

October 12, 2018

Mr. Brian T. Kenner, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Mr. Tyrone Garrett, Executive Director, DC Housing Authority

Dear Messieurs Kenner and Garrett:

The Near SE/SW Community Benefits Coordinating Committee (CBCC) is extremely grateful that the District is committed to a “Build First” strategy to ensure that current Greenleaf residents can stay in their community in Southwest rather than be displaced as a result of Greenleaf redevelopment. However, CBCC is concerned about the slow pace of the project, as well as the proper maintenance of current Greenleaf units as the redevelopment process drags on.

As you know, DCHA created an Advisory Council of local stakeholders to provide routine input on emerging plans for Greenleaf. On May 15 the group was introduced to the eight teams who were selected via an RFQ to submit proposals for Greenleaf redevelopment. Members of the Council, including CBCC Board members, have since asked to provide input to the RRP, since the RFP will largely determine whether and how current residents can be served in the new development.

The RFP has still not been issued, nor has the Advisory Council been able to provide input on its general content. As you contemplate orchestrating the first moves for the Greenleaf community, I am forwarding, below, a set of issues and questions that developers should be asked to address in their responses to the RFP.

1. How can we get the ball rolling?

Land banking of publicly owned properties and other parcels that become available for redevelopment, should be part of the process to realize Build First. We understand that DMPED and DCHA may be delaying the release of the RFP in order to identify one or more parcels that can kick-start redevelopment and, importantly, Greenleaf residents’ relocation.

This is good news if the agencies have decided that commitment of one or more such properties are the necessary predicate to ensuring that Greenleaf residents move only once and that none are forced to move away from Southwest. Developers should be asked in the RFP to address the options for procurement of one or more these properties in their proposals, and the implications for the number of Greenleaf residents anticipated to be accommodated in the first project.

2. How many new units in the proposed mixed-income project will be affordable for low-income households?

A “conceptual plan” developed by consultants and released to the community in March 2016, suggested a 3:1 ratio of Market Rate to Below Market Rate (BMR) units in the replacement development. If realized, the 25% BMR units would be far above the minimum legally mandated percentage for new development. Developers should be asked to defend the calculus for 25% BMR or defend a different ratio if the 25% is no longer governing.

How many of Greenleaf’s total nearly 500 units become part of the overall total of the new mixed-income housing must also be addressed in developers’ proposals. We note that while the community has pressed for one-for-one replacement, it is difficult to know precisely how many of Greenleaf units are currently occupied and how many DCHA has targeted to replace. Allowing the total to diminish through natural attrition as the redevelopment process lags would contravene the community’s objective of maintaining social diversity and supporting those whose families have lived in Southwest for generations.

Finally, specific rent limits and controls over time for BMR units will also be critical. Developers should be asked to describe the explicit profile of BMR income caps, and describe mechanisms to preserve BMR units over time.

3. Who will be eligible for BMR units in the new mixed-income housing?

Developers should describe the eligibility rules (whether federal/DCHA regulations or other) that will apply to new BMR units in the mixed-income project, who will be responsible for eligibility determinations, and how that process will work.

4. How else will the new mixed-income housing accommodate Greenleaf residents?

Whether there is need for as many very large (4 and 5 bedroom) units as when Greenleaf was built nearly 60 years ago, it remains difficult for low income families to find housing suitable for multi-generational families and those with more than one child. Households with aging seniors and those with disabilities also frequently include multi-generational individuals who need separate spaces, which is difficult to find in the private market. Proposals for the array of unit sizes should be made only on the basis of specific evidence of population needs currently and over time.

Accommodation for services (both space and programming) is also a critical component of new mixed-income housing, in order for former public housing residents to make a successful transition and to ensure that Greenleaf and other new residents are successfully integrated into a new social structure.

The numbers of townhouses vs. high rises will also impact what kinds of Greenleaf households can take advantage of each. The configuration is a concern for many Southwesterners, as it impacts the degree which mixed density and the preservation of open space reflect a Small Area Plan priority.

The fate of Greenleaf residents and of public housing overall is a persistent concern to all residents of Southwest, reflecting the Southwest Small Area Plan vision for the community to remain “an exemplary model of equity and inclusion--...a diversity of races, ages and income levels”. The issues above should be raised in the RFP and addressed in the responses, both to ensure that low and moderate income households are not pushed out of the community, and to reflect the interests of the larger Southwest community in maintaining social diversity, which has been so clearly articulated in the Small Area Plan.

Sincerely,

Fredrica D. Kramer
Vice Chair, CBCC

Cc: Kenneth LaCruise
Chair, CBCC