

BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE

Community Profile

November 2009

Buckley Annex, Colorado

Community Contact:

Tom Markham
Executive Director
Lowry Redevelopment Authority
555 Uinta Way
Denver, CO 80230
303-343-0276
tom.markham@lowry.org

Web Address:

www.Lowry.org/BuckleyAnnex

Installation Contact:

David D'Amore
Real Property Office
Headquarters Air Force Reserve
Command
255 Richard Ray Boulevard
Robins AFB, GA 31098
478-327-1065
david.damore@afrc.af.mil

State Contact:

Monica Sheets
Colorado Department of Public
Health and Environment
4300 Cherry Creek South Drive
Denver, CO 80246-1530
303-692-3439
monica.sheets@state.co.us

Closure at a Glance

Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA):

Lowry Redevelopment Authority (Buckley Annex)

Geographic area affected by closing:

City and County of Denver, Colorado

Population of affected area (before closure): 586,000

Total Acres to be Disposed: 70 acres

Estimated Job Loss Impact:

| Jobs Lost | |
|--------------------|------|
| Military Personnel | 1890 |
| Civilian Personnel | 40 |
| Contractors | 30 |

Source: Buckley Annex Redevelopment Plan (H-5)

Economic Adjustment Challenges

- Distressed real estate market
- Community acceptance of reuse plan related to building heights and density of development
- Funding for reuse plan implementation / financial feasibility
- Uncertainty of conveyance method (public sale, no-cost Economic Development Conveyance (EDC))

Key Reuse Planning & Property Disposal Milestones:

| | |
|----------|--|
| 5/30/06 | Federal Surplus Determination |
| 12/22/06 | LRA Homeless Outreach Completed |
| 3/19/08 | Reuse Plan Received by Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)/Air Force |
| Pending | HUD Determination on Submission |
| Pending | National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) Disposal Decision |
| Pending | Base Closure |

Organization

The Lowry Redevelopment Authority was recognized as the LRA for the Buckley Annex property through publication in the Federal Register on April 27, 2006. The Buckley Annex property was retained by the Air Force upon the closure of Lowry Air Force Base (AFB), and the original organization of the Lowry Redevelopment Authority included the Buckley Annex property within its defined geographic area. The City and County of Denver reaffirmed its desire for the Lowry Redevelopment Authority to plan for the reuse of Buckley Annex property.

The Lowry Redevelopment Authority led the planning LRA with a team of consultants with expertise in land planning, economic and market research, transportation and engineering, and public meeting facilitation. Task forces were formed with representation from the communities surrounding the site and with participation from various departments within the City and County of Denver. Those task forces looked at the issues surrounding the topics of housing, transportation and traffic impacts, market research/analysis, and planning and urban design, and made recommendations for the plan. Meetings were in a public forum with comments and suggestions from the community at large also being considered.

The planning LRA strove to create a plan that would best blend the interests, and sometimes conflicting desires, of the stakeholders, including the Air Force and HUD, City and County of Denver, existing community, future developer, and the marketplace.

Reuse Plan/Other Studies

The 70-acre site is the last remaining parcel of land held by the Department of Defense at the former Lowry AFB. Lowry AFB closed in 1994 as a result of the 1991 BRAC round, and Buckley Annex was retained federal property until slated for closure under the 2005 BRAC round. The Buckley Annex lies wholly within the City of Denver. The topography of the site is fairly flat, as it was a portion of a runway during the flight operations days of Lowry AFB. The runway has long been abandoned and now serves as the parking lot for the three-story, 600,000 square foot Building 444 used as office space for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, the Air Reserve Personnel Command (ARPC), and military contractors. Buildings 407 and 409 are used for storage and Building 446 is a concrete, below-grade structure previously used as a sanitary effluent holding tank. There is only one access route to the site, from Quebec Street at Lowry Boulevard on the east. Landscaped berms with mature trees buffer the adjacent community on the west and north. A security fence surrounds the site.

