
Long Range Planning Committee Meeting Summary

October 2, 2014; 7:00 pm

2100 Clarendon Blvd. Room 311

Topic: Affordable Housing Study

PC Members in Attendance: Inta Malis (LRPC Chair), Steve Sockwell, Erik Gutshall, Nancy Iacomini, Karen Kumm Morris, Jane Siegel, Ginger Brown and Brian Harner

Staff in Attendance: Russell Schroeder, David Cristeal, Marsha Allgeier, Anthony Fusarelli

Introductory and opening remarks were provided by LRPC Chair Inta Malis. The main goals of the meeting were outlined as being an opportunity for LRPC members to get a check-in on progress to date on the Affordable Housing Study, and to provide an opportunity for early feedback on emerging outcomes. After Chair Malis's remarks, Commissioner Sockwell provided additional remarks based on his direct involvement on the Affordable Housing Study working group. The staff and consultant team then provided a four-part presentation, with LRPC discussion following each part. The principal LRPC comments from the discussion are summarized below.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON PRESENTATION

1. PROCESS

- It will be important to ensure that the Planning Commission has a significant voice on this element, given the role outlined by State Code on this as a key part of the comprehensive plan;
- When is the Affordable Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan anticipated to be drafted, and what will it look like? [*The Community Energy Plan may serve as a good, recent model of this*];
- Given the assumed schedule of LRPC, then Planning Commission, then RTA, and finally adoption, there is concern about the lack of time the Planning Commission may have to dig into this;
- The Planning Commission can have a helpful role, especially in helping to focus on making sure components aren't treated as silos – the PC can also help with how the affordable housing element may relate to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan;
- It is important that if members of this committee have things to say about policy; that they are said – this will only help improve the outcome; and
- One stated hope for tonight's meeting is for LRPC to share some general impressions on where the pressure points are.

2. NEEDS ANALYSIS

- Based on the presentation it seems there may be a collision course likely to throw off the trajectories of need and supply; with the realities of the housing stock, what's the point at which people stop making compromises to live in Arlington and just decide to live somewhere else?
- It should be recognized that what we build very much affects those trajectories;
- We also need to ask ourselves if the market is distorted by our policies?
- While the industry seems to be providing mostly one bedroom units, there are some recent examples of projects with mostly 2 and 3 bedrooms (Avalon project at Glebe and Lee Hwy cited as example);
- The issue of making do (to live like places in Arlington) is very important, but perhaps one thing it suggests is that if it's a great community, maybe one doesn't need all that space within their actual unit;
- Important to consider where we are in terms of the dreams of people who live in Arlington;
- Is the analysis also looking at the link between housing and transportation? This can be an important factors, with the average cost of travel estimated to typically be about 12% of income;

- Given the metrics of looking at combined housing and transportation costs as a basis of affordability, and understanding transportation typically costs less for many Arlington households, why not use this factor (45% of income threshold) [*Main challenge here is the pertinent H+T data generally isn't available*];
- Did the analysis look at smaller geographic areas, such as sub-areas within the County?
- Given the high demand to live in Arlington, is it even worth projecting need? The demand is always going to be there. Is the better way to pose the question, how much affordable housing do we want to provide?
- We should recognize the needs assessment alone is not the way to get to the vision....more information is needed...; the vision and goal for an affordable housing target needs to factor for all other goals, and especially needs to consider the economic and sustainability reasons for doing so;
- Inclusivity and affordability is not just feel good; these are key parts of an equal society and community;
- In light of addressing the homeless problem, we should be realistic and recognize that it may not be as easy to fix as the presentation suggested; and
- It seems one important piece of information is suggestions on where we should focus our effort on saving existing units.

3. DRAFT PRINCIPLES:

- What are the elements that make a community? What are the choices we need to make and what are the elements that make a community sustainable?
- In this context, we need to be able to sell the concept of what a sustainable community is, and why addressing affordable housing is a key thing for sustainability;
- How to address need to address policies as part of the principles; perhaps there should be mention of competing principles/goals. Alternatively, since Principle 1 is where the link is to the economic importance of affordable housing, perhaps it can just be made much more explicit in the text;
- Overall, the principles themselves seem like maybe they are lacking some teeth; it should be saying something strong. If it seems like everyone would agree with this, then maybe there's not enough gravitas;
- The principles seems like they can be organized in two groups; principles 1 and 2 seem very different from 3, 4 5 and 6. They don't seem like they are on the same level.

4. DRAFT GOALS, OBJECTIVES POLICIES:

- When we are saying "throughout", do we really mean affordable housing should be targeted throughout the County?;
- There are different issues of what a community needs vs. what community wants;
- The use of 'particularly' in Goal 1 seems a bit odd, why is that in there at all if this is an Affordable Housing plan element – isn't it already intended to meet the needs of and moderate income households?;
- Thus far, it seems the questions of how many low and moderate units do we need is unanswered;
- Has there been any quantification yet on the need; Do we know what number we need to achieve our goal?
- That hasn't been addressed yet, but the challenge is that there are distinctly different ways in which we can quantify the goal;
- No matter how it's defined, we need to have a specific target in order to keep clear what we are working toward;
- The percentage approach is intriguing;
- While this is essentially a plan out to 2040, we are still working on the quantification of the target vision;

- It's important to ask ourselves what is the goal in terms of people who work here but don't live here; maybe the test should be "do they have an easy opportunity to live here"?
- As part of this, we need to define the community that we want; and understand what that might mean;
- One element that appears missing in Arlington so far is some really new, different forms of living; given our past with smart growth, as a County we need to continue to be visionary in how we do housing;
- To address the challenge of setting a goal, maybe we can deal with goals in terms of ranges, to avoid being so precise...it's often good to have a target but keeping it flexible may also be helpful;
- How is this document to be used...does it want to make people to want to have affordable housing? is that part of the reason? Is it part marketing piece, or is it simply guidance for future investment in housing and associated policies?
- Need to also acknowledge that strong families contribute to strong communities; In terms of Aging in Place, we should understand whether it is more about aging in the community, vs. aging in the actual structure; Given Arlington's general lack of large campuses typically used for adult assisting living facilities, what are Arlington's opportunities to address this?