shrine because as stated, they have lost integrity of design, do not reflect their period of significance, nor do they convey the original purpose as wartime housing. 3) The American foursquare with Prairie features is ubiquitous in American cities from the 1910s through the 1940s. Adapted to this style after 1964, this is a very late example and not original to the site and therefore not worthy of reproduction as they now stand. 4) Retention of the property does not protect an historic place as defined by the local Zoning Ordinance because as noted the Period of Significance for the "Parker-Gray District" ends in the "early twentieth century" before the Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and World War II. The Period of Significance of the "Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District" is not relevant to decisions made by the BAR. In consideration of the NRHP district, their retention is not essential to the viability of the district's listing because it represents less than one percent of the contributing resources. The NRHP nomination form incorrectly states that architectural significance is related to the Prairie style, which is not original to the building and is not listed among significant styles under the architectural classification section of the nomination form on page two. 5) Retention of the building will not promote general welfare because its declining condition may decrease real estate values. Retention will generate less business because there will be fewer residents to patronize local venues and learn, live, and work in the area. The buildings do not convey what they were or teach non-professional historians by just looking at them. The introduction of more housing units next to the history museum and community center will expose more residents to local American history. Their removal will result in a more attractive block, a more desirable place to live, and a higher quality of life for current residents. 6) The Project and associated landscape are out-of-scale in the neighborhood as they lack the density of their neighbors. Their demolition would allow for buildings more consistent with the BAR Historic District guidelines and the neighborhood in design, height, and setback.

Appropriate mitigation of Ramsey Homes is the introduction of more units of affordable housing within this block. Preservation of the resource is not absolutely necessary as there is ample opportunity for public interpretation and commemoration of the site's public housing legacy. In our opinion, such efforts would be appropriate mitigation for loss of the resource. The possibilities for such mitigation are broad and, in our opinion, preservation of the Ramsey Homes buildings, in comparison with appropriate mitigation, offers fewer opportunities to celebrate and inform the public about the social history of public housing in the city. ARHA has contributed to the city in the past by funding other interpretive displays.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ramsey Homes are located on North Patrick Street between Pendleton and Wythe Streets in the City of Alexandria, Virginia within the bounds of the historically African-American community known as Uptown and the locally zoned “Parker-Gray District” (Figure 1). The Board of Commissioners of ARHA propose to redevelop the study area consistent with the BEMP at a density high enough to sustain a critical mass of low-income residents in order to maintain the strong social and support networks that are essential in low-income communities. The increased density is a key goal of the BEMP 2012-2022 Strategic Plan and the City-adopted Housing Master Plan. In a memo dated April 22, 2015, city staff recommended demolition.

The Project includes four buildings with 15 units, labeled I, II, III, and IV north to south (Figure 2). The buildings were previously recorded as seven resources in 2006 in anticipation of nominating the “Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District” (DHR No. 100-0133) to the VLR and NRHP.

Building I.	912 and 914 Wythe Street (DHR No. 100-0133-1328) 625 and 627 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0754)
Building II.	619, 621, and 623 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0751)
Building III.	609 and 611 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0747) 613 and 615 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0749)
Building IV.	605 and 607 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0745) 913 and 915 Pendleton Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0948)

Each resource contributes to the VLR district listed in 2008 and the NRHP district listed in 2010.

One previously recorded archeological site has been recorded at DHR within the study area; site 44AX0160 represents a probable Civil War-era military barracks site that was investigated by Alexandria Archaeology in 1991. According to the DHR site record, the resource has not been evaluated for eligibility to the NRHP. In addition to this report, Thunderbird Archeology has, at the request of Ramsey Homes, LP of Alexandria, Virginia, prepared a Scope of Work (SOW) for a Documentary Study and Archaeological Assessment. The SOW was approved by Alexandria Archaeology and Thunderbird Archeology has completed a draft Documentary Study and Archaeological Assessment of the property.

Principal Archeologist Boyd Sipe, M.A., RPA; Principal Architectural Historian Anna Maas, MUEP and Associate Archeologist David Carroll, M.A. conducted archival research and prepared the report. Geospatial Analyst Michael Bowser prepared the map exhibits. Research was conducted at the National Archives and Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Office of Alexandria Archaeology, the Alexandria Archives and Records Center, the Alexandria Courthouse, and the Barrett Branch of the Alexandria Library (Special Collections). Catalogs for the Nimitz Library and Navy Department Library were searched for relevant collections. Previously collected research data from the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Library in Washington, D.C. and oral histories from several 20th-century occupants of public housing in the city were consulted. Additionally, specific research questions

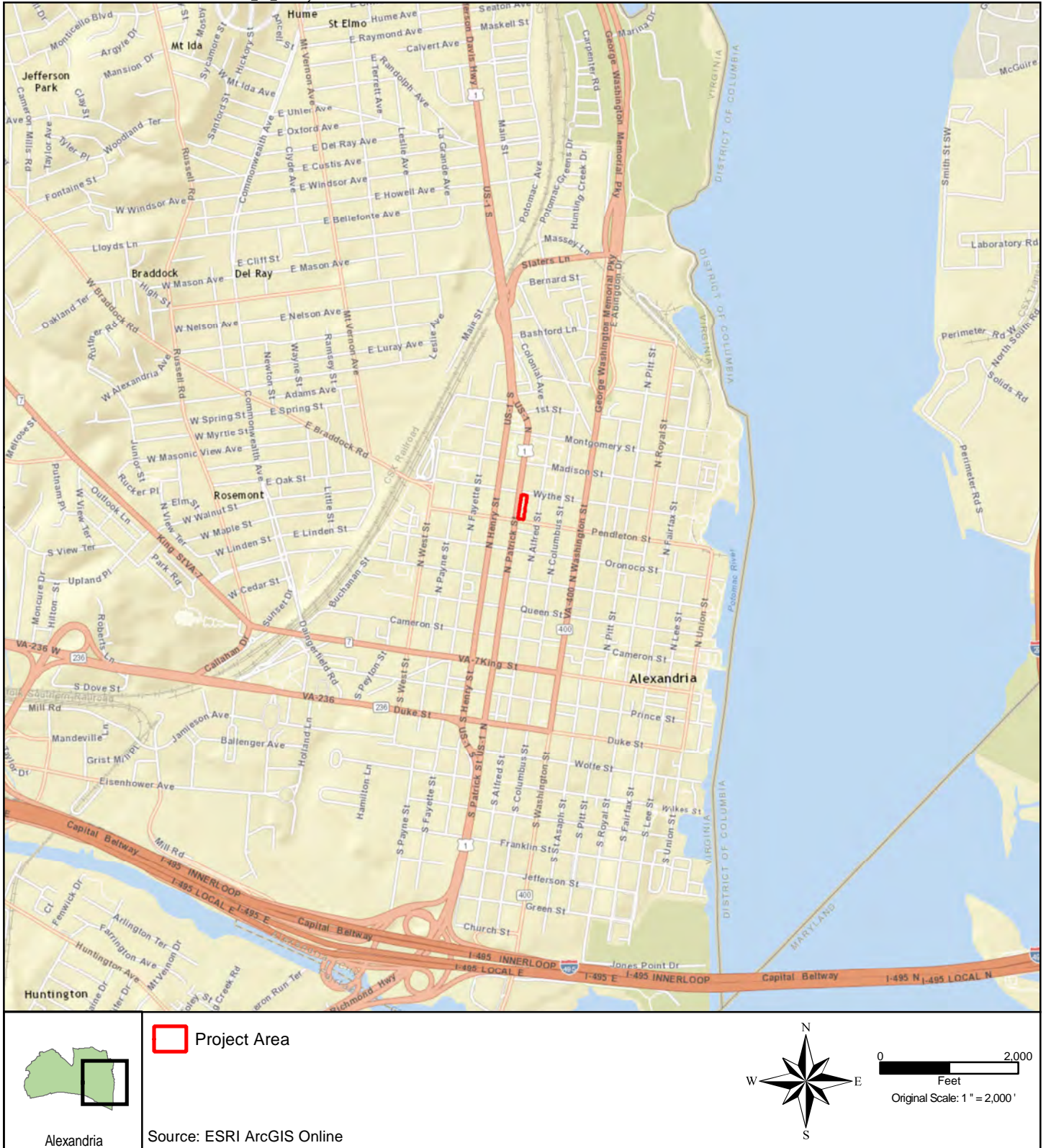


Figure 1
Vicinity Map

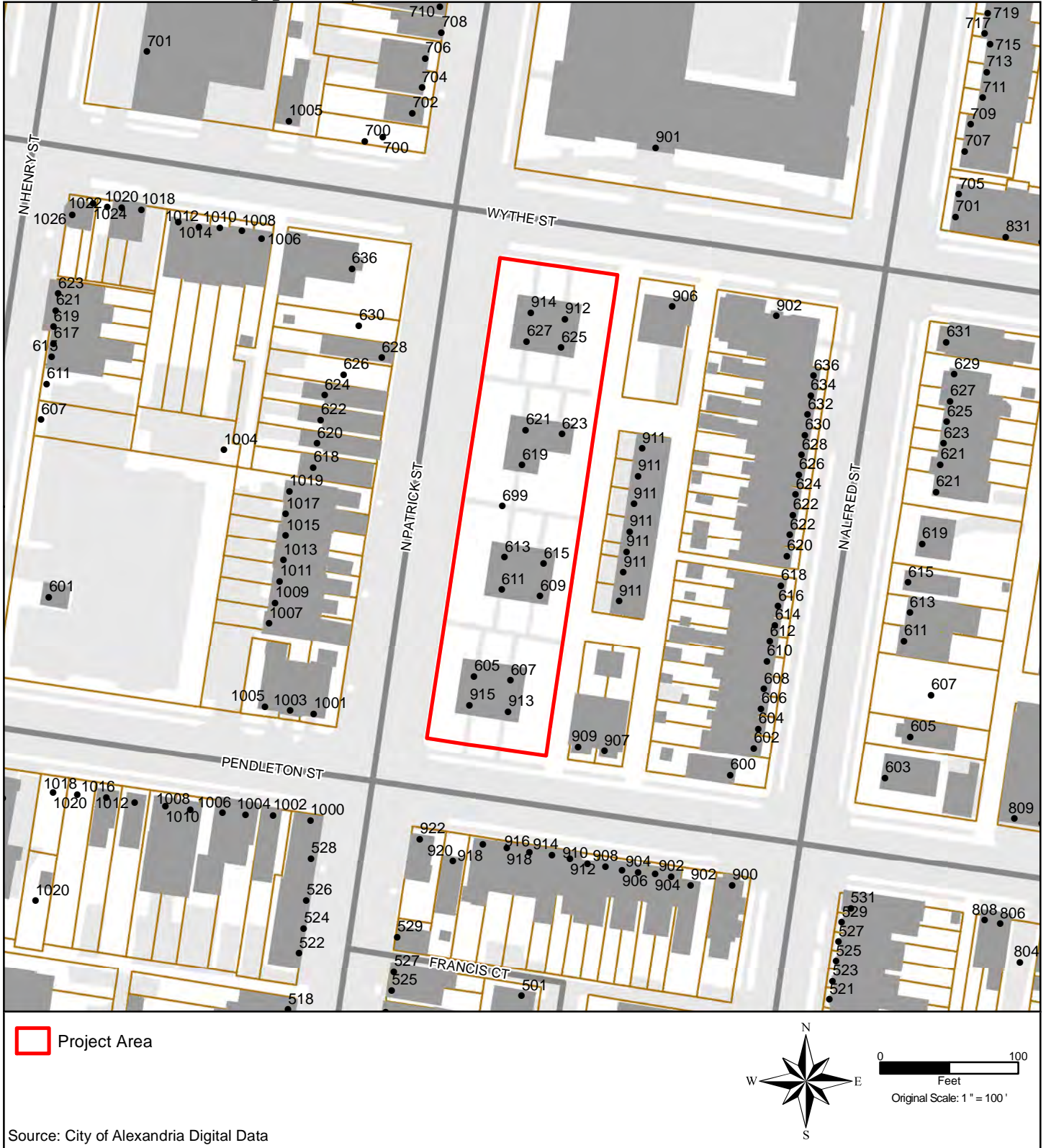


Figure 2
2015 City of Alexandria Parcel Map

were discussed with staff at Alexandria Archaeology, the City of Alexandria Fort Ward Park Museum, and the Jackie Robinson Foundation.

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Ramsey Homes are located in the northwestern quadrant of the 1797 street grid in the Parker-Gray District. The complex includes four buildings that occupy over one-third of a city block on the east side of North Patrick Street between Pendleton and Wythe Streets. The grass lawns are enclosed by a modern metal picket fence, which steps in around mature oak trees lining the Patrick Street sidewalk. Buildings are set back 10 to 35 feet from the right-of-ways and spaced around 40 feet apart.

The block is surrounded by small row houses and town houses, local businesses, converted warehouses, and community buildings most of which have very little setback from the curb. The area is dense with two- and three-story buildings from a variety of periods. The landscape and architecture of Ramsey Homes are out of character and scale with other historic resources in the study area (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Ramsey Homes, View to West from the Alfred Street Alley to North Patrick Street, Showing Difference in Scale between the Housing and Historic Homes

Buildings

As noted, the Ramsey Homes site includes four buildings with 15 units (see Figure 2).

Building I.	912 and 914 Wythe Street (DHR No. 100-0133-1328) 625 and 627 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0754)
Building II.	619, 621, and 623 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0751)
Building III.	609 and 611 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0747) 613 and 615 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0749)
Building IV.	605 and 607 Patrick Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0745) 913 and 915 Pendleton Street (DHR No. 100-0133-0948)

Buildings I (Figure 4), III (Figure 5), and IV (Figure 6) are identical two-story quadruplexes (45' x 43'6.5") with low-pitched hipped roofs. Building II is an L-plan two-story triplex (43'6" x 36'5") with a cross-hipped roof (Figure 7). The nearly square shape of three of the buildings and the replacement of flat roofs with hipped ones after 1964 altered their style from vernacular Modernist to vernacular Prairie style. Alterations made in 1995 introduced Colonial Revival elements with metal paneled doors, vinyl windows, and inoperable aluminum shutters.

Each building consists of a poured concrete foundation and Fabcrete building units used to construct the floors, walls, and roofs. A painted stucco-like material sheaths the exterior. The roofing is either a continuous membrane or a bituminous asphalt product. The low-pitched hipped roofs are capped by a metal flues at each center.

Entrances are inset and paired side-by-side such that each quadruplex has two facing north and two facing south. The triplex has one facing south and two facing north. Paneled metal doors are roughly centered on each unit. Paired one-over-one windows with brick aprons are situated next to the doors towards the interior dividing wall on the north and south elevations. Larger one-over-one windows are situated on the opposite side of the door towards the corner of each building. The elevations facing the east and west contain two one-over-one windows on each floor of each unit, for a total of eight symmetrically positioned windows. They are all vinyl replacement double-hung sashes flanked by decorative aluminum louvered shutters.

The interiors of the buildings are minimalistic with vinyl composition tile or carpet added by the tenants, painted walls and very simple trim. There is a small living room (17'7" x 11'7") with a closet under the stairs and a kitchen (9' x 9') with open utility closet on the first floor of each unit. Two small bedrooms (14'5" x 9'5") and one full bath (8' x 10') are located on the second floor. Fixtures throughout date to the 1990s. There is a gas heating unit and window-unit air conditioners.



Figure 4: Ramsey Homes, Building I



Figure 5: Ramsey Homes, Building III



Figure 6: Ramsey Homes, Building IV



Figure 7: Ramsey Homes, Building II

PROPERTY HISTORY

The Ramsey Homes property is situated outside of the original 1749 boundaries of Alexandria and remained undeveloped until the 19th century. George and Teresa Blish, immigrants from Germany, owned the block from at least 1834 until 1849 and operated a market garden on the property that supplied fruits and vegetables for the needs of residents of Alexandria. Henry Daingerfield, one of the wealthiest men in Alexandria, purchased it and erected several houses which were rented primarily to Irish immigrants who worked in various industries and businesses in and near Alexandria. During the Civil War, the Union army commandeered the lot for the headquarters, barracks, and hospital of Battery H of the Independent Pennsylvania Artillery, which served garrison duty in Alexandria from 1863 until 1865. Following the war, Henry Daingerfield's heirs continued to rent out deteriorating houses on the block until the 1890s, by which time the property was likely vacant of habitable buildings.

Noble Lyndsey maintained ownership of the study area until 1914, when a decree was issued in chancery during the settling of his estate to sell the block for cash. The property was sold to the Real Estate and Investment Corporation of Virginia for \$5,500 (Alexandria Deed Book 63: 553). The Real Estate and Investment Corporation in turn sold the property to Charles W. King in 1919 for \$8,000 (Alexandria Deed Book 69: 135). By 1921, the block was vacant (Sanborn 1921). In 1923, Charles King sold the property to his grocery wholesale company, Chas. King & Son (Alexandria Deed Book 76: 110). Also in that year, the block was surveyed for subdivision and soon thereafter lots were sold for development (Alexandria Deed Book 76:242). Although the eastern and central portions of the block were developed, the western third of the block comprising the study area was sold to four buyers who left it vacant (Figure 8).

By 1941, the United States Housing Authority (USHA), Nathan Strauss Administrator, under the Federal Works Agency (FWA), John M. Carmody Administrator, began to plan for the construction of permanent housing for African-American defense workers in the Uptown neighborhood. Then known as the Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA-44133, Ramsey Homes (or Ramsay as it was sometimes spelled) was developed and maintained in the following sequence:

1941 March 3, the Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA-44133 received Presidential or Administrative Approval.

