

Initial Draft and Summary of PHAR's

# **Resident Directed Positive Vision for Redevelopment**

APRIL 2016

## **Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR)**

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## 1. Introduction

Planning for redevelopment in Charlottesville is already underway. We, the residents, are very interested because we stand to gain or lose the most in this process. We hope this information – the initial statement of a Positive Vision for Redevelopment – will offer insight into the priorities of residents. We want to bring the spirit of cooperation to the conversations. PHAR will release a formal and detailed Vision for the public and residents once this draft is shared with residents and feedback is included.

The redevelopment process offers a time to come together, protect what is best about our neighborhoods and make improvements. We have learned about the financial pressures facing the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA) and the owners of Friendship Court. Developing a mix of affordable and work force housing (under 40% of the area median income) will help stabilize operating budgets for the future. We will all be better off if Charlottesville can “do redevelopment right:” protecting current residents from displacement and homelessness, making improvements to promote opportunities and integration, improve resident quality of life, and expanding our affordable housing resources.



This draft summary of the Positive Vision for Redevelopment is the result of conversations with over 100 residents. Six community meetings have been held at four public housing neighborhoods and Friendship Court to share information and listen to the ideas, questions and concerns of residents focusing on identifying current positive aspects of life in public housing and identifying future positive aspects of public housing based on realistic assumptions. In addition PHAR has held numerous work sessions and interactive workshops, open to all residents, that have identified key points to be addressed and offering additional input. Additional resident input has been gained from on-to-one contacts with residents. This is a living document which will continue to be changed as redevelopment planning moves forward.

PHAR hopes this forward-looking statement will help provide a framework and vision for the future, in order to ensure positive outcomes for future redevelopment. The Positive Vision process is based on resident input, building consensus on key ideas for redevelopment, and offering realistic positive goals. This draft will help PHAR as we further engage residents to develop the Positive Vision for Resident Directed Redevelopment.

## **2. General Principles**

Residents have determined key principles for discussing redevelopment goals. These principles are realistic and reflect basic needs of residents:

- The Residents' Bill of Rights for Redevelopment (RBoR) passed in 2008 by the CRHA Board of Commissioners and the Charlottesville City Council is the basic foundation for future redevelopment and should be used as a basis for all decision making moving forward.
- As such, residents should be included in all decision making regarding redevelopment and should inform redevelopment planning.
- Replacement housing, renovated or newly built housing should be fundamentally better than existing public housing.
- Unused land owned by CRHA can be used to provide more affordable housing for Charlottesville's population and is the proper avenue for exploring increases in density and relocation plans.
- Mixed-income communities can be built in ways that protect existing neighborhoods from increased gentrification and large increases in density.
- Redevelopment offers historic opportunities to fundamentally repair low-income communities, improve the Housing Authority, and make amends for the past.



### 3. Statement of Support

Our community workshops and one-to-one conversations resulted in hundreds of specific points (see the summary of the community meeting notes in Attachment A). The Residents' Bill of Rights for Redevelopment (Attachment C), adopted by both City Council and CRHA, is the foundation for conversations about the process and participation of residents. In addition to fully supporting the Residents' Bill of Rights, resident input led to the following additional statements of support:

- a. **We support a cooperative, inclusive process.**
- b. **We support preserving what is now positive and improving upon it.**
- c. **We support opportunities for betterment.**
- d. **We support preserving and improving green and open space.**
- e. **We support making the most of the opportunity to expand affordable housing.**
- f. **We support high quality construction.**

More information about the statements above is provided in the following section.

### 4. Details and Priorities of the Positive Vision's Statement of Support

Below are some of the issues residents talked about most often, or had the strongest feelings about, organized within the categories above.

- a. **We support a cooperative, inclusive process.**
  - Residents need to be part of the decision-making for our communities.
  - Stability is very important: on-going conversations, especially about relocation planning are very important. Relocation plans need to ensure residents are given plenty of notice (12 months), and keeps children in the same schools.



