

# City of Alexandria, Virginia


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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 24, 2007

TO: COUNCILWOMAN REDELLA S. PEPPER

THROUGH: ROSE WILLIAMS BOYD, <sup>Rb</sup>DIRECTOR OF CITIZEN ASSISTANCE

FROM: DAVID P. BAKER, CHIEF OF POLICE 

SUBJECT: WHAT'S HAPPENING TO PARKER GRAY? (COUNCIL REQUEST 07-27P)

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This is in response to your request for staff comment on the e-mail you received from Peter Nostrand expressing concerns about the Parker Gray (Inner City) community. Mr. Nostrand raises several issues of concern, including his fear that the condition of his neighborhood continues to deteriorate; repeated gunshots; and the redevelopment of the James Bland property. Lieutenant Dianne Gittins, Commander of the Community Support Section, was assigned to investigate this matter.

Lieutenant Gittins spoke with Mr. Nostrand on April 10 to gain a better understanding of his concerns. During their conversation, Mr. Nostrand told Lieutenant Gittins that his primary concern was the increased activity surrounding the Casablanca Dollar Store at 809 Pendleton Street. Specifically, Mr. Nostrand has seen an increase of trash accumulation and individuals loitering in front of the store.

Lieutenant Gittins spoke with the Parker Gray's community officer, Officer Michael Sprague, regarding Mr. Nostrand's concerns with the activity surrounding the Casablanca Dollar Store. Officer Sprague talked with the owner, Justin Marlow. Mr. Marlow was extremely cooperative and has agreed to attend the next Inner City Civic Association meeting to address any issues that the community has with his business. He also said that he does not encourage people to hang out in front of his store and will ask people to move along in the future. In reference to Mr. Nostrand's concern regarding trash accumulation in front of the store, Lieutenant Gittins contacted Doug McCobb of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES). On April 10, T&ES staff checked the trash can and found it empty. Mr. McCobb said he will continue to monitor that area for litter and take appropriate action. Additionally, as of April 10 there were no calls for service for the Casablanca Dollar Store. Lieutenant Gittins has contacted the commanders of each patrol division and made them aware of Mr. Nostrand's concerns and has directed the community policing officers in and around the area to be vigilant in their patrols of the neighborhood.

During their conversation, Mr. Nostrand and Lieutenant Gittins also discussed his concern regarding an increase in gunshots in the area. Lieutenant Gittins noted that between January 1 and April 9, 2006, there were 36 calls for shots fired in and around the area. Although any report of gunfire is of concern, during the same time period for 2007 there has been a significant decrease of shots fired calls, with a total of 10 calls.

In addition, Mr. Nostrand expressed a desire to learn about crime in the neighborhood. The Department's continued efforts in the James Bland community have resulted in a 23% reduction of Part 1 crimes from 2005 through 2006. The most significant decreases noted were in the categories of aggravated assaults and grand larceny of autos. The Department's strategy in this area involves high visibility uniform patrol, increased traffic and parking enforcement, increased plain clothes narcotics enforcement and an increase in police presence from officers assigned to the community. As a result, in addition to a decrease in Part 1 Crimes, there has been an 11.8% increase in officer initiated arrests in this community.

In order to address Mr. Nostrand's concerns about the redevelopment of the James Bland community, Lieutenant Gittins contacted Connie Lennox, Director of Development with the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). Ms. Lennox advised that the City Council and ARHA entered into Resolution 830 because of a mutual concern about the need to maintain affordable housing in the City. This Resolution states that 1,150 units of publicly assisted housing must be maintained in the City of Alexandria. These protected publicly assisted housing units are in addition to the 1,722 vouchers ARHA administers, not in lieu of them. The redevelopment that is currently underway in Glebe Park in Arlandria has necessitated the redevelopment of the James Bland properties. Glebe Park is plagued with a large mortgage. In order for a redevelopment to be successful, other properties in the ARHA portfolio that have significant land value had to be brought into the equation to dilute the existing debt in order to begin construction of the new units. The James Bland properties were the best candidate for this effort.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Lieutenant Dianne Gittins directly at 703.838.4763 or myself at 703.838.4700.

cc: The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council  
James K. Hartmann, City Manager