1941 April 16, Edward S. Holland, Jr., Certified Land Surveyor, 624 King Street, Alexandria, completed a "Property Line Map" for the Housing Authority of the City of Alexandria (the predecessor of ARHA established by law in 1939). This plan showed 16 lots on the south side of Patrick Street between Pendleton and Wythe. Labeled 19-34, each measured 22 ft. wide and 87 ft. deep. Parcel 1 included Lot 19, Parcel 20 included Lot 20, Parcel 3 included Lots 21-33, and Parcel 4 included Lot 34.

1941 July 8, the United States Federal Government purchased four vacant parcels from Edward E. Lawler, R. S. Reynolds, Marguerite F. Graham, and Julian M. Dove (Alexandria Deed Book 176:7).

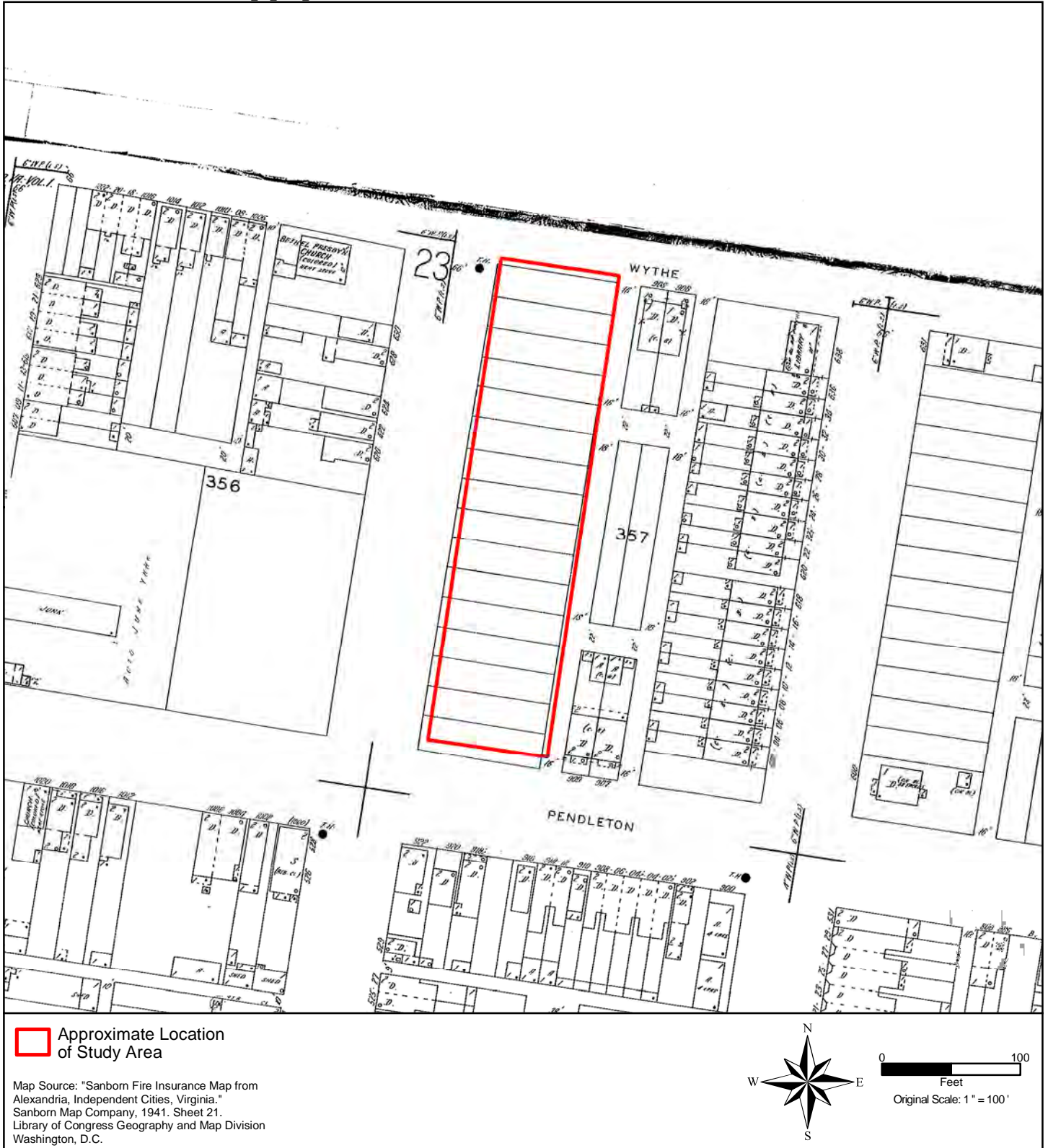


Figure 8
1941 Alexandria Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

1941 July 15, Smith, Werner, and Billings Architects, 220 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia; Robert K. Thulman, Mechanical Engineer; and Associated Engineers Inc. Site Engineers completed the first set of plans for the Ramsay Homes (Figure 9 and Figure 10). The firm's architects were Delos H. Smith, FAIA, junior partner J. M. Billings, and engineer Sheldon Werner. The original plan submitted was for three buildings. Building A and C were to contain four units, including a living room and kitchen on the first floor and two bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. The architects described Building B as flats and included one three-room unit, three four-room units, and three five-room units. Each were to have shiplap siding, brick accents, and large cupolas. The landscape plan called for plantings, alley parking, patios, hexagonal clothes lines, play area, and a spray basin (On file at ARHA).

1941 October 10, Smith, Werner, and Billings Architects submitted a second design, which was used by USHA (Figure 11 and Figure 12). The second option prescribed three four-unit Modernist foursquares and a three-unit L-shaped building with more economical materials such as "Fabcrete", a pre-cast unit of cementitious material that did not require interior framework for support and to which composition board, laths, and other material could be attached to achieve desired finishes. Joseph E. Hines of the Fabcrete Corporation, Richmond, Virginia applied for its patent on March 4, 1939, Serial No. 259,885. Utility lines and electrical wiring were outlined. Exterior elevations show coal chutes were once located on the north and south walls and interior plans note the plenums for "coal fired" heating and plumbing. The plan shows the elimination of large cupolas in favor of small skylights over each bathroom as they were located in the core of the buildings and could not have windows. It included parallel parking in the alley, hexagonal clothes lines labeled "yard clothes dryers", and a simple paved play area within the L of the triplex. Sheet 8 contains a "List of Plants", including 4 Trees of Heaven, 3 Honey Locust trees, 18 Black Locust trees, 15 Van Houtte Spirea flowering shrubs, 15 Arrow Wood flowering shrubs, 57 Regals Privet hedge plants, 85 Wash. Thorn hedge plants, 8 Japanese Creeper vines, 30 Evergreen Bittersweet vines, and 8 English Ivy vines. Historic aerials show mature trees between each building and that the landscape design was generally followed (RG 196, Records of the Public Housing Administration, Architectural and Engineering Plans, the National Archives at College Park Maryland).

1941 November 22, the construction contract was awarded (NHA 1942a).

1942 February 24, the U.S. Housing Authority was moved under the National Housing Authority of FWA and became the Federal Public Housing Authority (PHA). The PHA published a directory, Report SD-102, containing information on all war housing, including "Ramsay Homes", and slum-clearance projects financed in whole or in part by Federal funds during 1942 (NHA 1942a).

1942 July 31, the Project was under construction and 95 percent complete with an estimated cost of \$78,590 (NHA 1942a).

1942 September 18, the Project was under construction and 97 percent complete with an estimated cost of \$79,940 (NHA 1942a).

1942 October 2, the Project was under construction and 99 percent complete with an estimated cost of \$79,940 (NHA 1942a).

1942 October 30, the status of the Project had not changed (NHA 1942a).

1942 November 30, six units were occupied, eight units were available, and one unit was incomplete (NHA 1942a).

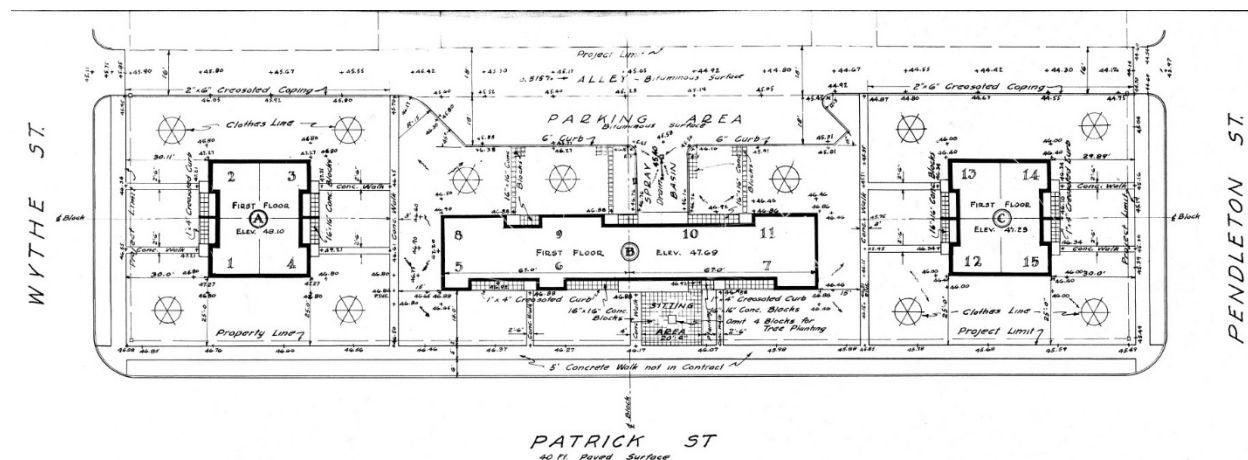


Figure 9: First Draft Site Plan July 7, 1941 Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA. 44133 (ARHA)

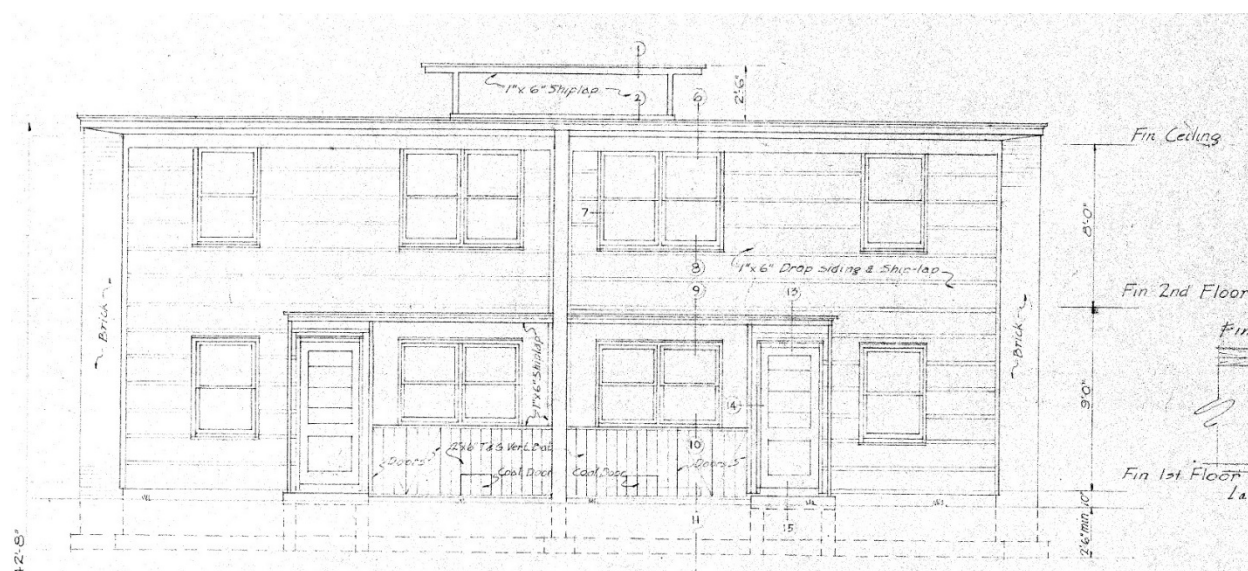


Figure 10: First Draft Elevation July 7, 1941 Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA. 44133 (ARHA)

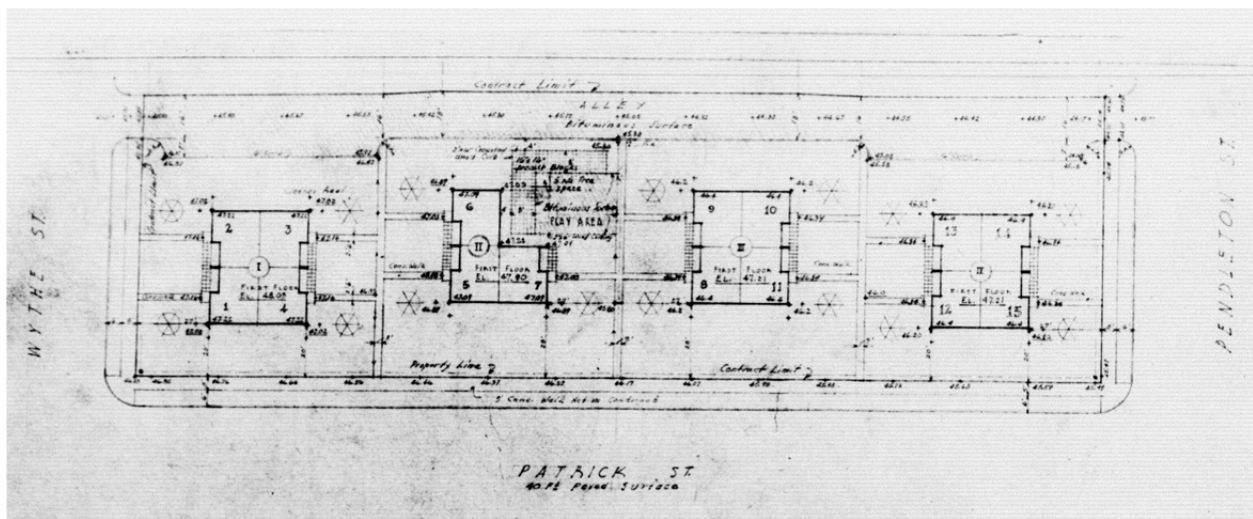


Figure 11: Final Site Plan Selected by USHA October 10, 1941 Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA. 44133 (National Archives at College Park, Maryland)

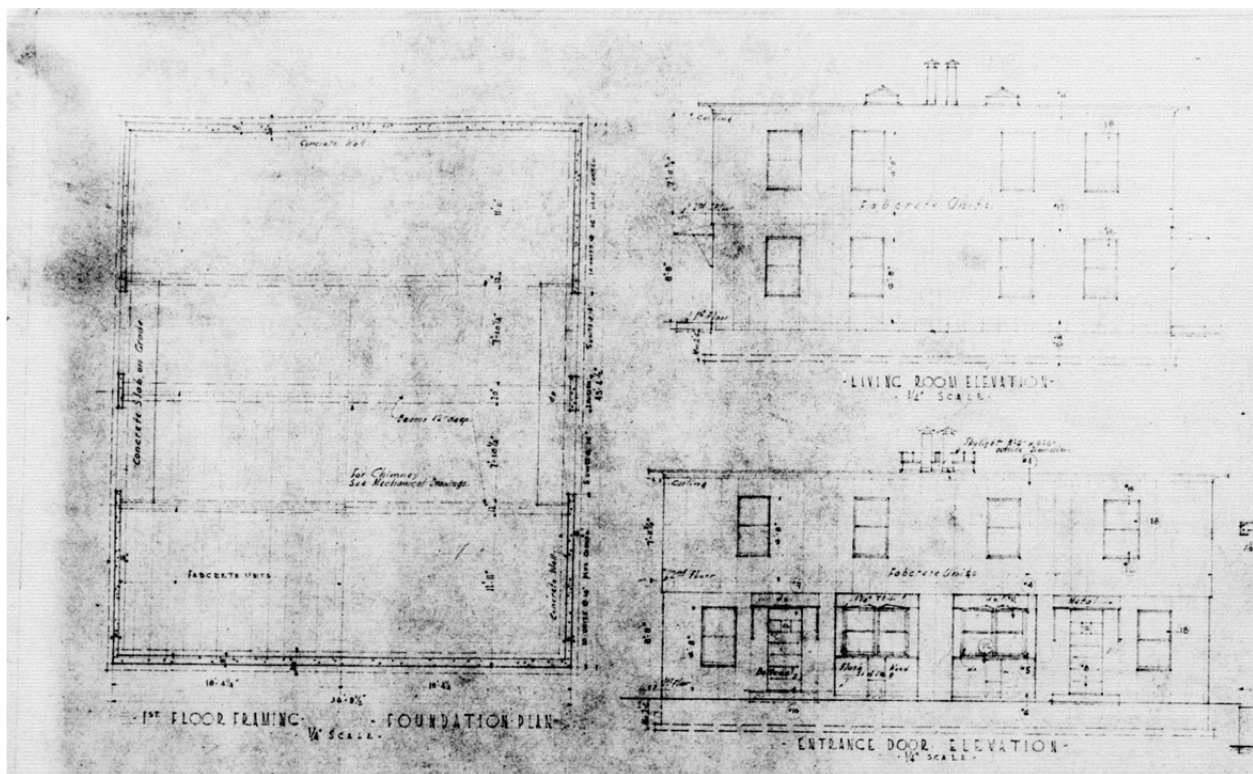


Figure 12: Final Elevation and Plans Selected by USHA October 10, 1941 Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA. 44133 (National Archives at College Park, Maryland)

1946 October 6, the Washington Post reported, “Three large war housing projects in Alexandria-elected at a cost of \$2,712,000-are now up for sale.” PHA gave the city the first chance to buy Chinquapin Village, Cameron Valley, and Ramsey Homes, all of which housed 2,000 people. While the PHA designated the buildings permanent, city officials contended that they were temporary, and the Mayor claimed the housing did not meet city building codes and were thus substandard.

