

Alexandria Picks Development Team for \$200M Makeover of Samuel Madden Homes
BY KEITH LORIA NOVEMBER 10, 2021 5:40 PM

A public housing project in Old Town Alexandria is getting a \$200 million makeover that will make way for close to 500 mixed-income units.

The Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, a public agency, has chosen a group of developers — Fairstead, Mill Creek Residential and The Communities Group — to redevelop the Samuel Madden Homes into a new mixed-use community in Old Town Alexandria, Va.

The total cost is expected to exceed \$200 million, according to someone with knowledge of the matter.

The project is part of an ARHA strategy to work with private developers to reposition public housing projects in Alexandria, in an effort to create more affordable housing.

Seven years ago, ARHA started a process to redevelop five sites in its portfolio based on its ARHA 2012-2022 Strategic Plan — Andrew Adkins, ARHA Administrative Building, Hopkins-Tancil Courts, Cameron Valley and Samuel Madden.

Originally built in 1945, the Samuel Madden is comprised of 66 affordable rental units, located in rows of townhomes on two blocks along Henry and Patrick streets.

“The real estate is irreplaceable. It’s a gateway site at the nexus of Old Town and National Landing, two of the most charming and desirable submarkets in the region,” Joe Muffler, managing director of development for Mill Creek Residential, told Commercial Observer. “It’s a generational opportunity to make a social impact and redefine the north end of Old Town.”

The development partners anticipate beginning the entitlement process early next year. The plans call for the relocation and replacement of the existing 66 homes into two brand-new, highly amenitized apartment buildings featuring 482 units of affordable, workforce and market-rate housing.

“By creating a mixed-use and mixed-income community, we are welcoming our neighbors in and establishing a new gateway to the city of Alexandria,” Brett Meringoff, managing partner at Fairstead, told CO. “Public-private partnerships are key to ensuring that communities are getting the services they need and fostering vibrant cities.”

Additionally, the plan calls for 16,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and a 10,000-square-foot public park on the north end of the property with a playground and public art installations.

“We want this property to act as a gateway to Alexandria and invite the community in,” Meringoff said. “We’re also working with two local, community-based nonprofits to help expand their services in the community.”

For example, the Hopkins House will run an early learning and child care center in a new 13,000-square-foot center, and ALIVE! will operate a food pantry, both on-site.

“This is a true mixed-income, mixed-use community with boutique appeal, best-in-class finishes, and premier amenities that also happens to be walkable to Metro, downtown Old Town and [is] 10 minutes from Amazon’s HQ2,” Muffler said. “We believe there is tremendous appeal in that program.”.

The site is situated near the Braddock metro, and is just south of the new Amazon’s HQ2 down Route 1 as you enter Alexandria from Arlington.

Housing prices in the area have skyrocketed more than 15 percent in the last year, according to the developers, so the need for affordable housing is significant.

“There is an urgent need for more housing across Northern Virginia where the average household income is among the highest in the country,” Meringoff said. “The Samuel Madden site is down the street from Amazon HQ2, along Route 1 which is a growing commercial destination. The need for high-quality affordable housing in this area is already at a crisis level and will only grow in the near future.”