



DUNDALK RENAISSANCE CORPORATION

June 4, 2009

Testimony before the Baltimore County Planning Board Regarding the Yorkway Redevelopment Proposal

**Amy Menzer, Executive Director
Dundalk Renaissance Corporation**

On behalf of the Dundalk Renaissance Corporation and its Board of Directors, I am here to testify in strong support of the Yorkway Redevelopment as currently proposed by Mr. John Vontran, Yorkway, LLC, and Ryan Homes.

I want to begin by thanking Baltimore County Government, including: the Smith Administration and the Ruppertsberger Administration the Baltimore County Office of Community Conservation and Director Mary Harvey the Baltimore County Council, especially our Councilman John Olszewski, Sr. and also the State of Maryland.

All have played tremendous roles in supporting the revitalization of Dundalk. It is because of their leadership and persistence, along with that of community Leaders, including Board member Mr. Ed Parker, that we are here today.

The DRC thanks the County for its investment in acquiring the former Yorkway Apartments, demolishing them, and assembling the land for the creation of new housing types. Without the County's willingness to invest in the acquisition and assembly of land at Yorkway, Dundalk would have been left with an ongoing eyesore, a locus of criminal activity, and an overall drain upon our revitalization potential, right at the doorstep of our National Register Historic District and Town Center.

I also want to thank Mr. Vontran, the developer, for his willingness to meet with and respond to concerns raised by the community.

We are excited to be on the brink of a new day for this site and for Dundalk.



DRC supports this proposed development because:

- the 66 large, single-family detached homes are exactly the kind of housing we need to help diversify the range of housing choices in our community. The homes will offer more square footage, more bedrooms and bathrooms, and overall layouts that today's homebuyers are seeking.
- The homes will provide new options for buyers throughout the region who might never have considered moving to Dundalk before.
- The homes will also provide options for current Dundalk families looking to move up, who won't need to move out of the community to do so.
- The homes will enhance the value of existing homes in our adjacent National Register Historic District.
- The homes will also attract buyers that diversify our income mix and support a stronger Main Street retail district and stronger schools, all within short walking distance, reinforcing the County's Smart Growth goals.
- The development will also reinforce the overall strength of Dundalk's Historic 1918 Town Plan, modeled after Roland Park. The proposed Yorkway Redevelopment will realize part of that initial plan that was interrupted by the World War II housing crunch, by including more single-family homes to complement the existing single-family homes, town homes, apartments, and mixed-use living options already in place.

Details of the Proposal

Site Plan, Open Space, and Community Benefit:

- We support the proposed density of 66 units.
- We support allowing a minimum of 10 feet between the houses as part of what makes the larger homes possible on this site. Further, we support the proposed 20' front setbacks from the sidewalk, given the proposed 8 foot buffer strip at the curb, plus a 5-foot sidewalk.
- We recognize that offering buyers choices is valuable, particularly in the current market, and we support current proposed ratio of front-loading garage homes and rear-loading homes. *(This includes 14 mandatory rear-loaded units, 34 "buyer's choice" units, and 18 front loaded units.)*
- Comments by residents at the April 27th Community Input Meeting and by The Old Dundalk Neighborhood Association have lead to some site plan changes we fully support, including the addition of some on-street parking through changes to one of the grassy islands in the street, and the alleviation of a circulation concern by relocating two of the rear-loaded units to avoid having driveways that back out into a tight intersection.