1947, the Negro Yearbook contained a table of Permanent Public Housing Projects Making Provision for Negro Tenants as July 31, 1945, which included Ramsey Homes (Guzman et. al.). Alexandria City Directory listed the residents of the Ramsey Homes for the first time, including Carneal Coffee, USA (perhaps the Army); Cleveland B. Tivy, Clerk War Dept.; Will Daniels, barber; George W. Witherspoon, auto mechanic; and Charles E. Smith, janitor. All were noted as African American.

1951 July 26, PHA entered into a contract with the Alexandria Housing Authority for conveyance of low-rent housing “after the termination of the use of the project as defense housing during the Korean emergency” (United States 1956:48).

1953 April 30, the Alexandria Housing Authority became the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing and purchased the Ramsey Homes from the PHA (Alexandria Deed Book 356:407).

1957-1964, historic black and white aerial imagery from these years show the specified play area next to the triplex, plantings, and buildings with flat roofs and skylights over the bathrooms (Figure 13).

1959, ARHA noted that its 4,942 tenants, occupying 1,247 dwelling units across eight development projects including the Ramsey Homes, “...almost all came from dismal, substandard, or overcrowded quarters,” were “generally happy in their surroundings” and had greatly benefitted from public housing (ARHA 1959:2). The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from this year shows the buildings and notes the use of pre-cast concrete and flat roofs (Figure 14).

1979, aerial imagery shows that ARHA removed the skylights and constructed hipped roofs.

1995 August 15, Sorg and Associates prepared plans for Interior, Exterior, and Site Improvements at VA 4-5, The Ramsey Community (Figure 15 and Figure 16). The plan called for a Colonial Revival makeover, showing vinyl replacement windows with clip-on six-over-six muntins, the addition of inoperable aluminum shutters, and replacement metal paneled doors. The BAR approved the plans for exterior renovations with the stipulation that the doors and shutters be hunter green and that the faux muntins not be used, leaving the windows one-over-one. Stucco and brick were patched and repaired. The kitchens and bathrooms were renovated. Chain-linked fencing was replaced with metal picket fences and the paved play area removed and sodded with grass. The plan notes that English Ivy was to be removed from the property. Any other historic plant material left at that time was removed.

The current location and type of trees and fencing is different from the original (Figure 17). Shrubbery and plants around the buildings are nursery stock and likely added by residents.

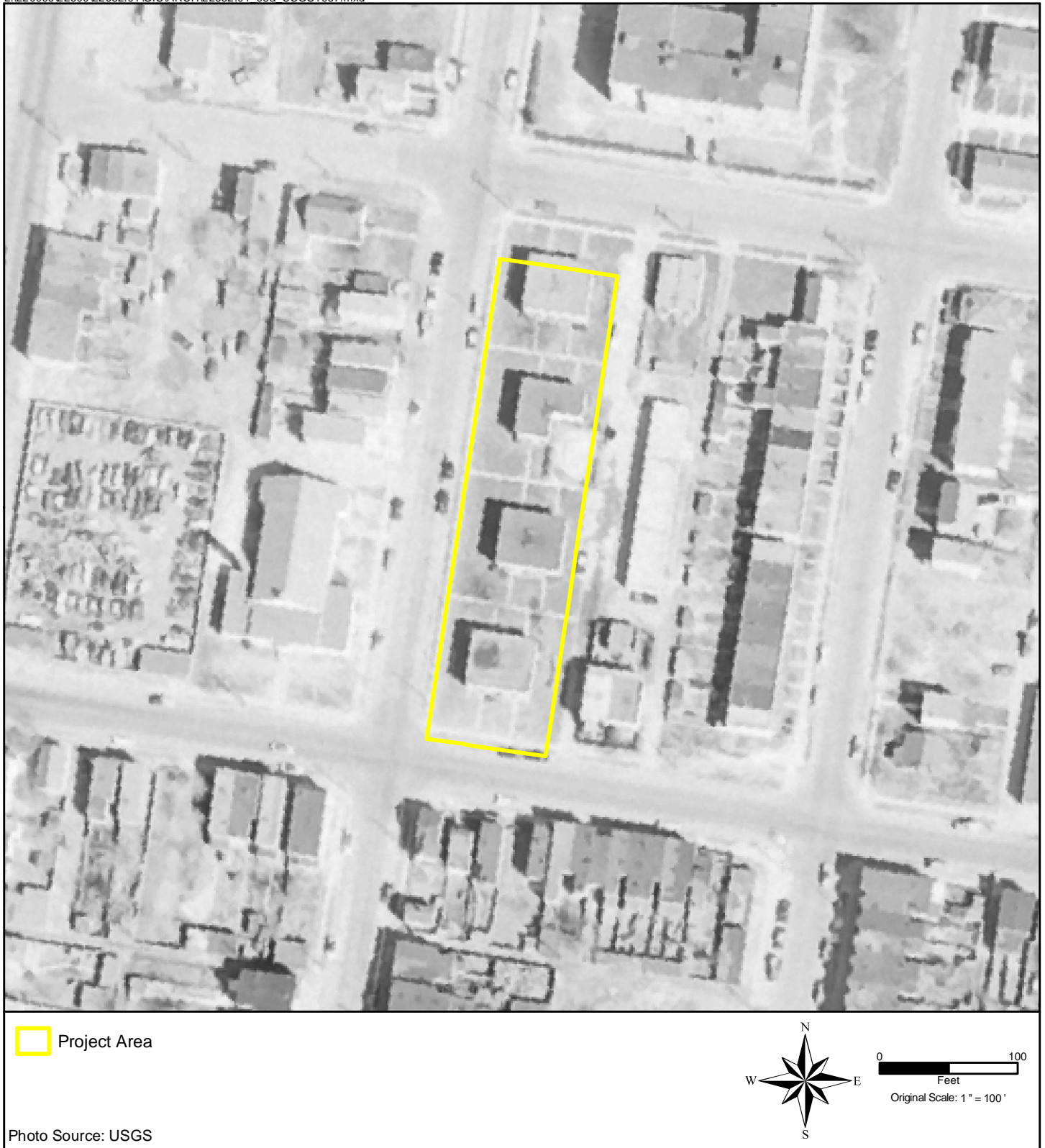
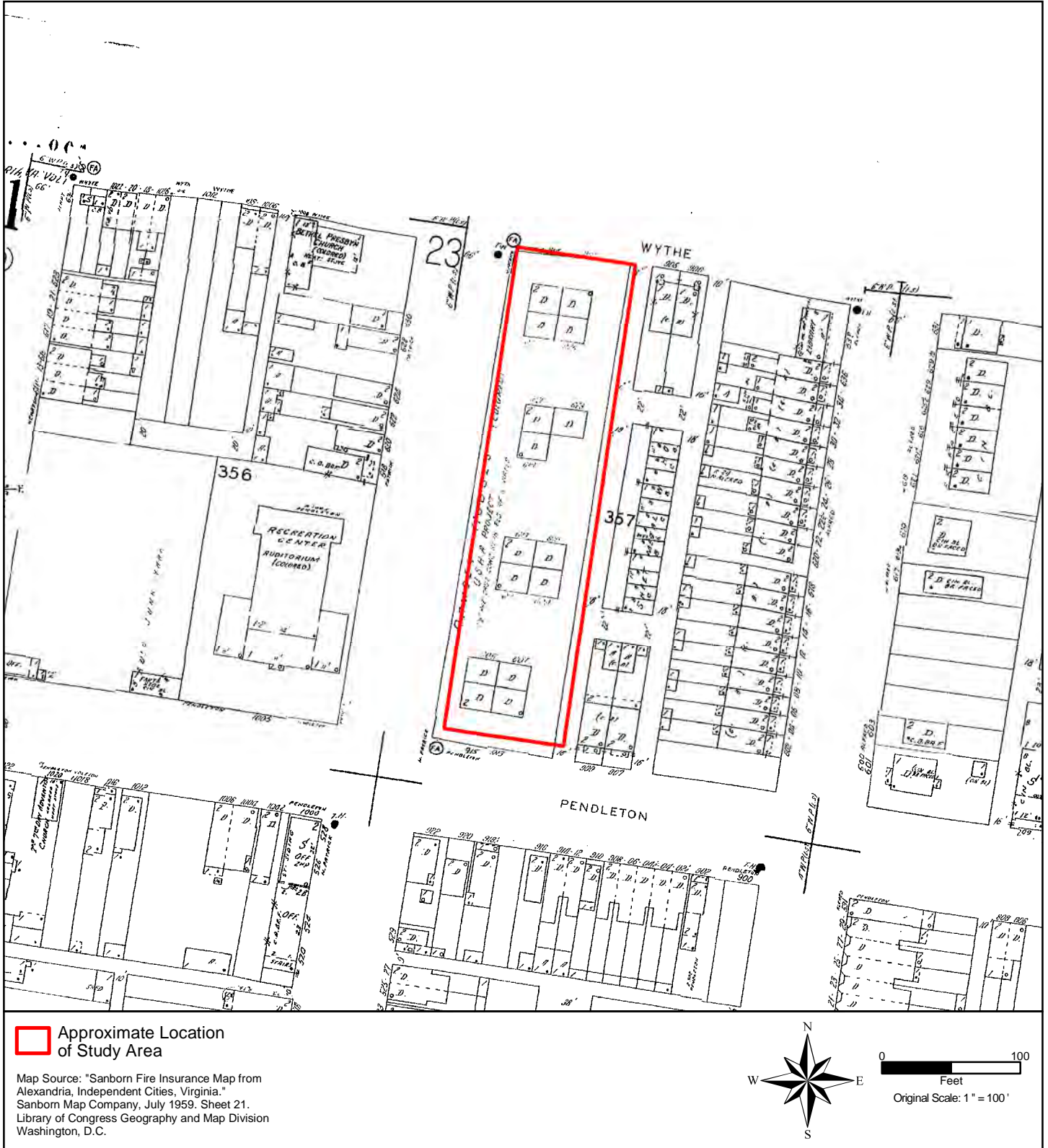


Figure 1'
March 1957 Alexandria Black and White Imagery



**Figure %
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map - Alexandria 1959**

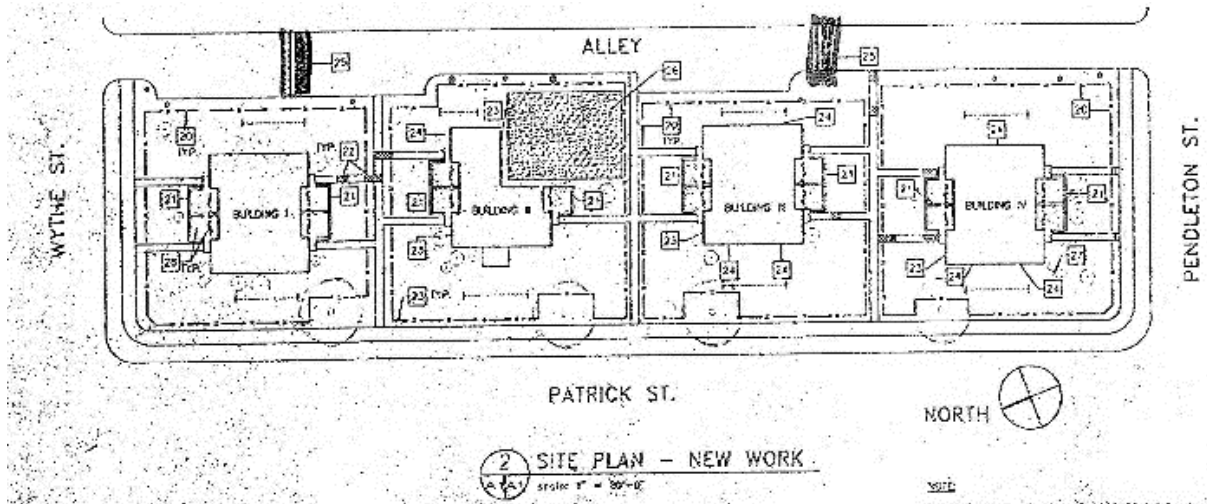


Figure 15: August 15, 1995 Plans for Interior, Exterior, and Site Improvements at VA 4-5, The Ramsey Community (ARHA)

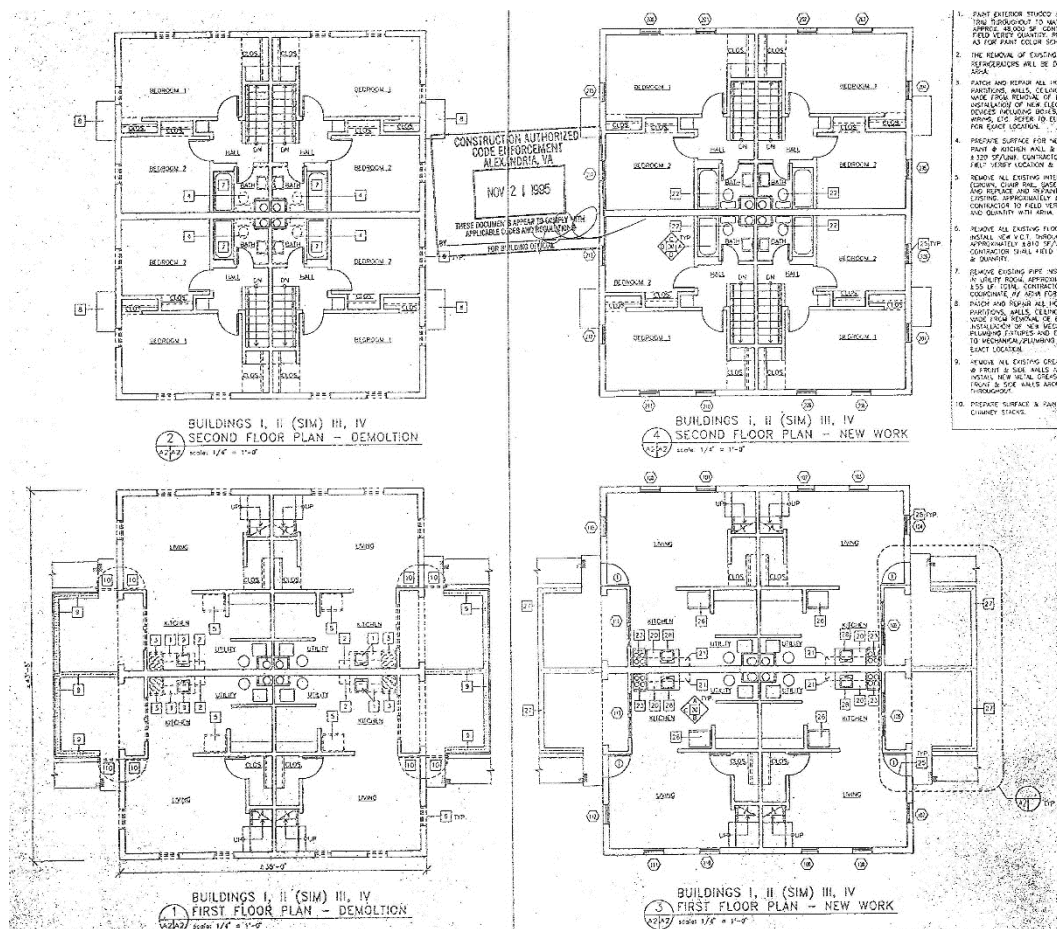


Figure 16: August 15, 1995 Plans for Interior, Exterior, and Site Improvements at VA 4-5, The Ramsey Community (ARHA)



Figure 17
March 2013 Natural Color Imagery

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The history of public housing in the United States provides a context in which to analyze the architectural design and styles of the built environment at the Ramsey Homes project site, as well as the situation of the historic and modern residents of the Project. A neglected area in the writing of urban history is the physical environment. It is very likely that the built environment reflects and shapes human behavior (Gardner 1981: 64). Most literature on low end housing has concentrated on tenements and urban reform in the late 19th century (Gardner 1981: 66). In recent years, interest has shifted to the evolution of public housing policy and design.

Public Housing in Early America

In rural or agrarian socio-economic milieus, such as much of the United States prior to the 20th century, families typically built houses for their own use. Industrialization in the 19th century radically altered the social relations of building, working and living. Increasingly over time, dwellings were built by hired labor and sold at market prices; those who could not afford such housing collected in slums.

In the early stages of our history, settlers built their own homes, good or bad, with their own hands and some help from their neighbors. Much of our farm and rural housing is still in this stage. When we came to town building and industrialization, private business enterprise took over the job. It has had no competition until recently, and the result is a larger acreage of worse looking slums than can be found in any other allegedly civilized country. Private enterprise rise can offer no alibi. That is simply what happened as a result of laissez faire and the free working of supply and demand (Wood 1940: 83).

Prior to the American Revolution (1775-1781), responsibility for caring for Virginia's poor rested with Anglican parishes. However, after the British were defeated, the Anglican Church was disestablished, and the responsibility shifted to the local governments (U.S. Department of the Interior 1937; Ward 1980; Watkinson 2000; Roach 2002). Public housing, with its current connotations, is a product of the early 20th century, in the 18th century the term "public house" referred to an *ordinary*, an inn or tavern.

The Alms House

Circa 1800, the town of Alexandria erected a poor house and work house at the northwest corner of present-day Monroe Avenue and Route 1. Inmates and the keeper of the poor house likely lived in the main building, which was a large, two-and-a-half-story, seven-bay, Federal-style brick structure (U.S. Department of the Interior 1937; Ward 1980; Watkinson 2000; Roach 2002). The building displayed Flemish bond brickwork and featured a hipped roof with pediment, dormers, and four interior chimneys. The symmetrical façade was arranged around a two-story, projecting center pavilion. The center pavilion contained an arched entrance that incorporated a fan light and sidelights; a Palladian window occupied the second story of the projecting pavilion. The interior displayed a rectangular, longitudinal-hall plan with central entrance.