The Buckley Annex Redevelopment Plan (Plan) builds upon the success of Lowry to create a neighborhood that integrates with the surrounding community. The Plan provides the vision for how this neighborhood could be developed as a vibrant community hub that will serve multiple generations both inside and outside the neighborhood. The Plan is defined by its choices including two mixed-use nodes united by a townhome boulevard and surrounded by a range of attached and detached homes oriented to open space and walkable streets.

In balancing the interests of the stakeholders, any plan must provide an appropriate yield that will offset the redevelopment costs and achieve a great neighborhood that integrates with the existing community. Oftentimes there were conflicting interests, but by finding that balance, the Plan at its core reflects the successful vision of Lowry with diverse housing types, great public spaces and amenities, and opportunities to replace lost jobs.

As part of the planning process and through the expertise of the planning team members, several studies were conducted. Other studies were done by the Air Force in coordination with the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) or as part of the Homeless Assistance submission. All of the studies contributed to the knowledge of existing conditions and estimated costs and all combined, were great assets in formulating the Plan.

Studies included:

- Existing Conditions Report
- Economic and Demographic Conditions with Full Market Study and Building 444 Reuse Investigation
- Housing Analysis and Affordable Housing Needs
- Economic Impact and Financial Analysis
- Tree Survey
- Transportation Analysis
- Drainage and Retention Study
- Infrastructure Cost Analysis
- Environmental Condition of Property Report

Homeless Submission

In 2006, LRA administered the homeless provider outreach process and received a Notice of Interest (NOI) from a consortium of 12 homeless assistance providers (the Buckley Annex Housing Consortium, or the “Consortium”). As part of the reuse planning process, the LRA conducted outreach to organizations in the vicinity of Buckley Annex, defined as the City and County of Denver and the City of Aurora. A list of homeless assistance provider groups was supplied to LRA by the cities of Denver and Aurora and over 60 certified mailings were sent out to those providers. Notification of an informational workshop was included in the mailing packet and notices were put in the local newspapers.

LRA considered the concerns and needs of the community in order to recommend the best reuse of the Buckley Annex property. LRA based its recommendations on facts derived from ongoing meetings with the representatives of homeless service providers and the Housing Task Force members, input from the community, stakeholder input, identified community needs, and an analysis of the property’s potential.

The Consortium submitted an application requesting a total of 298 housing units, incorporating a total of 15 acres at the Buckley Annex site. The organization’s application included housing for various groups of homeless people, including families, seniors, veterans, and individual homeless people. The planning team conducted an analysis of the homeless provider application, evaluated it for financial and operational feasibility, and considered the demonstrated needs for homeless housing in various categories in areas around the Buckley Annex and in the City and County of Denver at large. The application was also evaluated in light of the City of Denver’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, which emphasizes providing temporary or permanent housing and support services, rather than homeless shelters. The housing analysis also draws from HUD’s Housing First model, which calls for care, an emphasis on short-term interim housing designed to move people into permanent housing as soon as possible, an adequate supply of long-term housing, and a range of supportive services for homeless individuals and families.

The Plan requires a total of 20 rental units for homeless families, representing three percent of the proposed 800 residential units in the Buckley Annex redevelopment. The Housing Task Force agreed that a significantly larger provision of homeless housing, such as the 298 units proposed by the Consortium, would be difficult to integrate in a total plan containing a maximum of 800 residential units. The Plan does not outline a specific block within the Buckley

Annex site for inclusion of the homeless housing program. Instead, the Plan requires that a one and one half acre site be conveyed to the Consortium for the development of 20 units of housing for homeless families (with an additional 60 units possible) as part of a mixed-income development. The requirement is enforced through a legally binding agreement (LBA) with LRA. This LBA was executed by both parties and submitted to HUD with the Plan. With the guidance of the Housing Task Force and public input, the planning team identified four potential locations for the homeless assistance site based on access to transit, retail, and other services. The final location will be determined prior to conveyance.