- We support the Old Dundalk Neighborhood Association's request for attractive, neo-traditional, pedestrian-scaled street lamps to enhance the project's safety and aesthetic appeal.
- We are fully supportive of the developer receiving an open space waiver for providing no new open space on site, as there are several parks and ball fields within a three block walk of the development and we would rather see those parks utilized and improved. Fully utilizing the Yorkway site to create new, infill housing that diversifies Dundalk's housing mix is the best use for the entire site.
- In conjunction with no open space provided on-site, we look forward to landscaping improvements to two small green spaces on Yorkway and to the adjacent Fairway Park. It is our hope that open space waiver fees generated by this project will be reinvested into improvements in Old Dundalk.
- Further, we are very excited that as a provision of the PUD process, the developer has agreed to make additional improvements to Heritage Park as part of the Community Benefit for this project.
- We are pleased to see there are plans for street trees to enhance the existing neighborhood feel provided by many mature trees, and plans for screening on the ends of blocks and at the rear of the homes along the train tracks.
- We are excited about the possibilities for a pedestrian connection crossing the CSX tracks at Leeway with the Seagrams development, and with the high school and community college beyond. We would like to see that happen as part of the project if CSX can be persuaded to be a revitalization partner.

Materials Choices

We are pleased that:

- the developer and builder have committed to build the homes with all-brick or partial brick fronts as standard, and to include brick sides on end of block homes.
- Synthetic slate roofing shingles will be offered as a buyer option, as these would enable better integration with the existing homes.
- Carriage-style garage doors will be offered as a buyer option, because these will help soften the appearance of the garage doors and better integrate the front-loaded homes into the existing community.



Green Building Practices and Re-branding Dundalk

Incorporation of Green building elements into the houses and into the site design was an important concern for DRC. We are very pleased with the developer's, the builder's, and the County's willingness to incorporate some of these elements as standard or as buyer options.

Sustainability is becoming a more prevalent consideration and we see Dundalk leading the way. Green building projects here include the LEED-certified YMCA renovation currently underway that would serve Yorkway homebuyers; the LEED-certified new Dundalk and Sollers Point High Schools just authorized by the School Board, and the DRC's incorporation of green building into our house renovations. Dundalk Elementary, Middle, and Senior high schools are all certified as Green Schools, and DRC has revived the Greening of Dundalk tree planting initiative. All of these projects contribute to our effort to turn Dundalk's gritty, industrial image on its head to appeal to new homebuyers.

As proposed, the Yorkway redevelopment will contribute to this re-branding.

We are pleased that:

- Ryan Homes has agreed to obtain Energy star certification for these homes, to offer low-e windows as standard with argon gas as a buyer option, and to offer energy star appliances as standard.
- A high-efficiency mechanicals package will be offered as a buyer option, with a 90% efficiency or above furnace, a 16 SEER or above air conditioner, and a whole-home tankless water heater.
- The tree plantings and landscaping plans, which also include a rain garden, and may include rooftop disconnects to manage stormwater runoff, will further enhance the green branding of these homes.
- We applaud Baltimore County's decision to allow the existing alley widths of 14 feet to remain, as narrower alleys mean less impervious surface and help maintain the traditional neighborhood feel.
- We understand the County is exploring ways to green its infrastructure, including the use of pervious materials and curb cuts incorporated with traffic calming landscaped bump-outs alongside on-street parking to absorb stormwater runoff from the street before it enters the storm drain system.



Additional Community Concerns

- Local subcontractors should be hired where possible. DRC would be happy assist. We appreciate that the developer has been seeking local landscaping bids.
- The DRC is grateful that the developer and the builder have made the Homeowner Covenants available to us and to the Old Dundalk Neighborhood Association for review and comment, and we look forward to being involved in the finalizing of these documents to ensure they reflect community expectations and prohibit such practices as parking on front lawns.

Conclusion: Proposed Project is a Huge Revitalization Opportunity for Dundalk

This project is an extremely exciting opportunity for our community and for the County to help attract new homebuyers, diversify our income mix, and boost property values and the County's tax base.

We are grateful for the County's investment in making this redevelopment possible, and grateful to Yorkway, LCC and Ryan Homes for their interest in Dundalk and this project.

We would be strongly opposed to leaving this cleared land vacant and are eager to see the project proceed. We get calls and emails weekly from prospective buyers anxious to know when the new homes will be available for purchase.

The Dundalk Renaissance Corporation looks forward to helping market the project, and to building on the revitalization momentum it helps us continue.

Thank you, members of the Planning Board, for your time and consideration.