**b. We support preserving what is now positive and improving upon it.**

- There are many parts of our communities that we like.
- We want to continue to live near our current sources of support.
- Community resources such as access to the bus line, community centers, churches, the nursing clinics, community gardens, and programs are appreciated.
- Resident associations in neighborhoods and city-wide are important to us.
- Policy protections for residents are critically important such as the Earned Income Disallowance, the grievance process, having resident Commissioners, and having avenues to control our own communities.
- All current residents should be able to stay and continue to pay rents that are 30% of their incomes. Utility costs should continue to be provided by the CRHA.
- Single family homes are an important stepping stone for resident self-sufficiency, home ownership should be explored, and these units should not be lost from the total unit count (376).

*“I like the security of knowing I can afford my rent.”*



**c. We support opportunities for betterment.**

- We need jobs, job training and opportunities to start businesses and own homes. Redevelopment offers an opportunity to make amends for the past. We cannot recover the diverse economic base that African Americans once had in Charlottesville, but there is much to be done to help move forward. Mixed use is an option worth exploring, as long as its focus is economic improvement for residents, such as businesses that are owned and operated by current residents, or which bring an economic advantage to our



neighborhoods, such as a grocery store, childcare center, and resident business incubators.

- Those of us who are able to work need more supportive services in our neighborhoods. Some of us need help addressing barriers, such as culturally appropriate and easy-to-access mental health care.
- Those of us who are elderly or disabled need continued access to nursing clinics and other supports that help us to continue living in our homes.
- We need more enriching activities for children in our neighborhoods.

*“The nursing clinic has been a real help to me.”*

**d. We support preserving and improving green and open space.**

- Currently, residents have yards in all neighborhoods except for one (the high rise, Crescent Halls). We like our green space and do not want our current sites to be redeveloped with high density.
- A 20-25% increase in density on *some* of the sites could be appropriate as long as it maximizes yard and porch spaces and as long as the increase provides more affordable units (under 40% AMI).
- Land that is vacant or under-used gives opportunities for higher density housing.
- Children need better play areas, located in central areas in our neighborhoods.
- Community gardens bring us healthy food and we want to be sure the current gardens are protected, and new gardens have space in the redeveloped sites.

*“I appreciate the activities and events I can get to from my neighborhood.”*



**e. We support making the most of the opportunity to expand affordable housing.**

- More housing for a range of incomes will benefit the budgets of CRHA and Friendship Court. Residents overall support mixed income neighborhoods, especially where the density remains similar to what it is now and if it supports more affordable housing. Building cultural understanding and tolerance need to be part of the process of income mixing.
- Housing that is affordable for people under 40% of the AMI (\$32,520 for a family of four) will help improve the quality of life for Charlottesville's population. Most of our public housing neighbors have incomes below 20% AMI (\$16,260 for a family of four).
- Vacant and under-used land (especially on Levy Avenue and South First Street) can be developed densely without much change to the quality of life for current residents.

*“Public housing has helped a lot of people get on their feet. I would be homeless if not for public housing.”*

***Opportunities exist***

*This parking lot on Levy Avenue is owned by CRHA...*

*This could be affordable housing!*

*CRHA also owns under-used/unused land on South First Street.*



**f. We support high quality construction.**

- Materials used for redevelopment should be of long lasting, high quality.
- New units should be roomier and should comply fully with ADA requirements.
- Subsidized housing should not look different from other housing.
- There should be a variance of townhomes and row houses.
- Placement of multi-family apartment buildings should be limited and should rise no higher than 3 stories.
- Elderly people should not be living in a high-rise, due to fire safety and mobility challenges.
- Elderly and ADA units should be available at all of the sites for those who wish to be integrated into family communities.
- Important features: sound-proofing, central air and heat controlled by individual households, WiFi, back porches/patios and yards/decks. Community centers and playgrounds need to be constructed to help “build community,” in the centers of the sites, easily visible. Parking strategies that preserve open spaces should be considered such as underground parking.
- We hope redevelopment will leave our properties – and our residents – better than they are now.



**5. PHAR's Asset-Based Approach: What residents value in their neighborhoods**

Over the past several months, PHAR interns and staff held five workshops in public housing neighborhoods including Crescent Halls, Sixth Street, South First Street and Westhaven. Work sessions were also held with the PHAR Board, which is made up entirely of low-income people. Over 100 people have engaged in this conversation, including people living in all of the larger sites.

