

Memorandum

To: Symmes Advisory Committee and VHB Consultants

From: Marc Dohan for the Residential Working Group

Date: July 2, 2002

Attached please find the culmination of months of work by the Residential Working Group: A set of principles to guide the residential development at the Symmes site. This document is meant to provide guidance to the Symmes Advisory Committee, VHB and its consultants, the Arlington Redevelopment Board, and other town officials, employees and consultants regarding the residential development that will take place on the Symmes site. The principles are not listed in any order of priority.

The Residential Working Group has had strong attendance from architects, affordable housing advocates and developers, neighborhood residents and abutters. The Residential Working Group has not been a forum for advocates of any one particular type of housing; rather it has been a place where these diverse groups have come together in an effort to find common ground on the type of housing that Arlington residents would like to see developed at the Symmes site. In the words of one of our members, the group has focused on quality of life issues for the current neighborhood and for the future residents of the site.

Below are the answers to the more specific questions posed by Charlie Foskett.

1. **Summary of interest and activities.** The group, which has numbered as many as twenty at times, is made up primarily of two constituencies: neighbors to the site and advocates for affordable housing. Each of these groups brings their own varied interests to the residential working group.
2. **Statement of policy, objectives and goals.** See attached "Guiding Principles for Residential Development."
3. **Problem areas.** With such a diverse group, there are a myriad of potential problem areas. The residential working group has chosen to focus on the areas where there is agreement rather than the areas where there is disagreement.
4. **Two areas where we could use VHB Assistance.**
 - a. *The residential working group's role in the context of the larger development.* Many of the housing decisions can only be made in the context of a larger picture, and at times a discussion related to just housing feels too limited. Also, what will take place at the charettes vs. the working group meetings.
 - b. *Feasibility analysis.* The group needs more information to determine where and how much housing could/should be built given the site and design and financial considerations.

Symmes Residential Working Group
Guiding Principles for Residential Development

1. Open Process: The residential working group is committed to an open process that gathers data from all stakeholders, including, but not limited to the following groups: neighborhood residents, immediate abutters, school planners, affordable housing advocates, Arlington renters, Arlington Chamber of Commerce and other business interests and the Council on Aging. All participants in the process should be committed to openly sharing ideas and listening to the ideas that others present in an effort to guide the development process.
2. Integrated Planning: The residential development should be carefully integrated with the other uses on the site, with the surrounding neighborhood, and with the Town as a whole. See principle number three.
3. Neighborhood Impact: The housing should be physically integrated with the existing neighborhood in design, scale and density. Any development should:
 - a. Be sensitive to the impact of traffic through the neighborhood, especially on any private ways, and should direct the primary traffic flow to and from Summer Street. Care should be given to prevent cut-through and commercial traffic through the neighborhood.
 - b. Provide adequate parking on the site to accommodate residents and guests.
 - c. Have minimal or neutral impact on shadows and views from the neighborhood.
4. Appearance and Design: The development should improve the architectural appearance of the site as viewed from other points in Arlington. Design considerations and financial feasibility should determine whether or not the existing buildings are reused. The housing should be developed in an environmentally sensitive fashion.
5. Housing Types: The housing ideally should contain a mixture of ownership and rental opportunities. The Town might consider exploring whether a special or alternative type of housing is appropriate for the site.
6. Affordability: The development should contain housing that is affordable to different income tiers, including households earning up to 80% of median income (\$58,300 for a four person household), households earning up to 120% of median income (\$89,040 for a four person household) and market rate units. Due to the prevalent mismatch between the income of Arlington residents and current market rate housing prices, a sizeable percentage of the housing constructed should be affordable to households earning less than 80% and 120% of median income.
7. Maximize benefits to Arlington Residents: The development should meet the housing needs of Arlington residents and employees.