

Executive Summary

The Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority engaged Wallace Roberts & Todd in January 2009 to study its twelve properties with a view towards identifying rehabilitation and/ or redevelopment opportunities. From the beginning, the Housing Authority envisioned this endeavor as one with a high level of engagement of Housing Authority residents and community stakeholders. Both the process and the final product had to provide the Housing Authority with scenarios that:

- Provide a financially sustainable future for the Authority.
- Adhere to the provisions of the Resident Bill of Rights
- Provide, at the end of the redevelopment process, no fewer public housing units than it currently has in its portfolio (376).

To the extent possible within these initial constraints, the Housing Authority sought a plan that:

- Expands affordable housing opportunities in Charlottesville
- Provides mixed-income communities and de-concentrates poverty
- Integrates public housing sites with the surrounding neighborhoods
- Provides opportunities for mixed-use within public housing sites (or at the interface of public housing and surrounding neighborhoods)
- Provides opportunities for public housing residents to move from poverty to self-sufficiency through job training, education and economic opportunity
- Supports the goals and vision of the City of Charlottesville’s master plan
- Identifies strategies for the design of environmentally sustainable and energy efficient developments

The draft master plan is divided into six chapters:

- Chapter One - Existing Conditions
- Chapter Two - Defining the Market
- Chapter Three - Community Engagement
- Chapter Four - Analysis of Options
- Chapter Five - Building a Multi-Year Development Plan
- Chapter Six - Next Steps

The Housing Authority, with the collaboration of WRT, crafted an open, public process that engaged residents and community stakeholders in developing the enclosed draft plan recommendations. Meetings and interviews were held with residents and community stakeholders in May, June, July and September 2009. These meetings and interviews yielded some common themes:

- Residents are apprehensive about the redevelopment process, particularly about the issue of relocation.
- Residents, in general, are not enthusiastic about increasing housing density on CRHA’s sites, but will consider modest increases in density for a perceived benefit (such as more open space, or more play areas).
- Residents, in general, see their housing sites as their neighborhood, and do not necessarily see their housing sites as belonging to the larger neighborhood. Many residents commented that this was a “two-way street”, and that they did not feel welcomed by their surrounding neighborhoods.
- While residents generally say that they like their housing sites, the units are often criticized for being too small, with insufficient storage space, kitchen space and amenities.
- Several residents and social service providers said that CRHA needs to develop a comprehensive plan for the provision of social services on its sites. There is a perception that there is duplication of services in some areas and “gaps” in services in other areas.
- Many of the smaller sites, (for example: Michie Drive, Madison Avenue, Riverside Avenue), lack a community meeting room. This limits the on-site services that can be provided at these sites.

The consultant team also investigated the market for affordable housing in Charlottesville. Through research into prior studies, particularly the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission’s report of January 2007, and through on-the-ground research by our market analyst we determined that there is a deep need for more affordable housing in Charlottesville. Need exceeds the current supply both in the City and in the surrounding five-county region.

From all of our meetings with residents and stakeholders, our investigations of the sites, and with the assistance of our sub-consultants we have condensed the site development options preferred by residents and stakeholders into a comprehensive multi-phase rehabilitation and redevelopment program that accomplishes the following:

- Maintains the number of public housing units in CRHA’s portfolio at the current 376 units (while substantially rehabilitating or replacing the entire 376 units).
- Expands overall housing on CRHA’s sites from 376 units to 558 units.
- Creates mixed-income communities on the majority of CRHA’s sites and expands the availability of affordable housing options in Charlottesville by creating 130 new rental units for persons earning between 30% and 50% of area median income.
- Offers home-ownership opportunities to CRHA residents through the inclusion of 12 affordable for-sale houses.
- Maximizes single-move relocation of residents by building new public housing units on open land first, thereby minimizing two-move relocations and the reliance on temporary relocation vouchers. In the proposed multi-year development plan no resident is envisioned to remain on a temporary relocation voucher for more than one project phase (assumed to be 1 year).
- Re-connects CRHA’s public housing sites to their neighborhoods by means of new road connections at Westhaven, new pedestrian trail connections at South First Street, Madison, Sixth Street and Michie Drive, and a new entry pavilion at Crescent Halls.
- Offers the opportunity for a mixed-use redevelopment to connect Westhaven to West Main Street.

Chapter Six offers a set of opportunities and recommendations for next steps, including issues pertaining to CRHA policies, relocation, future unit mix, and the process of moving from a master plan into implementation.

This plan is still in its draft form, and we look forward to comments and feedback as we move toward completion of the final document in mid-January 2010.