*“In our neighborhood we’re like a family.”*



At the workshops, information was shared about the redevelopment planning process. The focus then shifted to a conversation about two questions:

- What are the positive qualities of current CRHA neighborhoods, and
- What are residents' visions for the future?

**Residents mentioned many positive qualities of their neighborhoods. These are a few of the most often discussed assets:**

- Affordability: residents appreciate the fact that their rent is a portion of their income, especially those who are on a fixed income (e.g., Social Security),
- Community: residents have networks that help with practical support, as well as friendships with their neighbors,
- Location: many residents are close to their jobs and public transportation,
- Green space: many residents noted their appreciation for their yards and back porches, and
- Community Centers: residents enjoy an affordable option for family gatherings, such as children's birthday parties and repasts.

Dozens of ideas about the vision for public housing neighborhoods in the future were also shared by residents. Please see Attachment #1 for more information.

## **6. Relocation**

Residents have expressed concerns over relocation for a number of years. Seeking clarity on this important issue is critical. The Residents' Bill of Rights for Redevelopment includes clear protections:

*"Residents who are displaced by redevelopment, and who wish to stay in public housing, will be guaranteed replacement housing in the following order of preference:*

- a. Replacement units at their current site.*
- b. Replacement units in another area that has equal or greater advantages as their current site.*
- c. As a last resort, and only when required by space or necessity, temporary housing of an equal or greater quality to their existing housing, with a duration not to exceed 12 months.*



*Each displaced household will have the right to choose to return to the redeveloped site or to relocate permanently to another replacement unit.”*

Additionally, residents suggest the following guidelines:

- 12 months’ notice of relocation should be given.
- The Uniform Relocation Act (URA) must be followed (see attached fact sheet), remember these are only the bare minimum of requirements, CRHA can offer better strategies than what is simply in the URA.
- Currently unused land owned by CRHA at Levy Ave. and South First Street should be the foundation for a relocation strategy.
- “Leapfrogging” families within units at their sites would be acceptable as long as no residents are left behind and that families displaced early on would have priority access to new units.
- Residents mostly prefer to return to their own sites.
- Using vouchers for relocation should be minimized, and residents should have the option to remain with a voucher or to return to public housing.
- If vouchers are used as relocation strategy the homes being utilized should be within City of Charlottesville limits, and should conform with other protections of the URA.
- Children of displaced families should be allowed to attend school in their current school districts.
- Individualized relocation planning should be utilized; this has been a successful strategy in many other public housing communities.

## **6. Suggested Early Steps in the Redevelopment Process**

CRHA redevelopment planning has gone through a start-and-stop process over the last decade. The current planning needs to include residents, and needs to be led by the new Redevelopment Committee. The financing mechanisms used to fund redevelopment will greatly influence key portions of the redevelopment plan. Relocation strategies, use of unused land, the role of mixed-income, and site selection will all depend on how redevelopment will be financed. The redevelopment committee should prioritize these issues and discuss them as a whole. The committee should also prioritize:

- Designing a memorandum of Understanding between CRHA, the City, PHAR and LAJC for “meaningful and enforceable resident participation” in the decision making process,
- Financing strategies,
- Relocation planning,
- Formation of a Community Development Corporation or other development entity
- Understanding and discussing the Alexandria Housing Authority analysis.

Technical assistance in planning how to make the most of Tax Credits and other financing options would be very helpful, and we hope all sessions will be open to the public, to enable residents to learn about the processes which will affect their futures.

Friendship Court redevelopment planning is just getting started. Plans need to include residents at every step, including now when the future vision is being developed.

The importance of including planning for supportive services in each neighborhood, including economic opportunities, must be a focus throughout the process.