Key provisions of the LBA include: a description of the designated homeless assistance site; the number of homeless housing units; conveyance of the parcel to the Consortium by quitclaim deed from the successful purchaser of the property; responsibility by the Consortium for all costs and expenses associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the housing complex and parcel; and, a requirement to construct the housing complex and begin operations within 24 months of the deed.

The Homeless Assistance Submission and LBA are currently pending HUD review.

Implementation and Partnering Strategies

Implementation efforts to meet the challenges previously mentioned are premature at this time because HUD has not yet made its determination for the Homeless Assistance Application and the Air Force has not yet made a conveyance decision.

The Plan recommends public sale of the parcel, supported by a Development Agreement (DA) to be included with the bid package and Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between LRA and the Air Force. The DA and MOU seek to implement provisions of the Plan, including a maximum number of housing units, building height limits, and other plan aspects critical to public acceptance of the Plan. However, possible legislation granting no-cost EDC under consideration by Congress may change the LRA preference for conveyance mechanism. The uncertainty of whether or not the property will be conveyed through a public sale or via a legislated no-cost EDC causes a large roadblock to moving forward with setting up a transition team or an Implementation LRA, or for the General Services Administration (GSA), working on behalf of the disposal agent which is the Air Force, to qualify and take bids from potential developers, consider financing, etc. LRA is in the final stages of the redevelopment of the former Lowry AFB and the organization will soon sunset. The assumption was for LRA to only conduct the planning process and create the redevelopment plan for the Buckley Annex, but not be the developer. The Board of Directors of the LRA is made up of members appointed by the mayors of Denver and Aurora because the bulk of Lowry property lies in both cities. If no-cost EDC legislation passes, the City of Denver is interested in obtaining the conveyance and the control they would have over the redevelopment. The City would form a new implementation LRA with a board made up of only Denver residents. The submitted Plan would not change and would be effective in job replacement regardless of the conveyance mechanism.

A representative of CDPHE was a part of the Planning Task Force and attended and participated at all of the public meetings. CDPHE has also reviewed the work of the Environment Condition of Property Report and worked with the Air Force to fill in information gaps.

The Denver Public Library has a facility directly across the street from the Buckley Annex site and submitted an NOI for a Public Benefit Conveyance (PBC) requesting two acres of land to be used as a parking lot for the branch library. During the Plan development process, it was determined that the Denver Public Library's request for additional library parking would be better handled as an obligation of the Plan instead of a PBC. Seventy additional parking spaces for the library will be incorporated into the Plan.

Representatives of the Air Reserve Command, GSA, ARPC, CDPHE, departments from the City of Denver, and the Office of Economic Adjustment were involved and informed throughout the planning process.

Successes/Lessons Learned

It is premature to describe key initiatives or successes contributing to our effort to meet adjustment goals. What has been accomplished was a very long and involved public process to determine the best use of the property, which resulted in the formulation of a Plan that gives good direction to those that will develop the property when it is vacated. It is not possible to move beyond that point until the Homeless Assistance Application receives concurrence from HUD and the Air Force determines the conveyance method.

Determining the use and development of any federal surplus property is challenging in the best of circumstances. Under the current negative economic influences, it is almost impossible to even get started. During the Buckley Annex planning, the GSA representatives asked who would be likely candidates to bid on the property. Immediately, four to five names came to mind. Now, none of those companies are interested or capable of bidding under the current economic conditions.

The Lowry redevelopment also shows the impact of the distressed economy. During much of the redevelopment, builders were lined up demanding 50-100 lots before they would participate. Today, this LRA is fortunate if the builders will take one or two lots at a time. If this had been the case in 1997 when the first deed was received from the Air Force, the redevelopment of Lowry would have taken 30-40 years instead of 15-17 years. As it currently stands, builders and buyers cannot get financing.