The ledger of Robert Hodgkin, who became keeper of the Alexandria Poor House in 1861, provides valuable information about the operation of the Poor House between 1861 and 1863 (Miller 1989; Ward 1980). Hodgkin's record of the operations of the Alexandria Poor House documents that, despite the disruptions to the local economy, he was still able to purchase a variety of foodstuffs, including fresh meat, salt beef, flour, butter, bread, molasses, cornmeal, herring, and pickled codfish. He also purchased "20 bushels rye for coffee" (Ward 1980: 65). These purchases supplemented the vegetables produced on the Poor House farm. In January 1862, the livestock on the farm included "three horses, two cows, one bull, and nineteen hogs" (Ward 1980: 66).

In January 1862, Robert Hodgkins prepared a list of the people, livestock, furnishings, and agricultural implements at the Poor House for submission to the "committee on the poor," which oversaw the institution. At that time, thirty-eight inmates lived at the Poor House, along with eight members of Robert Hodgkins's household. The Poor House ledger for 1861-1862 contains two sections, one for the alms house and one for the work house. According to local historian Ruth Ward, who analyzed the ledgers, "The ledger entries dealing with the work house indicate that most inmates were sent there for thirty days, although some were sentenced to six months." During the period covered by the ledger, at least two inmates of the work house, John Crisman and Kate Thompson, ran away (Ward 1980: 66). In January of 1863, one inmate delivered a child at the Poor House. The ledger also mentions three deaths in 1862: James Buckhannon, an unnamed boy who drowned, and a "German who died at poor house" (Ward 1980: 65-66).

Philanthropic and Limited Dividend Housing

Until the Depression, most American leaders believed that the private market, with a helping hand from private philanthropy, could meet the nation's housing needs. The antecedent of public housing, philanthropic and limited dividend housing of the late 19th century, though privately built and operated, shared some similarities with later public housing. For instance, philanthropic and limited dividend housing was also faulted for plain appearance (Gardner 1981: 67). In the early 20th century, a few unions and settlement house reformers built model housing developments for working class families, mostly in the northeastern United States and without government subsidy.

Public Housing in the New Deal

Overview

The Great Depression began on October 29, 1929, when the stock market crashed on what became known as Black Tuesday. By 1932, at least one-quarter of the American workforce was unemployed. President Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933 and began a series of experimental projects and programs, known as the New Deal, focusing on Relief, Recovery, and Reform. Prior to the 1930s, the Federal Government had no role in housing private citizens; the social welfare of the public, in terms of housing, was left entirely to local governments and private charities (Robinson et al: 1999b: 5). The Depression focused the nation's attention on

"the inequities of the housing market and on the smoldering slum problems ... devastated home ownership and the residential construction industry" (Robinson et al: 1999b: 1:12).

Public housing in the United States was first implemented after many Americans lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the economic crises. One of Roosevelt's responses was the Federal Housing Act of 1934, which established the basic format for public housing in which the government subsidizes the market value of the housing, and the creation of the Federal Housing Association (FHA) (Trotter 1958; Gotham 2000: 296). Public housing in the New Deal was also an employment program, as under the National Industrial Recovery Act, the formation of the Public Works Administration (PWA), which developed and built the first housing projects in the United States, led to the creation of many jobs in the construction industry (Aiken and Alford 1970).

The socio-political environment during the early years of the Great Depression accommodated reformers who believed that the federal government should subsidize social housing and build a noncommercial alternative housing sector. Many American housing activists envisioned public housing for the middle-class workforce as well as the poor.

The Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932

The first significant New Deal measure targeted at housing was the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932. This act created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a federal agency authorized to make loans to private corporations providing housing for low-income families. Also in 1932, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board was established to make advances on the security of home mortgages and establish a Home Loan Bank System. The act did little to assist individual homebuyers. The average home loan at that time required very short-term credit, with terms generally ranging from three to five years. Large down payments, second mortgages, and high interest rates were commonplace.

The Housing Act of 1934

As the economic situation worsened, the National Housing Act of 1934 was passed to relieve unemployment and encourage private banks and lending institutions to extend credit for home repairs and construction. Under the Act of 1934, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was created. The responsibilities of the FHA, now a federal agency under the Assistant Secretary for Housing-Federal Housing Commissioner, are to improve housing standards and conditions; to provide an adequate home financing system through insurance of mortgage loans; and to stabilize the mortgage market. Two mortgage insurance programs were established under Title II of the Act of 1934: Section 203 mortgage insurance for one to four family homes; and Section 207 multifamily project mortgages. The Act of 1934 also authorized the FHA to create the Federal National Mortgage Association, or Fannie Mae, which was chartered in 1937.

Helen Alfred, Executive Director of the National Public Housing Conference, summarized the rationale for the act, its means, and its goals:

Recognizing the social importance of housing to all the people, and the value of a home construction program as a medium of reemployment in a great key industry, the Federal government has taken a hand. The removal of blighted areas and rehousing of the lower-income groups at rents which they can afford to pay has not been accomplished by speculative builders or limited dividend corporations. This new policy of the Federal government, as expressed in the terms of the National Industrial Recovery Act, presents an opportunity to make rapid progress toward the solution of our housing problem. In conformity with the provisions of the Act, the Government has made large sums of money available for the purpose of clearing slums and erecting low-rent dwellings. These funds will be advanced in the form of loans and outright grants. Private corporations, including limited dividend companies, can merely obtain loans for their projects. Public agencies, in addition to loans, can obtain subsidies amounting to thirty percent of the cost of labor and materials (Alfred 1934: 23).

Alfred also summarized the necessity for states and local communities to pass legislation and charter local authorities that would make implementation of law possible:

The policy of the Government presents an opportunity for a vigorous battle against indecent housing conditions. The Government is doing its part; the next steps must be taken by local communities. As stated above, the outright grants will be given only to public bodies. Only five States now have the power to create housing boards or authorities with full power to acquire unhealthy areas, clear slums, and construct and operate dwellings. These States are California, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Enabling legislation is pending in a number of extraordinary sessions of State Legislaturescivic and welfare groups, members of the clergy, women's organizations and progressive labor leaders are uniting to promote sentiment in their local communities favorable to the creation of municipal housing authorities. Most of the municipal legislation is being patterned after a bill prepared in New York City under the supervision of the National Public Housing Conference. Under the terms of this bill, it is recommended that a municipal housing authority be created and that a board be appointed by the Mayor. This board is to have power to issue its own bonds and to sell them to the Federal government. It will have placed at its disposal an effective procedure for acquiring land by condemnation or purchase, for clearing, replanning and rebuilding unhealthy and blighted areas, and finally to manage and operate dwellings when completed. The Government loans will be repaid out of the rents collected (Alfred 1934: 23).

Critics of the Housing Act of 1934 have pointed to the act's failure to assist lower income families most in need of housing aid and feel it did little to improve inner city housing; it promoted the single family detached dwelling as the prevailing mode of housing, which perpetuated suburban sprawl and it intensified racial segregation. Critics of the FHA have seen racially discriminatory policies and practices of the agency associated with mortgage insurance and lending, appraisal guidelines, and home building subsidies (Gotham 2001: 309).

Many New Dealers, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Harold Ickes, Aubrey Williams and Harry Hopkins acknowledged and worked to mitigate the effects of race on public policy; for instance, it was mandated that African Americans, who comprised about 10% of the total population, and 20% of the poor, would collect at least 10% of welfare assistance payments and various New Deal relief programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) allocated 10% of their budgets to African Americans (Leuchtenburg 1963:244-246). President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed an unprecedented number of African Americans to second-level positions in his administration; these appointees were collectively called *the Black Cabinet*. These efforts were largely responsible for the transition of black political organizations from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party by 1936, forging the political alliance between African Americans and the Democratic Party that still exists. Few efforts were; however, extended to ending racial segregation or guaranteeing the civil rights of racial minorities. The CCC was organized in racially segregated units; however, pay and working conditions were equitable (Leuchtenburg 1963: 256-257).

Reformers and Housers - Ideals and Designs for Social Housing

Even before the onset of the Great Depression, a cadre of progressive American architects and planners had come to believe that fundamental restructuring of national residential patterns was needed. These design professionals and other reform-minded citizens, including urban and labor activists, envisioned the development of attractive and affordable alternatives to single-family suburbanization, which had become endemic by the 1920s (Mayer 1935: 400). Mayer, among other advocates of the rethinking of the American domestic landscape, saw new social housing not only as a solution for the problems of impoverished slum dwellers but a necessary step toward providing better lives for all Americans:

The slum and the blighted district -- urban and rural - are only the most spectacular manifestations of the bad conditions under which almost all of us live. The people who live in slums can't afford to live in decent places. Those who can afford to don't get anything really satisfactory, unless they shift around with the shifting, sprawling city and suburb. Lack of play spaces and convenient parks, noise, exposure to traffic accidents, encroachment of business, overcrowded roads and streets and subways -- these affect the well-to-do only in less degree than they afflict the poor. The well-to-do shift to new areas, and the poor move into the abandoned unsatisfactory areas. If this sounds an exaggeration to anyone, let him simply visit the derelict areas that were good neighborhoods twenty, fifteen, ten years ago.

...the housing problem is twofold. First, there is the lack of reasonable planning and stability which makes our entire physical environment unsatisfactory. Then there is the problem for something like two-thirds of our population who haven't the money to pay for physically decent housing--whose income or relief wage or relief dole is not enough to pay the sum of real-estate taxes, current interest and amortization on cost of land and building, and adequate maintenance. On top of these permanent elements there is the impending housing shortage, which will affect both groups. The problem of the two-thirds is bluntly one that involves

redistribution of wealth. The physical solution is similar for all: planning and construction of projects on a sufficiently large scale so that they can be free from traffic dangers and extraneous noise, can contain facilities for recreational and community life, and can achieve the economies of large-scale planning and its amenities of proper orientation to air and sunlight. Such projects must be so related to the larger community of which they are a part that they are within convenient reach of daily work, of shopping districts, of larger recreational and park areas (Mayer 1935: 400).

Catherine Bauer [Catherine Krause Bauer Wurster], born May 11, 1905 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, was a leading member of a group of early 20th century idealists known as *housers*, social reformers, mostly women, committed to improving housing for low-income families. On the basis of her belief that social housing could produce good social architecture, and impressions made on her by the wide spread suffering during the Great Depression, she became a great advocate for the poor in the struggle for housing. Bauer was a charismatic figure in the reform movement, and one of its greatest theorists. Her classic *Modern Housing* (1934) made her an authority on social housing and she co-authored the Housing Act of 1937.

Bauer was significantly influenced by American urban critic Lewis Mumford and European and expatriate American artists and architects in Europe including Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Sylvia Beach, and the architects of change group; Ernst May, André Lurçat, and Walter Gropius.

European ideals and designs for social housing that had developed in the 1920s were adopted and implemented in the United States in the 1930s. The goal of the houser movement, beyond the creation of a supply of adequate, low-rent Government-built housing for the urban poor, was the establishment of an ordered environment for the urban poor that would eventually lead to the elimination of urban slums. European urban planning concepts such as *Zeilenbau*, or a plan that arranged buildings in parallel rows, to take advantage of maximum light and ventilation, were adopted for many projects. Limited traffic flow with planned circulation patterns, pedestrian walkways, courtyard areas and open spaces with park-like settings were also emphasized in the designs (Robinson et al: 1999a: 18). Most projects were designed to a human scale and were well landscaped. Some included private or semi-private garden spaces.

Ultimately, the uninspired, sterile, and institutional designs that began to characterize American public housing fell far short of the communitarian, European-style projects that the housers envisioned.

The PWA - Public Housing Design and Construction

The United States Public Works Administration (PWA) was created as a federal agency under the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933. The agency's mission was to provide employment, stabilize purchasing power, improve public welfare, and contribute to a revival of American industry through management of the construction of public works and housing (Figure 18).

Horatio Hackett, a Chicago architect and engineer with limited experience in housing reform issues, was placed at the head of the PWA's Housing Division; consultants on staff included architects, Alfred Fellheimer and Angelo R. Clas (Robinson et al: 1999a: 21-23).



Figure 18: PWA Steam Shovel
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)

Several subordinate units were organized within the Housing Division of the PWA; the Branch of Land Acquisition which handled property acquisition and supervised site development; the Branch of Plans and Specifications, staffed by architects, engineers, landscape architects, and cost estimators, who worked closely with local architects and engineers; and the Branches of Construction and Management, which were responsible for the final aspects of project development, including slum removal, construction supervision, and administration of tenant services.

In the first years of its existence, the PWA Housing Division oversaw all phases of site development for public housing projects, excepting the style in which the buildings were built; which was, at least theoretically, left to the local architects (Robinson et al: 1999b: 19).

As PWA public housing scholars Michael W. Strauss and Talbot Wegg wrote:

...the style of buildings, whether they should be "modern," colonial, Spanish, or what-not, was on the whole left to the decision of local architects. They had only one watchword, simplicity. As a result there is, to the layman's eye, great variety in the exterior design of projects. New York, Chicago, Camden, Cleveland, and some others are modern; Jacksonville and Miami are of typical design; Charleston recalls the graciousness of its heritage; Boston is in keeping with the New England tradition; Dallas suggests the distinctive architecture of the Southwest (Strauss and Wegg 1938: 68).

The autonomy of local architects in design decisions proved problematic; PWA officials determined that most American builders were incapable of designing large-scale public housing projects that met the high standards of the Housing Division. Months before the first federal government funded public housing project, First Homes, opened in Manhattan's lower east side on December 3, 1935, the Plans and Specifications Branch began the preparation of a series of plans for the basic units of public housing complexes, including apartments and row houses of all types and sizes. These plans were published in May 1935 as *Unit Plans: Typical Room Arrangements, Site Plans and Details for Low Rent Housing*, were adopted by most local architects involved with public housing projects, and became the standard for PWA public housing design (Robinson et al: 1999b: 19). Such publications were updated from year to year. Public housing design in Alexandria, Virginia seems to have been informed by these plans with considerable flexibility in final site plan development.

Over time, the use of standardized plans and model unit designs became more and more evident. Although the original rationale for this approach stemmed from observed deficiencies in the design skills of local architects, the ultimate effect was a net loss of freedom of design and architectural innovation. Further, economy increasingly dominated other considerations of design and construction.

Typical American public housing projects of this period included multi-family, low-rise residential buildings and an ordered site plan that arrayed the buildings around open spaces and recreational areas; buildings generally occupied less than 25 percent of the site (Figure 19 and Figure 20). The most common building forms were several-story walk-up apartments and row houses, often constructed of brick, simply designed and generally well-built (Robinson et al: 1999b: 21-22). Attached dwellings were popular with designers of public housing complexes, being more economical in both construction and operating costs (Robinson et al: 1999b: 21-22).



Figure 19: K Street Projects in Washington, D.C.
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)



Figure 20: Cedar-Central Project in Cleveland, Ohio; June 1937
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)

A community center, typically a one-story building containing management offices, recreation rooms or classrooms, and a hall for community functions such as dances or meetings, was usually integrated into the project. Management offices, maintenance buildings, garages, nursery schools, and buildings originally containing retail or office spaces comprised a non-residential component at some sites (Robinson et al: 1999a: 18-19, Robinson et al: 1999b: 21-22). Larger projects often included multiple commercial and community buildings and manifested as almost self-contained communities within the surrounding neighborhoods. These sometimes included heating plants, generally characterized by a tall smokestack (Robinson et al: 1999a: 18-19).

Spartan utilitarian design characterized the interior spaces of the individual residential units (Figure 21). Most units included one to four bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, and bathroom. Room sizes were minimal and the shapes generally regular. Walls were most often painted concrete block or plaster partitions; floors typically asphalt tile or linoleum over concrete, with the occasional use of wood parquet where costs and availability permitted. Units included modern conveniences; a gas range and electric refrigerator in the kitchens and full bathrooms (Robinson et al: 1999a: 19-20).

Each project was subject to both strict cost controls and minimum standards of appearance and livability. Various cost and space saving strategies were employed including open cupboards and closets and suite type plans as interior hallways were considered wasted space. Units were almost always situated to take advantage of maximum natural sunlight and ventilation, and arranged to maximize the privacy of residents (Robinson et al: 1999a: 19-20).

Factors in determining the location of public housing projects within local communities included proximity to employment opportunities, slum clearance, existing transportation and infrastructure development, and availability of suitable land. City blocks were often combined to form superblocks (Robinson et al: 1999b: 21-22) (Figure 22 and Figure 23).

Designers sought to invest the project's residents with a sense of communal identity, distinct from its surrounding neighborhood, through the deliberate site plans and the design and form of the buildings. Public art was also an important component of early PWA-era projects and some later designs. The earliest PWA projects successfully integrated European design theories and contemporary American housing reform philosophies; the best of these achieved very high standards of design, site planning, and construction (Robinson et al: 1999a:19).



