



Editor [Rebecca McCarthy](#): Heard some news you want us to check out? Let me know:
Rebecca.McCarthy@patch.com

[Home](#)[News](#)[Events](#)[Places](#)[Marketplace](#)[House & Home](#)[Q&A](#)Search [Government](#)

AHA to "Transform" Jack R. Wells Public Housing Complex

Multi-year redevelopment planned in cooperation with Atlanta-based company

By [John Kissane](#) [Email the author](#) September 16, 2011

[Print](#)[0 Comments](#)[Recommend](#)

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

[Email](#)[Tweet](#)[View full size](#)

For years, Jack R. Wells Homes, the westside public housing complex often referred to as Pauldoe, has been saddled with the stigma of being a crime-ridden "project."

Most Pauldoe residents, who would be the ones to actually know, see things differently. They say any crime at Jack R. Wells today comes from outside and that the broader community is blind to this reality. Relatively soon, however, we'll all take a new view of Pauldoe.

A press conference at the Athens Housing Authority Thursday morning revealed bold plans for "transforming" Jack R. Wells Homes, built in 1967.

On hand for the meeting were representatives from Columbia Residential, an Atlanta-based housing development and management company selected to partner with AHA on the project. Also present were principals with the Dallas, Texas, architecture and planning firm JHP, selected to serve as project designers.

AHA Executive Director Rick Parker said the 125-unit Jack R. Wells complex has been scheduled for modernization work in 2012-2014. "But our Board directed us to take a more aggressive approach," Parker noted. AHA staff members and UGA social work students conducted meetings and interviews with residents, and "70 percent of those surveyed said they wanted to go the route of starting over," Parker said.

Existing structures at Jack R. Wells will be demolished, and in their place will eventually stand a combination of standard public housing, "tax credit" units and also market level apartments, some 350 to 375 dwelling units in all on the 40-acre property. The new development might even contain mixed uses, perhaps a "state-of-the-art" preschool and a few businesses. Then again, it might not.

Columbia Residential boasts extensive experience developing, redeveloping and managing multifamily affordable housing communities throughout the Southeast.

It was selected through a process that involved many Jack R. Wells residents. Among the firm's many successful projects is Columbia Parc at the Bayou District, a New Orleans community redevelopment undertaken in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The mixed-income Columbia Parc project was toured and touted by President Obama and the First Lady last year and was recently selected the 2011 Overall Winner among Affordable Housing Finance Magazine's Readers Choice Awards.

At Jack R. Wells, a combination of private capital, tax credit equity and federal funds will finance the project. AHA and Columbia Residential intend to apply to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for tax credits in the 2012 Tax Credit Competitive Round.

Assuming DCA approval, financing will be provided about a year from now and construction will likely begin in early 2013. The project will also require final approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Aspects of designing and planning the new development will begin next month, when UGA's School of Environmental Design conducts a community design charrette. This informal, give-and-take sort of approach will enable current residents as well as members of the larger community to voice their views.

Information gathered during the charrette will be passed along to Columbia Residential and JHP, and a preliminary master plan and development program will be prepared by the end of the current year.

Columbia Residential President and CEO Jim Grauley stated that the development will be a "green, sustainable design." "That's important to us, and we

know it's important in Athens," Grauley continued.

Most of the details of this undertaking are months or even years away from being decided. But the underlying goal of a mixed income community is, according to Parker, firm. Of the 350 to 375 new housing units eventually constructed on the 40-acre site, at least 125, or roughly one-third, will be standard public housing units, with rent levels corresponding to residents' incomes.

Approximately another third of the units will be "tax credit" housing, with rents capped at 30 percent to 60 percent of the median income in Athens-Clarke County.

The fina25 to 30 percent of the new housing at Jack R. Wells will be "market rate" units, with no subsidies involved whatsoever. Rents for these units will, according to Parker, "be set based on what can be supported in the neighborhood." Thus, the market rate units are likely to be fairly affordable, and this portion of the new development is envisioned as being good, quality housing ideally suited to people moving up from public housing.

Parker stressed that all units at Jack R. Wells will be built to "full private market standards," meaning that the quality of construction and detailing will be uniform, regardless of the class of housing.

Current residents will, of course, be faced with moving out of their apartments within about a year. Parker explained that AHA will either relocate residents to public housing elsewhere within Athens-Clarke County or issue Section 8 subsidized housing vouchers for use at other locations. Furthermore, AHA will cover all moving costs, both out of Jack R. Wells as well as back in for those returning in a few years.

Nationally, 17 to 20 percent of public housing residents displaced for redevelopment or new construction end up returning once work is completed. Parker and Grauley expect the figure to be higher here.

The project will likely be organized into three phases, with the first residents actually moving in to the new development's first phase in early 2014.

Related Topics: [Athens Housing Authohrity](#), [Jack R. Wells Homes](#), [Renovation](#), and [public housing](#)

Interested in a follow-up to this article?

Keep me posted!

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Email

Tweet

[Follow this article](#)

[Submit a tip](#)

[Add photos & video](#)

[0 Comments](#)

Leave a comment

Submit >



Advertise

Advertise on Patch and reach potential customers in your backyard and beyond. Click here for more information.

[Learn more »](#)

Contribute

- [Send us news tips](#)
- [Put an event on the calendar](#)
- [Announce something to everyone](#)

Volunteer

If you want to help local causes, or your cause needs local help, your next click should be right here.

[Learn more »](#)

