

Applicant's Report - Creighton Court Redevelopment
Date: 12/17/2020

The proposed redevelopment of Creighton Court to a mixed-income community has been a longstanding goal of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) and the City of Richmond. Under the leadership of The Community Builders (TCB) partnering with RRHA, and with the City's support, the redevelopment will continue the transformation of the East End of Richmond. The project joins hands with other key initiatives in Church Hill North that are underway. Most notable are Armstrong Renaissance, Bon Secours Community Hospital, The Market at 25th Street, The Kitchens at Reynolds and the streetscape improvements along Nine Mile Road. Armstrong Renaissance was the build first site to offer a priority for residents of Creighton court to relocate into a new mixed-income community.

The planning for a new mixed income community at Creighton Court was anchored by an inclusive community engagement process with the existing residents first, but also other community stakeholders. The initial discussions began in 2016 with Armstrong Renaissance. Most recently, the outreach and engagement occurred in September/October 2020, with the Final Concepts and Master Plans being presented in November/December 2020. The full details of the community engagement process can be reviewed and referenced in the Creighton Court Redevelopment 2020 Community Engagement Report dated December 2020 (attached). It was critical to hear and understand the resident concerns and practical needs related to safety, children and youth play areas, public gathering spaces, community center needs, green spaces, home styles, building materials, street & alley design, parking spaces, and updates. The proposed design sets out to achieve the goals most important to the current residents while working to decentralize poverty.

The Master Plan and CUP Ordinance sets the stage for the next steps of redevelopment at Creighton Court, augments the neighboring revitalization efforts for the Nine Mile Corridor, and serves as a catalyst for a new "East End Gateway" to the City. This Gateway, in the form of a mixed income community would anchor the East End of the Nine Mile Corridor and bring together Armstrong Renaissance, Creighton Court and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Creighton Court site is approximately 36 acres and contains 504 dwelling units. The proposed plan envisions the demolition and removal of the existing buildings in phases as funding becomes available and proposes a maximum of 700 new dwelling units, Community Center, a large linear park at the center of the community, and recreation open spaces. The program goal is to deliver a high quality mixed-income neighborhood that will attract both current residents and residents of differing income levels .

The large linear park at the center of the community will accommodate several outdoor recreational activities for families and children of all ages. By establishing and enhancing walkability within the community and creating a central public amenity with visibility, the community will enable residents to enjoy good health, safety, and a high quality of life.

Many of the new homes will have front and rear yards with private parking pads accessible from rear alleys. This design allows for a pedestrian friendly streetscape with front porches, street trees, and sidewalks that keep the tradition of many Richmond neighborhoods. The master plan layout also ensures adequate safety, light and air into each residence. A mix of housing types (both rental and home ownership) ranges from one-story bungalows, two-story single-family detached homes, duplexes, strings of town homes, two- and three-story stacked flats and three and four-story multifamily apartment buildings with elevators. The new homes and community center will adequately address the accessibility and visitability needs of residents. This mix of housing types will provide a variety of appropriate unit choices for each different resident group including single adults, couples, families, senior citizens, and disabled residents.

Introducing new streets connecting with the existing street network knits the neighborhood together and distributes traffic with multiple entry and exit points to relieve any concerns about traffic congestion. Public safety requirements such as access for fire rescue and other emergency vehicles have been accommodated with proposed street widths, turning radii and geometries to provide circulation to and within the plan.

The architectural design process began with a canvas of existing residential neighborhoods in Richmond including Church Hill, Church Hill North, Chimborazo, Oakwood, Glenwood Park, Fairmount, Union Hill, Shockoe Bottom, Jackson Ward, Oregon Hill and the Fan District. A variety of architectural styles found in these neighborhoods have been incorporated. They include Greek Revival, Federal Style, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival. Combined with the variety in type, massing, materials (brick and siding) and color, the variety of styles will create a more authentic feeling neighborhood where each resident feels like they live in a unique home. The homes will incorporate these different styles with architectural elements like covered stoops, front porches, bay windows, decorative columns, door and window trim, and prominent cornices. Many will use the low sloping roof characteristic of the canvassed neighborhoods.

The quality of the new homes will blend the affordable, work force and market rate housing making them indistinguishable from each other. Such a residential character will enhance the image of the surrounding context as well.

It should be noted that although it's not part of the Creighton Court redevelopment project, the Boys & Girls Club of Metro Richmond (BGC MR) plans to transform the Eastlawn Shopping Center (just west of Creighton Court) into a facility that provides health services, college-prep, workforce development, and programs and activities for teens.