For CRHA sites, PHAR suggests an initial plan that would make the most sense economically for CRHA and for the good of the residents is:

- a. Build on unused/under-used land, such as the properties on South First Street and Levy Ave. These will be relocation housing and then mixed-income in the future. The new developments can be more dense, in order to increase CRHA income from mixed-income renters in the future.
- b. Move the residents of Crescent Halls to the new buildings (relocation housing). Crescent Halls residents are the most vulnerable overall. The building is for seniors and people with disabilities, yet they suffer the worst quality of life of any site due to the condition of the building, including air quality, safety problems, and overall dilapidation. Additionally, the high rise puts them more at risk in case of fires or other emergencies. Charlottesville needs additional affordable one-bedroom and efficiency apartments which could be provided at Crescent Halls and/or with the newly build relocation housing.
- c. Demolish Crescent Halls and replace with 2 low-rise elderly buildings, or remodel it possibly to be mixed income housing.
- d. Build three-story buildings for elderly residents and offer the current elderly residents the option to move or stay in their temporary relocation housing.
- e. Begin redeveloping other sites, and dedicate 10-20% of homes at each site for people with disabilities. Westhaven is the largest site and cannot be renovated, due to reported structural challenges. Timing for Westhaven needs further discussion. Renovating the standing buildings on South First Street could be the next priority after Crescent Halls, followed by Sixth Street, Madison Avenue, Riverside and Michie Drive.

The need to provide a well thought-out relocation process needs to be a top priority. PHAR stands ready to assist with this. Due to the high cost of living in Charlottesville, many residents of public and subsidized housing have lived in the same home for many years, sometimes decades. Additionally, approximately half of all households have at least one family member who is elderly or has a disability, which creates additional challenges in relocating. Notice of at least 12 months would help residents prepare. Federal regulations (HUD Uniform Relocation Act) should be the starting point, and the Residents Bill of Rights and on-going resident input should be included in all steps of the process.



## **7. Conclusion**

Public and subsidized housing are important resources contributing to the diversity and quality of life of our entire community. It is possible to preserve these resources while expanding opportunities for other people, increasing integration and creating a more vibrant city.

The interlocking issues of financing, mixed-income, partnerships, relocation, and phasing must be discussed as a whole and will greatly determine the future of public housing in Charlottesville. Residents have presented realistic desires for their futures and PHAR hopes that the entire community will embrace the concept of resident driven redevelopment.

The Positive Vision for Redevelopment will be presented in a formalized document and using other presentable methods once this initial draft summary is reviewed and understood by residents. The formal Positive Vision will be a much more detailed living document open to revision as the process moves forward.

Residents are interested in learning more about options, and having opportunities to participate in decision-making throughout the process. We hope to engage in dialogue in the near future.

## **8. Attachments**

- A. Summary of Community Meeting Notes
- B. Resources for more information
- C. Residents' Bill of Rights for Redevelopment
- D. Relocation Fact Sheet



**Summary of the 2015 Community Meetings and PHAR Board Discussions**  
**Sites included: Crescent Halls, Sixth Street, Westhaven, South First Street**

**The following priorities were the most common and/or most strongly felt among the dozens of residents who participated in PHAR's five community meetings about redevelopment and in PHAR's Board discussions.**

**A. Residents' Visions for Inside Their Redeveloped Housing**

1. Central air and heating system and ceiling fans
2. Good quality materials (including dry wall, hard wood floors, etc.)
3. New and improved appliances (including washer, dryer, dishwasher etc.)
4. Bigger units/rooms and more variation in the number of bedrooms per unit
5. Wi/fi

**B. Residents' Visions for Site Design**

1. Wider porch
2. Deck/patio
3. Better parking, including driveways/garages
4. Improved (back)yard space
5. Design to minimize noise

**C. Residents' Visions for Their Neighborhoods**

1. A real sense of community, where the design helps people to interact. Where we live will help people to maintain their relationships and help each other.
2. Improved playgrounds that are in a central location
3. Convenience stores on/near property
4. Improved computer labs
5. New basketball courts
6. More activities available at recreational centers
7. On-site property managers who care about building community and a positive quality of life for residents
8. Promote and support incubators for resident-owned businesses
9. Services and activities available at community centers, including on-site supports (childcare, employment training programs, counseling, etc.) and access to CRHA jobs

D. Residents' Visions for Relocation

1. New placement must be of equal or greater quality (hotels included)
2. Favorable of utilizing the unused field
3. No desire to move to Albemarle County
4. Voucher option available during and post-relocation as a last resort. If vouchers are used, they should be limited to Charlottesville, and relocation assistance should be provided. Residents should be able to opt to continue as a voucher holder.
5. Same school districts for children