Figure 21: Public Housing Unit Interior, Hillside Homes, Bronx, New York
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)



Figure 22: Aerial View, PWA Built Hillside Homes, Bronx, New York
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)



Figure 23: Aerial View of Williamsburg Houses in Brooklyn, New York
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)

Slum Clearance

Housing reformers during this period were divided over the issue of slum clearance. In the 1930s, most American cities included slum areas, neighborhoods characterized by substandard housing of various types, occupied by the very poor, often ethnic or racial minorities (Figure 24 and Figure 25). Many believed that slums were breeding grounds for crime and a major public health problem (Figure 26 and Figure 27). Traditional reformers believed that slum clearance served to eliminate blighted and overcrowded neighborhoods while the building of new low-income housing on former slum sites allowed the poor to continue to live near their places of employment. Others, including Bauer and many housers, believed that slum clearance was a waste of time and money that primarily benefited the real estate industry. Opponents of slum clearance contended that new housing built on former slum sites, even with public financing, would often be too expensive for the dispossessed tenants. Lewis Mumford, an icon of the houser group, wrote: "if we wish to produce cheap dwellings, it is to raw land that we must turn... The proper strategy is to forget about the slums as a special problem.... When we have built enough good houses in the right places, the slums will empty themselves" (Robinson et al 1999b: 29).

Legal issues related to slum clearance proved to be a major obstacle for the PWA Housing Division projects. Early on, the PWA was determined to prove the feasibility of combining slum clearance with the construction of low-rent housing (Figure 28). Numerous PWA acquired sites that had been slum neighborhoods were condemned under the power of eminent domain. As some slum sites had hundreds of owners with whom the PWA had to negotiate, acquisition was sometimes very complicated. As a result of various legal challenges to condemnation proceedings before 1936, the PWA built all subsequent housing on vacant land or in sites for which it could negotiate clear title (Robinson et al 1999b: 37).

United States Housing Act of 1937

As previously discussed, the Housing Act of 1934, although responsible for several major public works housing projects, was quite limited in scope. In December 1935, Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York began a campaign to push a broader housing bill through Congress (Robinson et al 1999b: 33). In a speech before the NPHC, he defended his stand on public housing against attack from the political right:

The object of public housing ... is not to invade the field of home building for the middle class or the well-to-do ... Nor is it even to exclude private enterprise from participation in a low-cost housing program. It is merely to supplement what private industry will do, by subsidies which will make up the difference between what the poor can afford to pay and what is necessary to assure decent living quarters (Robinson et al 1999b: 33).



Figure 24: O'Brien Court Slum Dwellings, Washington, D.C., 1934-1936
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library)



Figure 25: Canal Street in the Yamacrow Section of Savannah, Georgia, 1936
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library)

**THE
BLIND ALLEY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.
SECLUSION BREEDING CRIME AND DISEASE
to kill the alley inmates and infect the street residents.**

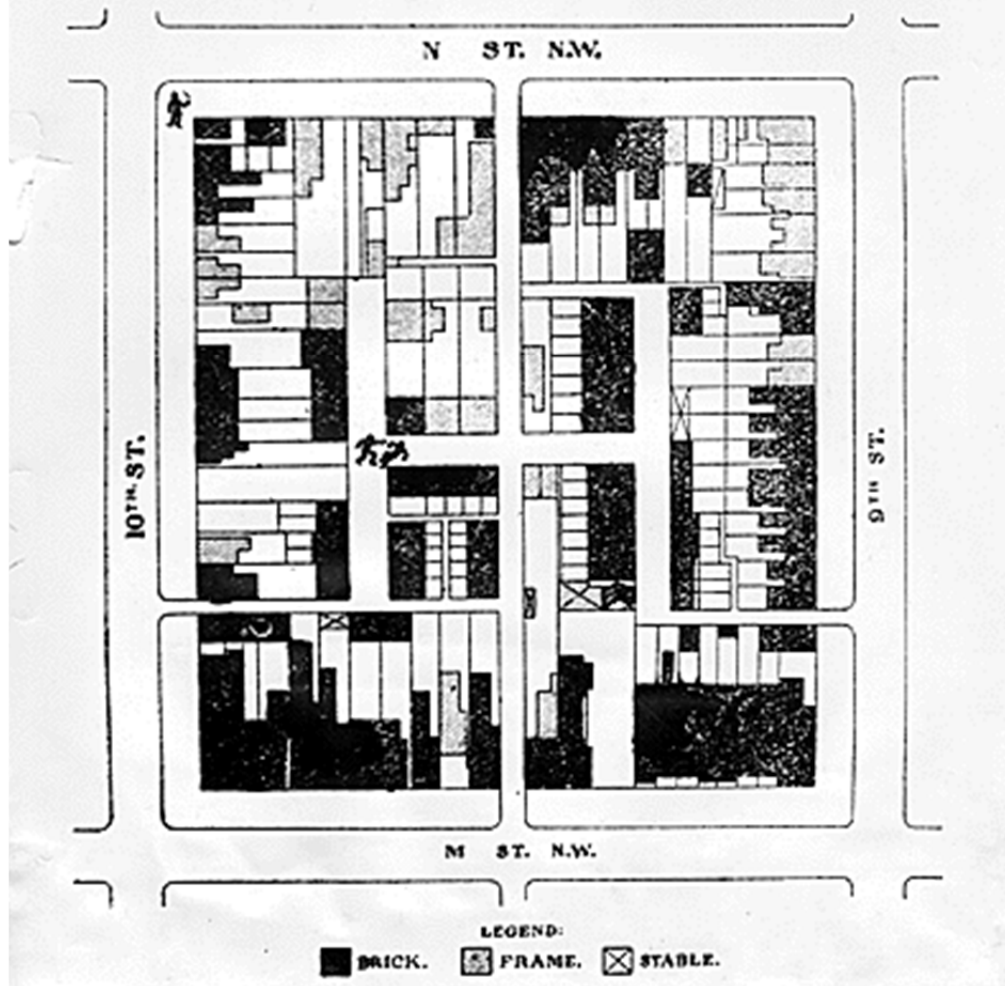


Figure 26: Propaganda for Slum Clearance in Washington D.C.
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library)



Figure 27: Slums Breed Crime; USHA Poster from the 1930s
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library)



Figure 28: Slum Clearance in Washington, D.C., 1934-1936
(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives)

Lobbyists for the private sector housing industry, amongst other groups, organized opposition to the new bill. One of the strongest and most vocal rebuttals to the philosophy of Wagner and his allies came from the president of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), Walter S. Schmidt, of Cincinnati:

It is contrary to the genius of the American people and the ideals they have established that government become landlord to its citizens ... There is sound logic in the continuance of the practice under which those who have initiative and the will to save acquire better living facilities, and yield their former quarters at modest rents to the group below (Robinson et al 1999b: 33).

Other business organizations followed suit, with the National Association of Retail Lumber Dealers, the U.S. Building and Loan League, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce also expressing fierce opposition to public housing legislation (Robinson et al 1999b: 33). The public housing activists responded by painting a bleak picture of the state of American housing:

...AT LEAST A THIRD OF OUR HOUSING IS BAD ENOUGH TO BE A health hazard, but not all in the same way or to the same degree. The coverage of moral hazard is less than that of physical hazard, which is fortunate, as its effects

are worse. About two fifths of our housing is rural, divided more or less evenly between farm and non-farm. The Farm Housing Survey made in 1934 shows an appalling lack of modern sanitation and conveniences, except in a few favored regions. To call 80 percent of our farmhouses substandard is an understatement (Wood 1940: 83).

Wood found data on urban housing conditions in the 1930s, derived from the *Real Property Inventories* housing field surveys conducted from 1934-1936, also disturbing. The structural condition of only 39% of urban homes was considered good, 44.8% needed repairs, and 16.2% was considered poor; 4.4% of urban dwelling units had neither gas nor electric lighting, 14.6% lacked a private indoor toilet, 19.9% had no bathtub or shower, and 17.4% of occupied dwellings were crowded or overcrowded (Wood 1940: 83). According to Wood, "to call a third of the nation or a third of those who live in urban communities 'ill-housed' can hardly be an exaggeration (Wood 1940: 83)." "One-third of a nation" became a rallying cry for the public housing movement (Robinson et al: 1999b: 34).

Enacted as law, the 1937 United States Housing Act, with the objective of providing affordable housing to the poorer segments of the population, provided stringent new cost guidelines to public housing projects that led to an increased emphasis on economy and greater standardization in American public housing:

It is the policy of the United States to promote the general welfare of the Nation by employing its funds and credit, as provided in this Act, to assist the several States and their political subdivisions to remedy the unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of lower income and, consistent with the objectives of this Act, to vest in local public housing agencies the maximum amount of responsibility in the administration of their housing programs (United States Housing Act of 1937, Sec. 2; 42 U.S.C. 1437).

The new legislation revived the failing Red Hook housing project in New York City; however, it also tightly controlled the project's budget. The total cost per room was cut to nearly half that of earlier PWA efforts in New York City, and the project density far exceeded that utilized in earlier public projects in the city (Robinson et al: 1999b: 40-41).

The issue of slum clearance was also revisited in the 1937 act. Senator David I. Walsh, a proponent of slum reform from Massachusetts, added the "equivalent elimination" provision to the bill, which required the local authority to remove substandard slum units from the local housing supply in a "substantially equal number" to the public housing units it built. The local authority could meet this requirement by "demolition, condemnation, and effective closing" of substandard units, or through rehabilitation by "compulsory repair or improvement." This provision was supported by many commercial landlords, who feared that expanded housing supplies would lower the rents that could be charged for their rental properties (Robinson et al: 1999b: 37).

United States Housing Authority

The United States Housing Authority, or USHA, was created under the 1937 Housing Act. This federal agency was designed to lend money to the states or communities for construction of low-cost public housing. Unlike the centralized organization of the earlier PWA Housing Division, which was responsible for every component of project planning and administration, operations at the newly established USHA were increasingly decentralized.

Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes successfully lobbied Congress to place the USHA within the Department of the Interior; however, President Roosevelt appointed Nathan Straus, a man strongly disliked by Ickes as the USHA administrator. This appointment resulted in Ickes distancing himself from the public housing program (Robinson et al: 1999b: 39).

Under the USHA, responsibility for initiating, designing, building and managing housing projects was given to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), while the Washington bureaucracy provided program direction, financial support, and consulting advice. In effect, site analysis, land acquisition, tenant distribution, and project design were handled by PHAs under the relatively strict constraints of the Federal program and the USHA furnished technical guidance, design assistance, project review, and issued program standards, management guidelines, design models, architectural standards, and building prototypes (Robinson et al: 1999b: 45).

Regarding the impact of increased standardization and restrictive budgets under the USHA on architectural style in public housing, it is clear that design creativity suffered during this period, continuing a trend that had actually begun under the PWA. Economy of materials and design trumped experimental and new design alternatives, resulting in what some critics have labeled an "unnecessarily barracks-like and monotonous" look. The social-psychological elements of project planning that had formed the core of the housers' vision were replaced by the goal of meeting minimum human needs of clean air and light within increasingly limited budgets. Although many new modern housing units were built, most were devoid of the artistic or aesthetic styling of earlier projects (Robinson et al: 1999b: 45).

As with the PWA projects, attempts were made to instill a sense of community in the public housing projects financed by the USHA. PHAs were encouraged to organize a variety of social, educational, and recreational events for the residents of the local complexes, most of which included a neighborhood community center. Choirs, nondenominational children's Bible schools, card clubs, dancing classes, nursery schools and neighborhood newsletters were amongst the activities and programs employed (Robinson et al: 1999b: 43). The USHA also attempted to increase public support for its programs and the new housing projects using city newspapers and government printed material, ground breaking and dedication ceremonies, tours of model homes, and radio broadcasts (Robinson et al: 42).

Criticism of Public Housing in the New Deal

In its earliest phase, the American efforts in public housing were inspired by modern architectural theory, progressive social ideals and the praxis of urban activists; however, it soon

founded due to political squabbling, pressures from private sector builders, racial prejudice, classism, and uninspired design. Although a high degree of technical excellence was mandated by USHA for public housing design after 1937, the buildings generally showed investment in healthier and safer designs over aesthetic considerations. There was also long standing social bias toward plain public housing (Gardner 1981: 67). Bias of this type might be supported by identification with property values as an expression of socio-economic status and a zeal for protection of private property rights (Hooks 2001:139).

Some historians, including Richard Pommer, have blamed the failures of public housing in the United States almost entirely on the architecture and design. Pommer explained that modern architecture was not embraced by the architects of American public housing projects due to the separation of housing designs, which remained traditional, from other building forms. Pommer added, "...the degradation of public housing in [the United States] resulted as much from the contempt of it and its inhabitants expressed by these purely architectural values as from the political-economic compromises necessary to sell it to the real estate owners, the rural politicians and the bureaucrats (Pommer 1978: 264)."

Housing and urban planning scholar John F. Bauman noted that the private housing market has long undermined government programs in public housing. This antagonism from the private sector, together with factors associated with racism and classism, such as the resistance of the middle class to living in proximity to the poor or racial minorities, the idea of public housing as transitional and the failed aesthetics of public housing design have resulted in the current state of public housing. Bauman stated, "The nexus of privatism and racism has foreclosed serious attempts by either public or private agencies to make low income housing into more than a poor house..." (Gardner 1981: 66).

Public Housing in the 1940s

Overview

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved industry toward war production and abandoned his opposition to deficit spending, the PWA became irrelevant and was abolished in June 1941. Although Congressional interest in public housing had begun to diminish in the late 1930s, the onset of World War II would lead to renewed interest, redirection and expansion of Federal housing efforts. As the United States increased industrial capacity in response to the expanding conflict, established manufacturing centers such as Chicago and Detroit, as well as new manufacturing sites, experienced a great influx of population which again drew attention to the inadequate stock of urban housing. Good quality and inexpensive housing for defense workers and their families became a component of the war effort, leading to the revivification of the American public housing program after 1941. The goal of the program was; however dramatically altered from the provision of housing for low-income families to housing for defense workers on the home front (Robinson et al: 1999b: 46).

Despite the patriotic rationale of the new public housing efforts, private enterprise and its supporters in Congress again formed opposition, arguing that federal involvement in housing should be limited to loans and mortgage guarantees to support private construction and, at most,

the public construction of temporary housing. Political battles continued between public housing advocates and business interests and their allies, which included Congressional conservatives such as Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia and Republicans from rural constituencies. Opponents of public housing tried to derail defense housing funds being appropriated to the USHA and feared that public housing would emerge after the war to compete with private enterprise. The success of such attacks on government-built defense housing severely limited the extent of the public housing program during the war (Robinson et al: 1999b: 46).

The Lanham Act of 1940

In opposition to the USHA, a new housing bill that would severely restrict Federal efforts to build public war housing was sponsored by Republican congressman Fritz Lanham of Texas. The Lanham Act, enacted as law on October 14, 1940 (54 Stat. 1125) was designed to provide relief for defense work areas found by the President to be suffering from an existing or impending housing shortage. In such cases, the Federal Works Administrator was empowered to acquire "improved or unimproved lands or interests in lands" for construction sites by purchase, donation, exchange, lease or condemnation. The Lanham Act provided \$150 million to the Federal Works Agency to provide federally built housing quickly and cheaply in the most congested defense industry centers. It emphasized both speed in construction and economy of materials.

The Lanham Act represented a radical departure from previous federal public housing policy. It waived the low-income requirement for tenancy and made defense housing available to all workers facing the housing shortage. It also ordered local authorities to set fair rents at variable rates to be within the financial reach of all families employed in defense industries. The act exempted local authorities from the "equivalent elimination" clause, no longer requiring the demolition of an equal number of slum housing units for all public housing units built. Interestingly, the new policies conformed to the vision of earlier housers, such as Mumford and Bauer; public housing was becoming available to a more diverse section of American society, not only the most impoverished, and expensive, time consuming, and wasteful slum clearance was no longer mandated (Robinson et al: 1999b: 47).

Between 1940 and 1944, about 625,000 units of housing were built under the Lanham Act and its amendments with a total appropriation of nearly \$1 billion.

War Trailer Projects

During World War II, the great majority of the public housing units, over 580,000, were of temporary construction, such as plywood dormitories and trailers (Robinson et al: 1999b:52). Government built trailer camps became a common sight on the home front landscape during World War II:

Across the length and breadth of America at war can be seen compact colonies of strange little cottages on wheels. These vehicles, each boasting all the comforts of home on a miniature scale, are known as trailers. A group or colony of them is a trailer camp. They are used to house workers in American war industries and

other plants which have sprung up like giant mushrooms all over the United States. An owner, with his auto, which. pulls his trailer, may journey 500 to 1,000 miles to join some trailer camp near the factory where he intends to work ...

People do not live in trailers because they like the idea of being gypsies, but generally because there are few houses to rent in the big war industry centers. So as a last resort they buy or rent a trailer, or even make one. Each trailer is built on two or four wheels and towed behind the owner's automobile. There are thousands of these trailers gathered in colonies near the nation's war plants.

There were not quite 200 trailers in the camp. There were four neat rows of them and a few more scattered under the trees in front of a wooded ravine. Two white, roughly macadamized roads let through the trailer village. In about the middle of the camp stood the office and utility buildings. The office building was a bare room with a concrete floor and on the wall was a poster advertising war bonds. At the end of the room was a small office which served as renting bureau and post office. Stretching down one side of the room was a store where one could buy everything with the exception of fresh fruit and vegetables; fish and fowl. There was every kind of delicatessen -- sausages, salami, cheeses and potato salad and great stocks of sardines and canned salmon, canned goods and groceries. There was a small selection of such meats as chopped beef, pork chops and stew meats. There were oranges, bananas, cakes and bread (Vorse n.d.).

As early as 1940, war trailers were being distributed to areas in need of housing for defense workers. In the National Housing Agency publication, *Standards for War Trailer Projects* (NHA 1942b), it was stated that trailers were to be used as expedient and temporary housing for defense workers, were to be transferred to other locations once adequate housing facilities became available, and were to be held to minimum construction standards due to their temporary nature. Additional guidelines suggested site selection in consultation "with local housing authorities, planning agencies, municipal officials, military authorities, industrial experts, and other persons in a position to give information and advice" (NHA 1942b:1). The primary criterion for site selection was proximity and convenient access to the war activity, usually a defense plant of some type.

