



By Dave Cook—The Washington Post

Preservation Plan Debated In Alexandria

By Leslie Marshall
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A special committee on Alexandria's Parker Gray Preservation District has recommended that alterations to existing buildings and new construction in the district be based on compatibility with surrounding structures rather than stricter architectural codes used in Old Town.

But some residents of the predominantly black neighborhood near the Braddock Road Metro station say the proposals would bring the type of restraints they do not want and against which they waged their successful battle to prevent annexation to the city's Old and Historic District.

The year-long debate over the fate of the neighborhood is expected to flare up again when the committee's recommendations, along with some by city planners, are unveiled at tonight's City Council meeting.

The proposals will then be forwarded to the city Planning Commission, which has set a Sept. 26 hearing on them.

Members of the special ad hoc committee of six city residents that studied the Parker Gray district say they hope their proposals will be found suitable to all involved in the struggle over the neighborhood. However, several members said they did not wish to comment specifically on their recommendations.

Longtime neighborhood residents argued successfully that inclusion in the city's Old and Historic District, with its stringent architectural codes and tradition of gentrification by young professionals, would force up taxes and force out many elderly, poor residents.

"People are just waiting right now for an extension of Old Town so they can move on in," Eudora Lyles, chairman of a neighborhood group called the 16th Census Tract Crisis Committee, said yesterday.

"We wanted a district. The neighborhood has a character of its own. The character is what it is," said Lyles. "We don't need an architectural board coming in here and making suggestions about how to do things."

Lyles and others in the community are concerned that the ad hoc committee's proposals, which include the suggestion that the Board of Architectural Review set up a second panel to review the Parker Gray district, would bring them just what they do not want.

"There are usually emotional responses to projects of this kind," said Robert L. Crabill, head of special projects for the city's Planning Department. "I would expect we will hear a lot of discussion."

Concern over the area, dubbed the Parker Gray Preservation District in reference to a former neighborhood high school that was a longtime black institution, arose because of its vulnerability to Metro-related development.

Ironically, boundary proposals of the ad hoc committee exclude from the Parker Gray district the land immediately adjacent to the Braddock Road station. The committee would include an area that falls roughly between the RF&P Railroad tracks and Columbus, Cameron and First streets.

The 16th Census Tract Crisis Committee says the Parker Gray district should include the area surrounding the Metro station.