E. Residents' Visions for Mixed Income

1. Units should look the same regardless of income
2. Income based is still important
3. If neighborhoods become mixed income, real integration is needed; no separation or way to tell which apartments are public housing
4. Protect public housing
5. Ensure fairness

F. Residents' Visions for Addressing the Needs of People who are Elderly and/or Disabled

1. 10% of all sites should have units that accommodate the elderly and disabled
  2. Designated elderly units
  3. If buildings are multistory, then no more than three floors
  4. Moving assistance should be offered if relocation is necessary
  5. More handicapped parking
- \*No discrimination against disabled and elderly

G. Residents' Visions for Policies/Guiding Principles

1. Maintain income criteria
2. Formerly incarcerated return
3. Redevelopment should leave properties *better* than when they found them
4. Maintain affordability
5. Promote renting to homeownership

H. Residents' Visions for Services

1. Build economic capacity: job training, access to jobs, entrepreneurship
2. Security
3. Bus stops
4. Trainings (including jobs, maintenance, etc.)
5. Pest control
6. Improved maintenance

## Attachment B

### Resources for more information:

PHAR's research into redevelopment has identified several helpful articles and resources. In order to better understand Charlottesville's history, we suggest you read "Urban Renewal: The End of Black Culture in Charlottesville, Virginia," by Renae Nadine Shackelford and James Robert Saunders. This resource is based on oral histories from people affected by the demolition of the Vinegar Hill neighborhood, a downtown community with several businesses owned by black residents. This book is available from the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library.

To learn more about public housing residents' perspectives about their communities, we suggest you read "We Call These Projects Home, Solving the Housing Crisis from the Ground Up." This report was published in 2010 by the Right to the City Alliance and is available at [http://righttothecity.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/We\\_Call\\_These\\_Projects\\_Home-2.pdf](http://righttothecity.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/We_Call_These_Projects_Home-2.pdf).

Ashley Blackwell, a graduate at the University of Virginia ('15), has published an important thesis called "Towards a More Equitable and Economically Targeted Redevelopment Process." Her paper includes information about ways that neighborhood design can contribute to a sense of community, the benefits and drawbacks of mixed-income developments and the opportunities to improve residents' well-being by offering effective supportive services, including workforce development. The Delancey Street Foundation is cited in Ms. Blackwell's thesis. This program operates in several states and provides intensive vocational and academic support services. Contact the author to request a copy of the paper (email: [ab7mn@virginia.edu](mailto:ab7mn@virginia.edu)).

Root Shock: How Tearing Up Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It, by Mindy Thompson Fullilove. Dr. Fullilove examines the "ruptures of community" brought about by urban renewal. She also discusses how to prevent future damage and re-build neighborhoods with strong communities offering opportunities for low-income people. One of her concepts, the "Community Burn Index," assesses the damage a neighborhood suffers in the same way that a burn victim's wounds are categorized by degree. A third degree burn is the demolition of a home. The Community Burn Index is found by identifying the number of blocks with any third degree burns (demolished homes) and dividing that number by the total number of blocks in that specific area.

The Urban Institute recently worked with three localities to implement community-based services, including in at least one locality, involvement in redevelopment. The Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration is the model which provided the foundation for this work. For more information, see [http://www.urban.org/research/publication/chicago-family-case-management-demonstration/view/full\\_report](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/chicago-family-case-management-demonstration/view/full_report).

To learn about the City of Charlottesville's vision for redeveloping a downtown region called The Strategic Investment Area (SIA), we suggest you read the SIA Plan (and also Ms. Blackwell's paper cited above). The SIA Plan is available on the city's website (<http://www.charlottesville.org/home/showdocument?id=27996>).

Research about how to effectively work with residents when redevelopment is being planned is growing; this resource offers useful information: "Community-Level Engagement in Public Housing Redevelopment" published in Urban Affairs Review, written by Laurie Walker (email: [laurie.walker@umontana.edu](mailto:laurie.walker@umontana.edu)).