Sites were to be, when possible, within walking distance to the war activity, "2 miles for men and 1 mile for women" (NHA 1942b:i). "For economy and speed of construction," site layout conformed to existing topography and utilized existing drainageways; water lines and sanitary sewers were installed on-site; storm sewers were not built (NHA 1942b:5, 15). Construction of paved roads accessing the site if not already present and sidewalks within the site were mandated (NHA 1942b:6). Acceptable site density was considered to be "12 to 18 trailers per acre of usable land" (NHA 1942b:i). Example site plans were included in the manual.

Service trailers or buildings ancillary to the residential trailers and their arrangement in the site plan were also specified in the standards. Community Facilities included "Community Toilets," to be located within 200 feet of the residential trailers; "Community Laundries," within 300 feet; and "Collection Stations" for "refuse, garbage, sink waste, water supply, and ashes" within 150

feet. Outdoor lighting was recommended to "supplement street lighting" on walkways between the residential and ancillary structures (NHA 1942b:7). Larger trailer camps, sites with 50 or more dwellings, were to be provided with on-site management and maintenance services, social or activity centers, outdoor recreation areas, health service facilities, and commercial facilities unless it could be demonstrated that adequate off-site facilities of these types were available to camp residents. Reduction or omission of such facilities required the approval of the Washington office of the Federal Public Housing Authority (NHA 1942b:9).

With the end of the war in 1945, the PHA was required, under the Lanham Act, to dispose of the temporary housing units, over 320,000 extant family dwelling and dormitory units at that time (NHA n.d.). The agency experimented with the reutilization of temporary war housing, in whole or in part, as barracks, utility buildings, and even rural dwellings and actively promoted the sale of such structures in domestic and foreign markets (NHA n.d.). The success of this program and the number of such structures that continued in use after the war is not known.

Following is a series of photographs documenting one or more war trailer camps in the vicinity of Alexandria, Virginia in 1941 (Figure 29-Figure 30). These photographs were probably taken at Spring Bank Trailer Camp located on U.S. 1, in Fairfax County, south of the City of Alexandria (Netherton et al 1992:622). A segregated Farm Security Administration (FSA) Trailer Camp for African Americans was present in Arlington, Virginia by 1942 (Figure 31). Although few details relevant to this facility have been located at this time, a community building including "a well laundry" supplied with new aluminum Maytag Commander washing machines was located within the camp (Lupton 1996: 21).



Figure 29: "Trailer Occupied By War Department Employee and Wife from Pennsylvania. Trailer Camp near Alexandria, Virginia; March 1941" (Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection; Library of Congress)



Figure 30: "Showers and Toilets for Trailer Camp Occupants; Trailer Camp near Alexandria, Virginia; March 1941" (Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection; Library of Congress)



Figure 31: "Arlington, Virginia. FSA (Farm Security Administration) Trailer Camp Project for Negroes. Single Type Trailer; April 1942" (Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection; Library of Congress)

The Housing Act of 1949

After World War II, any effort to extend public housing policy was vigorously contested by special interest groups, sometimes referred to as the real estate lobby, including the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Savings and Loan League, and the National Association of Retail Lumber Dealers.

In 1945, legislation to extend the public housing appropriations of the 1937 Housing Act, which had been suspended before the war, was introduced in Congress. This legislation reached the U.S. House of Representatives as the Taft-Ellender-Wagner (T-E-W) Bill in 1948. Although it was bitterly fought by the real estate lobby and its political allies, after the election of Harry S. Truman as President of the United States in 1948, a popular mandate for passage of the bill was perceived. The T-E-W Bill was signed into law in July of 1949 as the Housing Act of 1949. The Act called for the production of more permanent public housing across the United States. Under Title I of the Act, the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) was authorized to provide capital grants and loan guarantees to local agencies for use in urban renewal; large scale land acquisition and slum clearance; under Title III, the Public Housing Administration (PHA) was authorized to allocate federal funds to local housing authorities for the construction of 810,000 public housing units over a six year period (Robinson et al: 1999b: 100).

Although the Housing Act of 1949 was nominally an extension of the United States Housing Act of 1937, it was also a great compromise between advocates of housing reform and the real estate lobby (Robinson et al: 1999b: 100).

Public Housing After 1949

Overview

In the perceived prosperity of the postwar years, public housing remained an integral part of Federal housing policy but received limited attention and funding. The rapid growth of population in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century and the concentration of this population in urban areas led to new problems in housing and the need for government to address these problems. Under the Housing Act of 1949, beginning in the 1950s, numerous massive public housing projects, typically high-rise complexes were constructed in urban areas across the country (Robinson et al: 1999b: 57).

In terms of design, public housing projects after 1949 were characterized by a simple, unified appearance. Standardization and economy became the most important elements of design; the "stripped modern" exterior architectural detailing of most public housing resulted in an institutional appearance. These later complexes also had much higher site densities than earlier projects, having both taller buildings with more units, and a greater number of buildings per site. The interiors of later public housing complexes also contrasted with the earlier ones, typically having smaller units with smaller rooms, connected by long hallways. Also, unlike earlier small-scale projects that were designed to blend with their surroundings, public housing in the second half of the 20th century tended to stand out in the urban landscape (Robinson et al: 1999b: 57).

Many critics of the public housing system in the 1950s considered it tied to humanistic sentiments and not focused on practical methods of assisting the poor. They claimed that the bureaucracy involved in the public housing system was inefficient and significantly decreased the funds that were actually used for housing, that public housing tended to result in more racially segregated communities within cities, and that the demand on collective cooperation and unity necessary in public housing, due to the close quarters in which tenants lived, was often unreasonable. The most significant federal housing legislation to be enacted between 1949 and the 1970s was the Housing Act of 1959, which established a direct loan program for senior citizens in need of housing aid.

Although local housing authorities continue to be supported with federal funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the federal government no longer pays to build new housing projects. HUD organizes all public housing in the United States. Federal programs begun in the last quarter of the 20th century, the Section 8 Housing Program, and HOPE VI involved government encouragement of and partnership with private sector entities to provide low cost housing and to redevelop distressed public housing projects as mixed-income communities. Since 2001, HUD has increasingly diverted funds from public housing toward home ownership programs. Many such programs including the "Renewing the Dream" tax credit work to encourage private sector housing developers to construct housing for low income residents. HUD has also formally recognized the persistence of inequalities in the conditions of housing for racial minorities and persons with disabilities.

Section 8

In reaction to the problems associated with the aging stock of public housing and increased requirement for low cost housing for those in need, the U.S. Congress passed legislation enacting the Section 8 Housing Program in 1974, which Richard Nixon signed into law. Section 8 encourages the private sector to construct affordable homes and assists poor tenants by giving a monthly subsidy to their landlords. This assistance can be 'project based, "which applies to specific properties", or "tenant based," which provides tenants with a voucher they can use anywhere vouchers are accepted. Since 1983, almost no new project based Section 8 housing has been produced. Effective October 1, 1999, existing tenant based voucher programs were merged into the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which is today the primary means of providing subsidies to low income renters.

HOPE VI

In 1989, a National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing was named and charged with proposing a National Action Plan to eradicate severely distressed or obsolete public housing by the year 2000. The HOPE VI program, also known as the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program, was authorized by the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act of 1993. It was also authorized, with slight modifications (amending Section 24 of the 1937 Housing Act), by Section 120 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. The program focused on the concept of mixed-income New Urbanist developments, which better blended with existing neighborhoods

than previous public housing developments. PHAs on HUD's Troubled Housing Authority list were eligible to apply for HOPE VI funds. In 2009, HOPE VI received a \$120 million budget. By the following fiscal year, it received no funds while the new Choice Neighborhoods program received \$250 million. According to HUD, while functional, HOPE VI grants were used to demolish 96,200 public housing units and produce 107,800 new or renovated units. 56,800 were to be affordable to the lowest-income households.

Public Housing in Alexandria

Overview

The history of public housing in the City of Alexandria may be traced to the last years of the 1930s, beginning with the establishment of the Alexandria Housing Authority and planned USHA slum clearance efforts in the city. In the early 1940s, several temporary public housing projects for defense workers - war trailer camps - were established in the city. Several permanent public housing projects, including Ramsey Homes, were constructed by 1945. Segregation of the city's public housing appears to have been a constant component of the system. In 1965, with the integration of two African American families into the previously "whites only" Cameron Valley Homes, project efforts to remedy this situation were made (WP 1965: C1).

The Alexandria Housing Authority

In June of 1939, the Alexandria Housing Authority was formally established as a public agency under the Housing Authority Law, Chapter 1, Title 36 of the Code of Virginia of 1938, as a result of work done by the local Council of Social Agencies and the Woman's Club. Reportedly, the municipal authorities were originally opposed to the creation of the agency; however, the city appropriated \$3,000, granted as a loan, to fund the Authority, pending anticipated financial assistance from the USHA. In 1940, the agency had one permanent full-time employee, the executive director, two part-time typists and an architect hired on a contingent basis. Its first mission was clearing slums and creating new affordable housing in the Berg and Parker-Gray neighborhoods where little investment had occurred since before the Depression (Woodbury 1940: 140).

During the 1940s and 1950s, it constructed new units and acquired ones built for the war effort. The Authority was renamed the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) by 1956 as it was granted authority to issue bonds. New developments continued in throughout the coming decades. The City established a Housing Office in 1975, as ARHA increasingly received federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), which funded infrastructure development and anti-poverty programs in affordable housing areas. Though ARHA received no funding from the City, in 1972, ARHA agreed upon Resolution 99 with the city agreeing that it must maintain units or engage in one-for-one replacement for any units that are removed from its affordable inventory. This was enacted because public development or redevelopment activity made the elimination of existing housing desirable. Resolution 830 superseded Resolution 99 in 1982 to incorporate publicly assisted housing occupied by the elderly and disabled persons.

Today, the primary mission of the agency has been to provide sanitary and safe dwelling accommodations to persons of low income at affordable rents in the city. ARHA's annual operating cost and capital funding for the upkeep and maintenance of ARHA properties are primarily funded by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The City appoints the nine members of the ARHA Board of Commissioners.

Slum Clearance in Alexandria

In a letter to the editor of the Washington Post in December 1935, a citizen of Alexandria expressed outrage at the paper's hostility to the emerging federal housing program and its contention that local government could handle the housing crisis:

In my own hometown I know of no present or past attempts to remove the slum dwellings or even discuss the possibility of removing them. Shacks that were formerly grog shops and houses of worse repute are now renovated with a coat of paint, brass doorknobs [sic], green shutters, foot scraper, and a tub and are rented to the stupid petit bourgeois for fabulous sums while the former inhabitants are turned out to shift for themselves and develop bigger and better slums by their shifting...your "local government" is a non-entity and has failed to alleviate conditions... (WP 1935: 8).

In October 1939, the USHA earmarked \$900,000 for use by the Alexandria Housing Board in a program of slum clearance and the construction of "200 family units that may be individual dwellings, row houses or single apartments." Provisions for slum clearance mandated that for each unit constructed an existing unit would be renovated or razed. The units were expected to rent from between \$14 and \$18 monthly and were to be made available to families earning less than \$75 per month (WP 1939:12).

According to a letter to the editor of the Washington Post, slum clearance in Alexandria was underway by the beginning of 1941, the author informed:

...of a situation which exists in the town of Alexandria...about the close of the year notices went out to various colored families living in Alexandria, in that area near the railroad tracks between Oronoco and Princess Streets, that because of the slum clearance in charge of the Housing Authority, these families must vacate the shacks in which they then lived and move to other homes so that better houses might be erected there.

...However, they did not move...and on January 2, 1941 the wrecking crews came...Today I received word that the houses on Princess Street are having their roofs taken off...all those people living in that row of houses, including a child with a broken neck, will be entirely homeless, without even the shelter usually given to animals...Alexandrians are content to allow people to be treated worse than animals.

It seems that the Housing Authority should have...ascertained whether there were enough places for these people to move... (WP 1941:10).

In a 1944 interview, Virginia Representative Howard Smith noted "the extremely pressing problem of District slums and the dire need here for proper Negro housing." Smith remarked on the recent efforts toward slum clearance and public housing in Alexandria:

Over in Alexandria we can see in a small way the blessings of slum clearance. There are two blocks down there of fine brick dwellings for Negroes, with backyards and plenty of air and sunlight. They replaced former slums. It is deeply gratifying to see the pride and self-respect which a decent place to live has engendered in the occupants of these homes. They are beautifully kept (WP 1944a:B1).

Proponents of the Taft-Ellender-Wagner housing bill of 1948 noted that Alexandria, with a population of about 75,000, had available only 421 rental housing units for low income families (130 units for white families, 291 units for African-American families), not including those allotted for military personnel (WP 1948:15). Former defense housing, including Ramsey Homes, was acquired by ARHA for use as public housing in the 1950s, and additional public housing was constructed in the 1950s and throughout the latter half of the 20th century to address the housing needs of low-income families.

In 1985, a group called "The 16th Census Tract Crisis Committee" accused city officials of deliberately reducing and eliminating housing opportunities for African Americans in the city, beginning in the 1960s (Washington Post 1985: F1). They filed a complaint with HUD, that the constitutional rights of African Americans were violated by city actions. Backed by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, The 16th Census Tract Crisis Committee singled out the following city actions as violating the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Washington Post 1985:F2). Among other things, they complained that the city was:

Using zoning code, code enforcement or condemnation to demolish homes occupied by African Americans without providing affordable alternatives;

Rejecting planned urban renewal projects and renovating housing units that were generally too expensive for African Americans;

Closing the historically African-American Parker-Gray High School and reselling the property for commercial and upper end housing use rather than low income housing; and

Enacting a 1984 ordinance that designated the Parker-Gray African-American community as a special preservation district.

Residents of the primarily African-American Parker-Gray neighborhood opposed the extension of the Old Town Historic District into the neighborhood as it would increase property values and property taxes and force them from their homes (Washington Post 1984:C1).

Ramsey Homes Defense Housing

During the Second World War, the United States Housing Authority (USHA) constructed Ramsey Homes, then known as Lanham Act Alexandria Defense Housing Project VA-44133, as permanent housing for African-American defense workers. Alexandria architect and architectural historian, Delos H. Smith, FAIA, of Smith, Werner, and Billings Architects, proposed two Modernist designs for the project. The first option consisted of three buildings comprising 19 units, while the second option consisted of three four-unit foursquares and a three-unit L-shaped building constructed of more economical materials complex. The final plan included landscaping and a simple paved play area within the L of the triplex.

According to documents related to his nomination as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Delos Hamilton Smith was born in 1884 in Willcox, Arizona, but graduated from high school in Washington, D.C. He received his bachelor's degree in architecture from George Washington University in 1906 and his M.A. from the same school in 1916. Smith concentrated heavily on ecclesiastical structures and was also an authority on early American architecture, presenting a study of over 250 colonial churches to the Library of Congress, publishing numerous articles on historic architecture, and serving on the Alexandria Board of Architectural Review for several years beginning in 1947. He and his firm also designed 440 public housing units, including the Ramsey Homes, for the U.S. Housing Authority in the late 1930s-early 1940s. Smith was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1952.

Approval for construction of Ramsey Homes was attained in November 1941. It was completed in November 1942. Some units were already occupied prior to the entire project's completion. The original residents of the complex were African American defense workers, but their identities were kept secret as a matter of national security. The 1945 Alexandria City Directory does not list the odd-numbered addresses on the 600 block of N. Patrick Street as a result of this policy. Similarly, photographs and information concerning the Naval Torpedo Station on the waterfront, which employed an integrated work force and where residents of Ramsey Homes may have worked, were similarly withheld from public access until after World War II (Washington Post 2014).

The Alexandria City Directory for 1947 listed the residents of the Ramsey Homes project in that year. Two of the listed residents, Carneal Coffee and Cleveland B. Tivy, appear to have been associated with the defense industry, their occupations listed as "USA" (perhaps the Army) and "Clerk War Dept." respectively. Other residents listed include Will Daniels, barber; George W. Witherspoon, auto mechanic; and Charles E. Smith, janitor. All of the residents were noted to be African American. The appearance of listings for the Ramsey Homes residents in 1947 reflects the end of the policy of secrecy that likely caused their omission from the war-time city directories, and the listed occupations of the residents suggests that the housing was no longer restricted to defense workers.

After World War II, the Federal Public Housing Authority sought to sell the Ramsey Homes; the City of Alexandria contemplated the purchase of the site, and the Washington Post reported that the Mayor of Alexandria claimed the wartime housing did not meet city building codes and were therefore "substandard" (Washington Post 6 October 1946:5). The property did not leave federal

hands until 1953, when the ownership of Ramsey Homes was transferred to the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (Alexandria Deed Book 356:407), which remains the owner and manager of the property.

Other Housing Projects in the Vicinity of the Ramsey Homes

Several other public housing projects have been constructed in the vicinity of the Ramsey Homes and the Parker-Gray District. The earliest projects were built in the 1940s, as either defense housing or slum clearance public housing. The following brief descriptions of public housing projects are presented in chronological order by construction date.

John Roberts Homes

The first public housing project completed in the Uptown/Parker-Gray area was the segregated "whites only" John Roberts Homes, built in 1941 in the block bound by Oronoco Street, E. Braddock Road, N. West Street, and the RF&P Railroad line. John Roberts Homes consisted of twenty-one wood-frame buildings each of which contained between four and ten units. The projects were razed in 1982 and replaced by the Colecroft residential development. Ninety units were replaced by ground lease at the Annie B. Rose House.

