



# City of Chattanooga

Ron Littlefield, Mayor

October 15, 2009

Mark J. Brezina  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Field Office  
701 Locust Street  
Knoxville, Tennessee 37902

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OFFICE OF THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Mark:

On Wednesday of this week, I met with officials from the Chattanooga Housing Authority in an attempt to better understand their proposed \$4.8 Million Fairmount Avenue project. Even though I had visited the site and came to the meeting prepared to defend the plan, I am disappointed to say that I, along with members of my public works staff and two city council members, left the meeting angry and confused as to the logic used in determining the scope, design and overall concept of this project.

Unfortunately, the staff of the Chattanooga Housing Authority has taken action without any forethought as to the impact such an expansion will have upon the future residents of the new facility, the existing infrastructure and the quality of life of the community. While this project might be acceptable in an urban setting with easy access to public transportation and services such as grocery stores, schools and medical facilities, in its current design and location, it has the potential to isolate the very residents that will live in the development and severely impact neighboring property. We have several outstanding issues regarding this proposed project.

1. The Fairmount Avenue project is a throwback to the failed HUD policies of concentrating low income residents in an isolated, confined area without access to vital services. The proposed location is on a dead end street and will cause increased traffic congestion once the current 26 units are demolished and replaced with 48 apartments. Also, the proposed design relies too heavily upon individual transportation and discourages the use of public transportation.
2. The lack of green space included in the initial design confounds me, especially considering that the housing authority is promoting this as, "green public housing." Contrary to their claims, the substantial addition of impervious services will result in additional water runoff which has the potential to negatively impact an already unstable

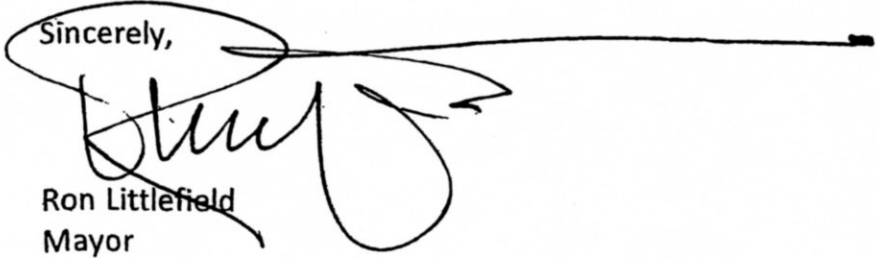
hillside location. The existing development actually has a more acceptable use of green space while the proposed new development would be nothing more than an island of high density completely surrounded by a virtual "sea" of asphalt.

3. The proposed structures are situated in a very unimaginative fashion in the center of the site. It is proposed to be a three story walk-up development (no elevators) with a bland appearance that can best be described as "plain". One individual present at our meeting described it as similar to Soviet developments that he had seen in eastern bloc countries. Counter to present day thinking, it would appear to have a poor "defensible space" design.
4. And finally, the local housing authority management has failed to communicate with elected officials and the residents who will be most impacted by this development. Regrettably, our community has come to expect this lack of consideration when dealing with the Chattanooga Housing Authority.

The unprofessional conduct of the Housing Authority continues to defy common sense and has become an embarrassment to our City. The lack of public participation and inadequate planning on behalf of the residents who will live in this poorly designed and improperly placed housing development is unacceptable. I recently listened to a housing official from Washington, DC describe current efforts to convert old housing projects "from enclaves of despair to healthy, diverse communities of hope." He described modern principles and new thinking regarding the concept of public housing. This proposed project would appear to run counter to such efforts. Frankly, I'm very much in despair over it all myself.

Please know that I will do everything within my power to ensure the residents of the City of Chattanooga who rely upon the services of the housing authority are not continually subjected to the incompetent management that seemingly thrives within this organization. I look forward to discussing alternatives to the Fairmount Avenue project and your suggestions as to how we can begin to change an ingrained culture of mismanagement and negligence that is prevalent within the Chattanooga Housing Authority.

Sincerely,



Ron Littlefield  
Mayor

cc: Honorable Pat Hoban-Moore  
Betsy McCright ✓  
Chattanooga Housing Authority Board of Directors  
Chattanooga City Council