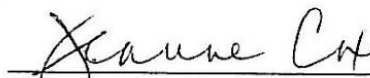
# **Residents' Bill of Rights for Redevelopment**

*(as approved unanimously by the CRHA Board of Commissioners, 11/24/08)*

The Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority and the City of Charlottesville hereby commit to a redevelopment process that improves the quality of life in our public housing neighborhoods, involves residents in key redevelopment decisions, enhances housing and employment opportunities for residents, and guarantees that current residents will not be subject to permanent or long-term displacement or homelessness as a result of redevelopment. To fulfill these commitments, CRHA and the City of Charlottesville endorse the following guiding principles for our redevelopment efforts:

1. A meaningful and enforceable resident participation process will guide all substantive decisions about redevelopment;
2. There will be at least one-for-one replacement of all affected units with newly-built or renovated public housing units ("replacement units");
3. Replacement units will be of like kind (1 bedroom for 1 bedroom, 5 bedroom for 5 bedroom, elderly for elderly, family for family, etc.), subject to an analysis of needs of current and future public housing-eligible residents;
4. Those replacement units will be reserved for very low-income and extremely low-income households, as under current public housing admissions rules;
5. The opportunity to live in the replacement units will be offered first to those households living in CRHA units, without having to re-apply or re-qualify;
6. Residents who are displaced by redevelopment, and who wish to stay in public housing, will be guaranteed replacement housing in the following order of preference:
  - a. Replacement units at their current site.
  - b. Replacement units in another area that has equal or greater advantages as their current site.
  - c. As a last resort, and only when required by space or necessity, temporary housing of an equal or greater quality to their existing housing, with a duration not to exceed 12 months.
7. Each displaced household will have the right to choose to return to the redeveloped site or to relocate permanently to another replacement unit;
8. The redevelopment process will support a system of economic justice in which residents have priority access to jobs, homeownership and contracting opportunities created by redevelopment, and in which the redeveloped communities feature improved amenities and enhanced access to services, employment and transportation for residents.

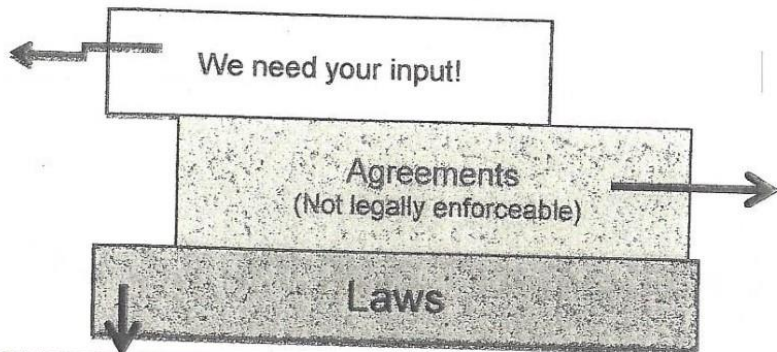
Approved by Council  
December 15, 2008

  
Clerk of City Council





## Pyramid of Protections



### The Uniform Relocation Act (URA)

The Uniform Relocation Act is a federal law that controls relocation during most public housing redevelopment.

**What it does:** No one able to be moved without "a reasonable opportunity to relocate to a comparable" home.

- "Comparable" means:
  - Decent, safe, and sanitary
  - Adequate size for number of family members
  - Similar price (note: not exact price)
  - In a location just as desirable as original home with respect to facilities, services, public utilities and proximity to job
- If you have to move, you get...
  - Replacement housing expenses for up to 42 months
  - Reasonable moving expenses
  - Help finding a place—counseling, when needed, transportation to inspect new housing; etc.
- If you're temporarily relocated, you have a right to return to your original home

### Notice under the URA

- PHAs must give notice to affected residents as soon as feasible, and are encouraged to plan early BUT
- 90 days written notice is all that's required

## Relocation

during redevelopment

### The Residents Bill of Rights

- This is a local agreement on redevelopment, signed by Charlottesville City Council and Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA). Enforcing these rules requires active engagement from the public housing community.

### States that:

- Residents will be part of redevelopment decisions, including relocation planning.
- Each displaced household can choose to return to where they lived before, or stay in replacement unit (i.e. residents have a **right to return**).
- The opportunity to live in newly built units will be offered first to current public housing residents, without having to re-apply or re-qualify
- Relocated residents will be given replacement housing in the following order of preference:
  - Units at their current site
  - Units in a comparable unit elsewhere
  - As a last resort, temporary housing of equal or greater quality, for no longer than 12 months