Cameron Valley

Originally built in the 1940s around the same time as Ramsey Homes, Cameron Housing became the focus of a replacement-housing program in 1987. ARHA sought to build and acquire and rehabilitate a variety of housing types to replace all 264 homes. Sixty homes were rebuilt onsite, 30 units were New Construction Public Housing, 55 were Rehabilitation projects, 152 units were located in Glebe Park, 38 condominiums were located in Park Place, and 41 units were at scattered housing sites. The project received a CDBG and was required to consider size, scale, materials, and setback of the existing neighborhood, induced traffic, minority economic participation, affirmative action goals, and job training.

George Parker (Hopkins-Tancil Courts)

George Parker Homes, renamed Hopkins-Tancil Courts in the 1980s, are located on two blocks bounded by Fairfax Street, Royal street, Pendleton and Princess Streets. The housing consists of two-story brick buildings constructed for military housing circa 1942 and later turned over to ARHA for use as public housing units for low-income African-American families. When renamed, they were rehabilitated under the Moderet Rehabilitation program and provided with PBV subsidies.

Samuel Madden Homes (Downtown) or the Berg

The Samuel Madden Homes (Downtown), also known as the Berg, was a 100-unit public housing complex, built between ca. 1942 and 1959. It was built adjacent to the George Parker Homes and, together, the projects occupied two contiguous blocks, bounded by Pendleton Street to the north, Princess Street to the south, North Royal Street to the east, and North Pitt Street to

the west. The earliest units were two-story brick row buildings constructed for military housing circa 1945. The project, named for the first African-American pastor of the Alfred Street Baptist Church, was initiated as part of a program of slum clearance, with the "blighted" area extending well beyond the site of the public housing units, and including areas north of Madison Street and west of N. Fairfax Street. After clearance, some of the land became the location of temporary houses built to provide displaced families a place to live while the Samuel Madden Homes were under construction. It was ultimately replaced by Chatham Square, a mixed-income community of 52 units on site and 48 scattered units.

Samuel Madden Homes (Uptown)

Samuel Madden Homes (Uptown) were built in 1945, in the 900 blocks of Patrick and Henry Streets and the 1000 block of Montgomery Street, and are a non-contiguous element of the Samuel Madden (Downtown) project several blocks to the east of the Parker-Gray District. The Samuel Madden Homes and the later James Bland project were all the work of architect Joseph Saunders, and are very similar in design. Each project includes side-gabled brick row town houses, sometimes with six or more repeated in a row, and placed around landscaped garden areas that are oriented to face into the north-south streets. Through oral history interviews with residents who lived in the neighborhood and in the Samuel Madden Homes and James Bland Homes public housing projects in the 1940s and 1950s, it has become apparent that little distinction was made by the residents between the Samuel Madden Homes (Uptown) and the later and adjacent James Bland Homes projects. Typically, both were known as "the projects." Perhaps due to confusion associated with Samuel Madden Homes (Downtown), Samuel Madden (Uptown) is frequently referred to as James Bland by area residents.

James Bland and James Bland Addition

The James Bland Homes occupied two entire and three partial city blocks bounded by First, N. Patrick, Madison, N. Alfred, Wythe, and N. Columbus Streets. Constructed in 1954 and 1959, the project was named for James Alan Bland, a 19th-century African American musician and songwriter. Although formally integrated, the complex became almost entirely African American after the completion of the project. The James Bland project was redeveloped as a mixed-income community with both affordable rent and market-rate housing units.

Jefferson Village

The Jefferson Village affordable housing complex was built in 1968 at the corner of Princess and N. West Streets. The buildings are brick row houses and apartment structures built in a late Modern Movement style. Purchased by ARHA in 1980 as temporary replacement housing for the Cameron Valley redevelopment effort. It has since been disposed of as affordable housing.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

As noted, the Ramsey Homes are located in the "Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District", listed to the VLR in 2008 and the NRHP in 2010, and in the locally zoned "Parker-Gray District". The Period of Significance for the NRHP district is ca. 1810 to 1959. The Period of Significance for

the locally zoned district ends in the “early twentieth century” (roughly 1900 to early 1930s) before the New Deal and World War II housing and the Ramsey Homes were built. Frequently, the boundaries and Period of Significance of a local district is different from a NRHP district. They may overlap, but have different priorities, standards for eligibility, and associated laws. The NRHP often includes longer Periods of Significance, does not dictate changes to the exterior of buildings, and has a low bar for eligibility, particularly for buildings contributing to a district or associated with minority groups. Though the primary concern of this project is the local zoning, a discussion of NRHP eligibility follows.

National Register of Historic Places Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District

The earliest example of public housing in the Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District, Ramsey Homes contribute to the district in the areas of social history and architecture as "an example of the housing constructed with public funds, between 1940 and 1945, for defense workers during World War II". As codified in *36 CFR 60.4*, the four criteria applied in the evaluation of significant cultural resources to the NRHP are as follows:

- A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Association with the lives of significant persons in or past; or
- C. Representative of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master; or
- D. Have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

The Ramsey Homes may be determined individually eligible for listing based on Criteria A of the NRHP due to its association with African-American defense workers, the history of affordable housing, and the history of wartime housing, discussed in the historic context above, despite a significant loss of integrity.

It does not appear to be individually eligible under Criterion B because there is no evidence of association with significant people. Efforts to identify significant historic personages that lived at the Ramsey Homes public housing site have not been successful. Although some local sources reported that baseball legend Jackie Robinson once lived in Ramsey Homes, a representative of the Jackie Robinson Foundation confirmed that Robinson was never a resident of the site (Mirielle Stephen personal communication 2015). Basketball pioneer Earl Lloyd; sometimes referred to as the “Jackie Robinson of Basketball” was a native of Alexandria, Virginia but did not reside at Ramsey Homes (Alexandria Gazette Packet 2015).

Though the homes were designed by a Delos H. Smith, a prominent fellow of the AIA, and his partners, they are not recommended eligible under Criterion C, because they were altered dramatically by the removal of Modernist flat roofs, skylights, and landscape features. The post-1964 hipped-roof foursquares were neither innovative nor distinctive of their period and do not reflect the period of significance (1941-1942) or articulate the social significance of affordable housing. The 1995 addition of Colonial Revival elements further diminishes the property’s significance.

The property may be found eligible under Criterion D dependent upon future archeological investigations.

Other areas considered in determining eligibility are the evaluation of a property's integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as related to its area of significance in architecture and period of significance. The buildings have lost integrity of design, setting, feeling, and association due to the alteration of style and landscape, which is integral to listing under Criterion C, but less so to listing under Criterion A, particularly in association with resources related to minority groups.

City of Alexandria Parker-Gray District

As discussed, the primary concern of the Project is local significance, as defined in the City of Alexandria Historic District Guidelines, BAR Application Criteria, and the Zoning Ordinance Article X. Section 10-200 of the City of Alexandria, rather than NRHP significance. The Parker-Gray District was established "to protect community health and safety and to promote the education, prosperity and general welfare of the public through the identification, preservation, and enhancement of buildings, structures, settings, features and ways of life which characterize this nineteenth and early twentieth century residential neighborhood". Note that the establishment of this district emphasizes resources that predate or date to the early twentieth century (1900 to the early 1930s), not the mid-twentieth century (late 1930s to late 1960s), thus the local district's Period of Significance ends before the homes were built in 1942. In addition, much of the language in the local Historic District guidelines emphasizes respecting scale and setback of historic resources that pre-date the mid-twentieth century and are dramatically different from the Ramsey Homes site. The BAR demolition permit application poses the following questions. Answers follow in italics.

1. Is the building or structure of such architectural or historic interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?

The buildings are not of such architectural or historic interest that their removal will be a detriment of the public interest. The buildings and landscape were altered so dramatically after 1964 that they do not reflect their period of significance (1941-1942), the Modernist economy with which they were built, or for what they were built. The buildings have lost integrity of design, setting, feeling, and association due to the alteration of style and landscape.

2. Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?

The buildings do not merit becoming a shrine because they have lost integrity of design, do not reflect their period of significance, nor do they convey the original purpose as wartime housing.

3. Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?

The American foursquare with Prairie features is ubiquitous in American cities from the 1910s through the 1940s. Adapted to this style after 1964, this is a very late example, not original to the site and therefore not worthy of reproduction as they now stand.

4. Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

Retention of the property does not protect an historic place as defined by the local Zoning Ordinance because the Period of Significance for the "Parker-Gray District" ends in the "early twentieth century" before the Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and World War II. The Period of Significance of the "Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District" is not relevant to decisions made by the BAR. In consideration of the NRHP district, their retention is not essential to the viability of the district's listing because it represents less than one percent of the contributing resources. The NRHP nomination form incorrectly states that architectural significance is related to the Prairie style, which is not original to the building and which is not listed in the list of significant styles under the architectural classification section of the nomination form on page two.

5. Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?

Retention of the building will not promote general welfare because its declining condition may decrease neighboring real estate values and the residents' quality of life. Retention will generate less business because there will be fewer residents to patronize local venues and learn, live, and work in the area. The buildings do not convey what they were or offer inherent or visual educational opportunities to non-professional historians. The introduction of more housing units in the vicinity of the local museum and community center will expose more residents to local American history. Their removal will result in a more attractive block, more desirable place to live, and a higher quality of life for current residents.

6. Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

The Ramsey Homes and landscape are out-of-scale in the neighborhood as they lack the density of their neighbors. Their demolition would allow for buildings more consistent with the BAR Historic District guidelines and the neighborhood in design, height, and setback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since settlement, the project area's land use has evolved from vacant land to farmland (pre-1849) to Union Army military housing and hospital during the Civil War (1861-1865) to affordable tenant housing for European immigrants (1865-1914) to vacant land (1914-1941) to military housing during World War II (1942-1945) to affordable public housing (1946-present). The property as a whole has significance in social history rather than architecture, and while they contribute to the NRHP-listed historic district, their listing does not preclude them from demolition. As noted, their integrity and ability to convey the depth of their history is not evident and does not meet the Alexandria BAR criteria for protection.

Appropriate mitigation of their loss is the introduction of more units of affordable housing within this block. Preservation of the resource is not absolutely necessary as there is ample opportunity for public interpretation and commemoration of the site's public housing legacy. Mitigation for the demolition of a similar historic African American school in Loudoun County, Virginia involved educational and commemorative components (

Figure 32). In our opinion, such efforts would be appropriate mitigation for loss of the resource. The possibilities for such mitigation are broad and, in our opinion, preservation of the Ramsey Homes buildings, in comparison with appropriate mitigation, offers fewer opportunities to celebrate and inform the public about the social history of public housing in the city.

ARHA has experience in developing such exhibits. It funded the "Mural and Hall of Fame: Stony the Road We Trod" at the nearby Charles H. Houston Recreation Center, formerly the Parker-Gray School. The Hall of Fame was spearheaded by Robert Dawkins and Julian Haley Jr. who, with an ad hoc committee, reviewed nominations to "honor and memorialize the achievements of history makers in Alexandria's African American community and document the contributions of the community to Alexandria's history." Adrienne T. Washington, Ferdinand Day, Harry Burke, Nellie Brooks Quander, and Lillian Patterson were among 40 figures appearing on the wall when dedicated in 2013 (Figure 33).

The Virginia Department of Transportation, the Federal Highways Administration, and the City of Alexandria, Virginia, with the assistance of Thunderbird Archeology and other consultants, employed various creative strategies in order to mitigate for adverse effects to the historic Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery site under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In addition to Phase III archeological excavations aimed at ensuring that no graves would be impacted during construction of the memorial, mitigation efforts involved preparation of public interpretation materials including the establishment of a public park and memorial features on the site, preparation of content and design for the City of Alexandria's planned Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial web site, and the design of an historic site brochure with text, graphics and QR codes that would link to relevant portions of the website (Figure 34).



Figure 32: Mitigation for Demolition of the Frederick Douglass Elementary School in Loudoun County, Virginia included Student-Conducted Oral History Research and a Memorial Exhibit



Figure 33: Dedication of Hall of Fame at Charles H. Houston Recreation Center, June 22, 2013, Funded by ARHA (<http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/photos/galleries/2013/jun/27/hall-fame-dedication/5612/>)



Figure 34: City of Alexandria Contraband and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial Historic Site Brochure Designed by Thunderbird Archeology.

The former 1940 Robert H. Robinson Library on Wythe Street now serves as the Alexandria Black History Museum. It houses a permanent exhibit, *Securing the Blessing of Liberty*, which examines early African-American life in Alexandria, and the Parker-Gray Gallery, where rotating exhibits are displayed. Mitigation for the loss of the Ramsey Homes could include the development of an exhibit for this space and a corresponding electronic media, commemorating and informing the public about the history of public housing in Alexandria. Exhibits may be interactive and tie in activities for children. Possibilities include the replication of the Ramsey Homes floor plans and the war trailers in the exhibit, activities related to defense workers in World War II and other occupations associated with residents of the Ramsey Homes as revealed in city directories and oral history. Further illustrated interactive timelines of the local architectural and land use history may be made available as part of the local history curriculum in schools. Additional interpretation may be appropriate on the street with a traditional historical highway marker developed in coordination with the City of Alexandria, the DHR, and ARHA.

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ADDRESS OF PROJECT: 699 N. Patrick Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (Parcel Address)

TAX MAP AND PARCEL: #054.04-12-01 ZONING: RB

APPLICATION FOR: *(Please check all that apply)*

- ☒ CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS ~~CONCEPT 2 WORKSESSION~~
- ☒ PERMIT TO MOVE, REMOVE, ENCAPSULATE OR DEMOLISH
(Required if more than 25 square feet of a structure is to be demolished/impacted)
- ☐ WAIVER OF VISION CLEARANCE REQUIREMENT and/or YARD REQUIREMENTS IN A VISION
CLEARANCE AREA (Section 7-802, Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)
- ☐ WAIVER OF ROOFTOP HVAC SCREENING REQUIREMENT
(Section 6-403(B)(3), Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)

Applicant: ☒ Property Owner ☐ Business *(Please provide business name & contact person)*

Name: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Address: 600 N. Fairfax Street

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: 703-549-7115 x364 E-mail: cstaudinger@arha.us

Authorized Agent *(if applicable)*: ☒ Attorney ☐ Architect ☐ _____

Name: Duncan Blair Phone: 703-778-1444

E-mail: dblair@landcarroll.com

Legal Property Owner:

Name: Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Address: 600 N. Fairfax Street

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: 703-549-7115 x 364 E-mail: cstaudinger@arha.us

- ☐ Yes ☒ No Is there an historic preservation easement on this property?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, has the easement holder agreed to the proposed alterations?
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Is there a homeowner's association for this property?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, has the homeowner's association approved the proposed alterations?

If you answered yes to any of the above, please attach a copy of the letter approving the project.

NATURE OF PROPOSED WORK: *Please check all that apply*

- ☒ **NEW CONSTRUCTION**
☐ **EXTERIOR ALTERATION:** *Please check all that apply.*
 ☐ awning ☐ fence, gate or garden wall ☐ HVAC equipment ☐ shutters
 ☐ doors ☐ windows ☐ siding ☐ shed
 ☐ lighting ☐ pergola/trellis ☐ painting unpainted masonry
 ☐ other _____
☐ **ADDITION**
☒ **DEMOLITION/ENCAPSULATION**
☐ **SIGNAGE**

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK: *Please describe the proposed work in detail (Additional pages may be attached).*

The Applicant is requesting permission to demolish four obsolete buildings in order to develop new construction of a multi-family low-moderate income residential property.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

Items listed below comprise the **minimum supporting materials** for BAR applications. Staff may request additional information during application review. Please refer to the relevant section of the *Design Guidelines* for further information on appropriate treatments.

Applicants must use the checklist below to ensure the application is complete. Include all information and material that are necessary to thoroughly describe the project. Incomplete applications will delay the docketing of the application for review. Pre-application meetings are required for all proposed additions. All applicants are encouraged to meet with staff prior to submission of a completed application.

Electronic copies of submission materials should be submitted whenever possible.

Demolition/Encapsulation : *All applicants requesting 25 square feet or more of demolition/encapsulation must complete this section. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- N/A
- ☒ ☐ Survey plat showing the extent of the proposed demolition/encapsulation.
☐ ☒ Existing elevation drawings clearly showing all elements proposed for demolition/encapsulation.
☒ ☐ Clear and labeled photographs of all elevations of the building if the entire structure is proposed to be demolished.
☒ ☐ Description of the reason for demolition/encapsulation.
☒ ☐ Description of the alternatives to demolition/encapsulation and why such alternatives are not considered feasible.

Additions & New Construction: Drawings must be to scale and should not exceed 11" x 17" unless approved by staff. All plans must be folded and collated into 3 complete 8 1/2" x 11" sets. Additional copies may be requested by staff for large-scale development projects or projects fronting Washington Street. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

- N/A
- ☐ ☒ Scaled survey plat showing dimensions of lot and location of existing building and other structures on the lot, location of proposed structure or addition, dimensions of existing structure(s), proposed addition or new construction, and all exterior, ground and roof mounted equipment.
 - ☐ ☒ FAR & Open Space calculation form.
 - ☐ ☒ Clear and labeled photographs of the site, surrounding properties and existing structures, if applicable.
 - ☐ ☒ Existing elevations must be scaled and include dimensions.
 - ☐ ☒ Proposed elevations must be scaled and include dimensions. Include the relationship to adjacent structures in plan and elevations.
 - ☐ ☒ Materials and colors to be used must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided or required.
 - ☐ ☒ Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
 - ☐ ☒ For development site plan projects, a model showing mass relationships to adjacent properties and structures.

