



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog
www.dcfpi.org

February 11, 2014

A New Plan for New Communities

By Jessica Fulton

The New Communities Initiative aims to revamp blighted public housing, build mixed-income communities, and create economic opportunity for public housing residents while minimizing displacement. Unfortunately, since the initiative was conceived in the mid 2000's, the four housing sites — Barry Farms (Ward 8), Lincoln Heights/Richardson Dwellings (Ward 7), Northwest One (Ward 6), and Park Morton (Ward 1) have seen little progress. Today, DCFPI will testify on the lack of progress in the project, and suggest that the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) rethink its redevelopment strategy.

The New Communities Initiative calls for replacing all subsidized housing units, one-for-one, in these communities, and adding an equal number of market-rate units and moderately-priced units. Unfortunately, in most communities in the project, market-rate housing has not been created at all. And in the one New Community that has made the most progress — Northwest One — the creation of market-rate housing far exceeds that of any other housing.

Table 1:
Housing Creation in New Communities Initiative Lags

Site	Deeply Subsidized		Moderately-Affordable		Market Rate	
	Built/Under Construction	Needed	Built/Under Construction	Needed	Built/Under Construction	Needed
Barry Farms	100	444	246	444	0	444
Lincoln Heights/Richardson Dwellings	32	630	102	630	0	630
Northwest One	137	280	117	280	253	280
Park Morton	27	174	56	174	0	174

Why is redevelopment taking so long?

There seem to be a number of reasons. In sites like Lincoln Heights, the idea that market-rate development occur and generate the opportunities to finance affordable housing was never realistic. In others, it seems that time delays changed circumstances and made project completions difficult.

Whatever the reason, it's time for DC to take another look at the New Communities Initiative and create updated plans with realistic timelines and financing to support these communities. The goal of revitalizing dilapidated subsidized housing and helping low-income communities thrive remains important. The commitment to residents living in these communities should be maintained.

You can read DCFPI's complete testimony [here](#).