Signs & Awnings: One sign per building under one square foot does not require BAR approval unless illuminated. All other signs including window signs require BAR approval. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

- N/A
- ☐ ☒ Linear feet of building: Front: _____ Secondary front (if corner lot): _____
 - ☐ ☒ Square feet of existing signs to remain: _____
 - ☐ ☒ Photograph of building showing existing conditions.
 - ☐ ☒ Dimensioned drawings of proposed sign identifying materials, color, lettering style and text.
 - ☐ ☒ Location of sign (show exact location on building including the height above sidewalk).
 - ☐ ☒ Means of attachment (drawing or manufacturer's cut sheet of bracket if applicable).
 - ☐ ☒ Description of lighting (if applicable). Include manufacturer's cut sheet for any new lighting fixtures and information detailing how it will be attached to the building's facade.

Alterations: Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.

- N/A
- ☐ ☒ Clear and labeled photographs of the site, especially the area being impacted by the alterations, all sides of the building and any pertinent details.
 - ☐ ☒ Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
 - ☐ ☒ Drawings accurately representing the changes to the proposed structure, including materials and overall dimensions. Drawings must be to scale.
 - ☐ ☒ An official survey plat showing the proposed locations of HVAC units, fences, and sheds.
 - ☐ ☒ Historic elevations or photographs should accompany any request to return a structure to an earlier appearance.

ALL APPLICATIONS: *Please read and check that you have read and understand the following items:*

- ☐ I have submitted a filing fee with this application. (Checks should be made payable to the City of Alexandria. Please contact staff for assistance in determining the appropriate fee.)
- ☒ I understand the notice requirements and will return a copy of the three respective notice forms to BAR staff at least five days prior to the hearing. If I am unsure to whom I should send notice I will contact Planning and Zoning staff for assistance in identifying adjacent parcels.
- ☒ I, the applicant, or an authorized representative will be present at the public hearing.
- ☒ I understand that any revisions to this initial application submission (including applications deferred for restudy) must be accompanied by the BAR Supplemental form and 3 sets of revised materials.

The undersigned hereby attests that all of the information herein provided including the site plan, building elevations, prospective drawings of the project, and written descriptive information are true, correct and accurate. The undersigned further understands that, should such information be found incorrect, any action taken by the Board based on such information may be invalidated. The undersigned also hereby grants the City of Alexandria permission to post placard notice as required by Article XI, Division A, Section 11-301(B) of the 1992 Alexandria City Zoning Ordinance, on the property which is the subject of this application. The undersigned also hereby authorizes the City staff and members of the BAR to inspect this site as necessary in the course of research and evaluating the application. The applicant, if other than the property owner, also attests that he/she has obtained permission from the property owner to make this application.

APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT:Signature: Printed Name: Roy O. Priest, CEO, ARHADate: 04/03/15

OWNERSHIP AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Use additional sheets if necessary

1. Applicant. State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. Alex. Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA)	600 N. Fairfax Street Alexandria, VA 22314	100%
2.		
3.		

2. Property. State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the property located at 699 N. Patrick Street (address), unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. ARHA	600 N. Fairfax Street Alexandria, VA 22314	100%
2.		
3.		

3. Business or Financial Relationships. Each person or entity listed above (1 and 2), with an ownership interest in the applicant or in the subject property is required to disclose any business or financial relationship, as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance, existing at the time of this application, or within the 12-month period prior to the submission of this application with any member of the Alexandria City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals or either Boards of Architectural Review.

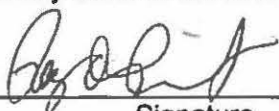
Name of person or entity	Relationship as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance	Member of the Approving Body (i.e. City Council, Planning Commission, etc.)
1. ARHA	None	P.C. and C.C.
2.		
3.		

NOTE: Business or financial relationships of the type described in Sec. 11-350 that arise after the filing of this application and before each public hearing must be disclosed prior to the public hearings.

As the applicant or the applicant's authorized agent, I hereby attest to the best of my ability that the information provided above is true and correct.

04/03/15
Date

Roy O. Priest, CEO, ARHA
Printed Name


Signature

Zoning Ordinance Section 10-205 (B) - Matters to be considered in approving certificates and permits.

- (B) Permit to move, remove, capsule or demolish in whole or in part buildings or structures. The Parker-Gray District board of architectural review or the city council on appeal shall consider any or all of the following criteria in determining whether or not to grant a permit to move, remove, capsule or demolish in whole or in part a building or structure within the Parker-Gray District.
- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historic interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?
 - (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?
 - (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
 - (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
 - (5) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?
 - (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

CHAPTER 4

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

INTRODUCTION

The demolition of any structure, either in whole or in part, in the historic districts, **regardless of visibility from a public way**, requires the approval of a Permit to Demolish by the Boards of Architectural Review.

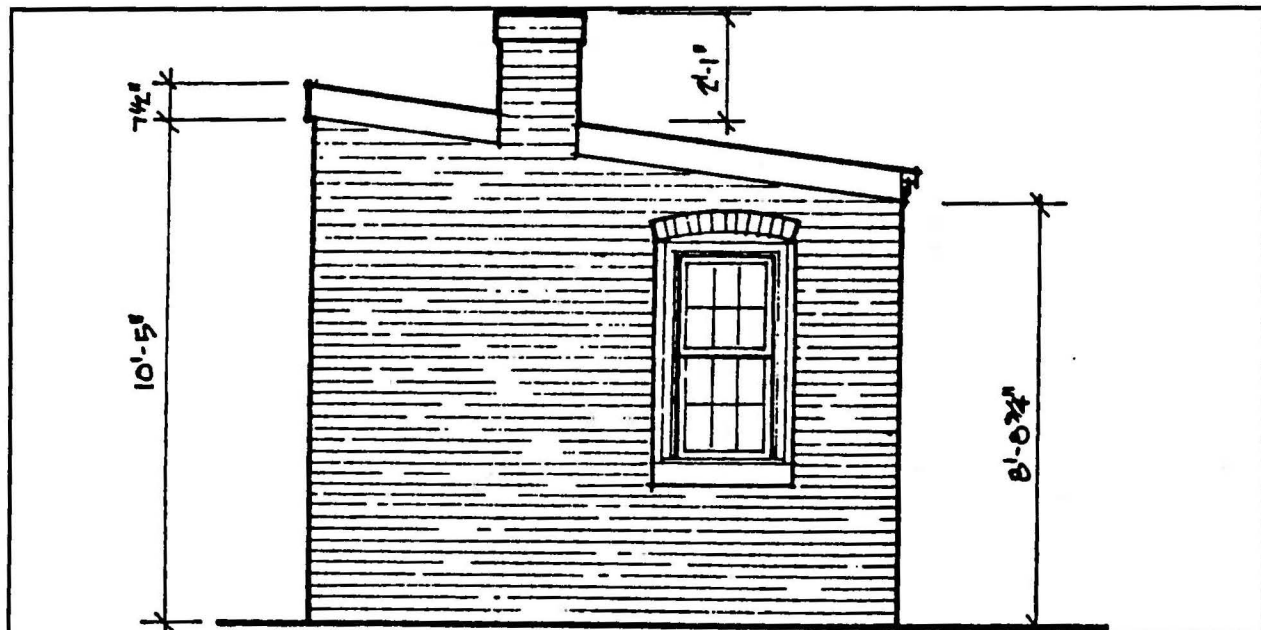
The Boards are extremely conscious of the need to preserve the existing building resources of the historic districts. At the same time, the Boards are also sympathetic to the needs of building owners to make contemporary 20th century use of a property. It is the policy of the Boards that the absolute minimum demolition of an existing structure should take place. For example, in the case

of an addition to the rear of a property, the Boards prefer that the amount of demolition be limited to that necessary to accommodate access to the addition rather than wholesale demolition and replacement of the rear facade.

Because approval of the demolition of an existing structure, in whole or in part, is such an important decision, the action of the Boards on such requests requires a roll call vote of each member.

REQUIREMENTS

- The demolition of an existing structure must meet the requirements of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- Demolition of an existing structure requires the issuance of a permit by Code Enforcement (USBC §105.1).
- If asbestos is present, an asbestos permit is required in addition to a building permit. Certain exemptions apply.



Example of a record drawing including measurements required as part of the approval of a demolition of a rear addition.

SOURCE: 125 South Payne Street, BAR Case #92-86, Richard C. Bierce, AIA, Historic Architect

- A building permit for demolition will not be issued until services to the building including gas, electric, water and sewer have been disconnected. In addition to the Boards of Architectural Review, approvals must be obtained from the Traffic and Health departments.

- Demolition of an existing structure, in whole or in part, requires approval of a separate Permit to Demolish by the Boards of Architectural Review in addition to approval of a certificate of appropriateness for an addition or new construction.

- Removal of less than 25 square feet of an exterior wall, roof or other exterior surface is not considered demolition. Such removal is considered to be an alteration. (§ 10-103 (B) and § 10-203(B) of the Zoning Ordinance).

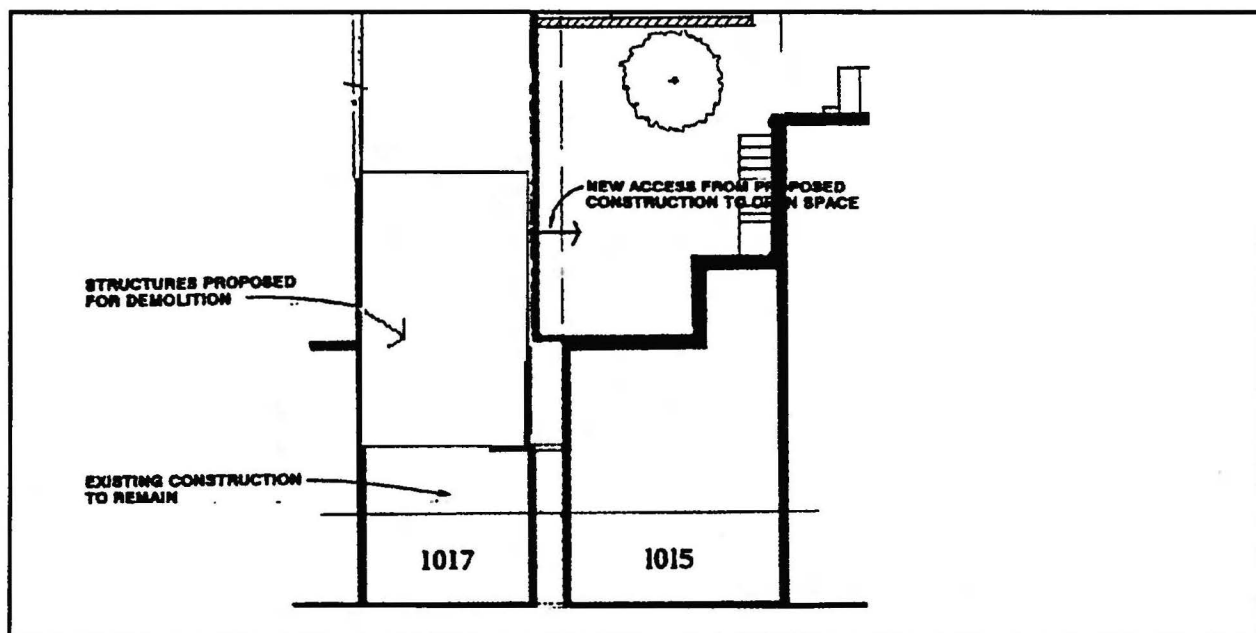
- Demolition of an existing structure which involves land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or more must comply with the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Protection Ordinance. Information on this requirement may be obtained from the City Engineer. (Telephone: 703/838-4328)

- If the Boards deny a Permit to Demolish, the decision can be appealed to City Council.

- An owner may demolish a property, following denial of a Permit to Demolish, if the building is offered for sale for a specified period of time and no bona fide offer to purchase the property is made during the specified time period. The period of time for which the building has to be offered for sale varies from 3 months, when the offering price is less than \$25,000, to one year when the offering price is \$90,000 or more. (§ 10-108 and § 10-208 of the Zoning Ordinance).

GUIDELINES

- Generally speaking, there must be a compelling reason for the demolition, either in whole or in part, of a significant structure in the historic districts. The Boards actively seeks to retain the existing historic fabric of the historic districts and strongly discourage the demolition of any portion of an 18th or early 19th century structure.



Demolition plan for the rear addition to an existing structure.

SOURCE: 1017 Duke Street, BAR Case #90-73, John E. McKean, AIA, Architect (Altered)

Criteria for demolition in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and for 100-Year Old Buildings:

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?
- (7) In the instance of a building or structure owned by the city or the redevelopment and housing authority, such building or structure having been acquired pursuant to a duly approved urban renewal (redevelopment) plan, would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare in view of needs of the city for an urban renewal (redevelopment) project? (§ 10-105(B) of the Zoning Ordinance)

Criteria for demolition in the Parker-Gray District:

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historic interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into an historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

- (5) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage and making the city a more attractive and desirable place to live?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood? (§ 10-205(B) of the Zoning Ordinance)

- In some instances, the Boards may require a structural analysis of the building by a licensed professional engineer in order to make an informed decision regarding the structural integrity of a building before making a decision on the application for a Permit to Demolish.

Determination of Significance

If a building which is considered to have significance in the historic districts is to be demolished, documentation will be required. The requirements for documentation are set forth in the Application Requirements section. A determination of a building's significance will be made by the B.A.R. Staff. The determination of significance will be based upon the following factors:

- All buildings and structures constructed prior to 1860 are significant and those historic portions must be documented.
- Buildings and structures which contribute to and may increase knowledge of the architectural and cultural history of Alexandria or the nation are significant and must be documented.
- Buildings which embody noteworthy craftsmanship or design features may be considered significant. In some instances, documentation may be limited to recordation of the significant features or details.
- Structures which are non-historic and not compatible with the historic and architectural character of the historic districts do not require a separate application for a Permit to Demolish. Structures falling within this category include inappropriate accessory buildings such as metal storage sheds and site improvements such as stockade and chain link fencing and planters. Demolition of such structures may be included in the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations. Staff of the Boards of Architectural Review will make the determination whether a structure is non-historic.
- If the site of the demolition of an existing structure is to remain vacant for a period of time, it should be landscaped and maintained.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All applications for approval of the demolition of an existing structure must contain the following information:

Alexandria Business License

Proof of a valid Alexandria Business License is required at the time of application for contractors, subcontractors, architects, and designers.

Plot Plan

A plot plan accurately showing the extent of the proposed demolition is required.

Reason for Demolition

The application must clearly spell out the reason for the demolition and describe alternatives to demolition and why such alternatives are not considered feasible.

Significant Buildings

Buildings or structures that have been determined to be significant and which are to be demolished, in whole or in part, must be documented with a written history, measured drawings and photographs. The following documentation must be approved by the B.A.R. Staff and deposited in the Lloyd House Archives of the Alexandria Public Library prior to the approval of the building permit to demolish the structure.

History of the Structure

Buildings or structures that have been determined to be significant and which are to be demolished, in whole or in part, must be documented with a written history. At a minimum, this information must include date of construction and any major alterations, information about persons or events associated with the structure, general architectural characteristics and background on the designer or architect.

Photographs of Existing Structure

Clear record photographs of the existing structure are required. Both black and white and color photographs and their negatives are required. Photographic prints must measure at least 4" x 5".

Measured Drawings

Measured drawings of a structure to be demolished must be made. The drawings must include floor plans and elevations at a minimum scale of 1/4" = 1'. Details may be required in some cases. Drawings may be in pencil or ink on vellum or mylar on a sheet with maximum dimensions of 30" x 42".

All Other Buildings and Structures

Buildings which are compatible but are not considered to meet the criteria of significance are not required to be documented with measured drawings. However, photographs and a building plat are required.

NOTE: Illustrations are provided for information only. Applications for Permits to Demolish are reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.

ADOPTED BY THE BOARDS OF
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW, 5/25/93

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The demolition of a structure in whole or in part may affect archaeological resources. With its rich history, the City of Alexandria is particularly concerned about its archaeological heritage. Archaeological resources in the historic districts are great in number and highly diverse in materials. They often consist of ceramic and glass fragments in the backyards of historic properties; however, archaeological resources are also brick-lined shafts in yards and basements; brick kilns; foundations, footings, postholes and builders trenches of non-extant buildings; landscape features such as walkways and gardens; and even American Indian artifacts which pre-date colonial Alexandria. Often these clues to the City's past appear to be unimportant debris; yet when the artifacts and building remains are excavated and recorded systematically, they provide the only knowledge of lost Alexandria.

Every application to the B.A.R. which potentially involves ground disturbance is reviewed by city Archaeologists to determine whether significant archaeological resources may still survive on the property. Therefore, the potential for additional requirements to protect archaeological resources exists with any project that involves ground disturbing activities.

The applicant can speed along the archaeological review process by requesting a Preliminary Archaeological Assess-

ment from Alexandria Archaeology at the earliest date. Call (703) 838-4399, Tuesday through Saturday, 9am to 5pm. Alexandria Archaeology is located on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

• RESIDENTIAL ZONES

In residential zones, the application for the demolition of a structure in whole or in part that involve ground disturbing activities is reviewed by City archaeologists. In most cases, the applicant is required to notify Alexandria Archaeology before ground disturbance, so that a City archaeologist may monitor this work and record significant finds. However, when a property has a high potential for containing significant archaeological resources, a City archaeologist may request permission to excavate test samples in the affected area before the project begins.

• COMMERCIAL ZONES

In commercial zones and residential projects involving the construction of three or more houses, the ground disturbing activities associated with the demolition of existing structures in whole or in part may necessitate compliance with the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Procedure (§ 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance). The specific requirements may be obtained from the City Archaeologist. Occasionally, compliance in such projects may require the property owner to contract with an independent archaeologist to document conditions before and during construction. Property owners should contact the City Archaeologist as early as possible so that there are no project delays.