

Reston Birthday Celebration
Bob Simons 96th Birthday

Reston Community Center
April 10, 2010

Alexander Garvin as Guest Speaker

Chuck Veatch opened the session by noting that in Reston we are all interested in community. We have added to the live work and play-serve. There is nothing like community participation. Our community told Supervisor Cathy Hudgins, "please give us a homeless shelter."

Alexander Garvin. Real Estate, Planning and Urban Design. President and CEO of Alexander Garvin and Associates, Planners and Designers. Worked on New York City Olympic Bid, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the World Trade Center Competition. Yale University graduate. Has written a number of books including "Introduction to the Study of the City," "Parks, Recreation and Open Space" and an about to be published work "Public Parks: The Key to Livable Communities".

Garvin took a seminar at Yale University and Bob Simon spoke about what he wanted to do at Reston. It was an inspiration for me and others. He hired Jim Rossant, a noted architect who had developed plans for Lower Manhattan in 1965/66. The idea was to bring people to live downtown. This happened. Battery Park City. Jim designed Butterfield House. In 1962 and the Charles Center in Baltimore, the Lamaze School (slides of all). He was an important designer.

Bob Simon was forward-looking. There were other ideas of how to plan cities. In 1867/68, there was a plan for Riverside, Illinois done by Frederick Law Olmstead. Set houses back from the street and plant trees so that houses don't impose themselves on the street. Then there was Radburn "a town for the motor age" that was proposed in the 1920s. Bob's father was an investor. Bob tells a story about how he sat around the dinner table naming streets for Radburn.

The common open space in Reston is known as sinews like in Radburn. You can get to the important things on foot. Radburn opened in 1928. It included underpasses copied from Central Park. There are 29 underpasses in Reston. In Radburn, there are school-based and recreation-based activities along the open space sinews.

In 1966, I came to Reston and saw a model of the community. In 1970, I made my second trip to Reston (Lake Anne – slides show it looked pretty much the same). It was a huge influence on towns like Columbia, Celebration, Irvine, and the Woodlands.

How did Reston evolve? Did it meet its original goals?

The original plan included seven villages. There are five today. The population envisioned was 75,000. Today, the population is 62,500. The number of dwelling units originally envisioned was 22,000; now there are 24,000. The housing has been diverse: 31 percent of the units are townhouses or duplexes, 54 percent are multi-family and the rest are single family houses. This meets the goal of making available a wide variety of housing types.

Goal. To show concern for the dignity of individuals. People feel they belong here. They love it. There are 20 million ft.² of office space, four hotels and a variety of single-family residences. There are 60,000 jobs. 42% of the residents of Reston work in Reston. You can walk, ride a bike, and a variety of different places and open spaces are available.

Goal. To make cultural and recreational facilities available. The goal to incorporate high standards for structural and natural beauty. Green sinews. The quality of development is higher.

Goal. To be a financial success. The property was transferred from Bob Simon to Gulf Reston and then to Mobile. You could say that it has achieved financial success once the bulk of the plan had been achieved. The Town Center is a financial success. But the villages have not been a financial success. There have been changes in retailing including Internet shopping. The size of grocery stores is not the same. Now they are 40,000 to 60,000 ft.². There are no grocery stores at Tall Oaks and Lake Anne now.

Lewis Mumford. Goal to have a place so rich in activities. Now the centers are threatening to become failures. Retail was the basis of village life.

How do we make sure in 46 years, people will see a 100 percent successful community? **The answer has to do with the second growth of Reston. The only avenue is to bring more people here. I urge you to find sites that would be developed and find**

enough customers. The retail is not competing with Reston Town Center. You need to create an atmosphere that makes it easy for developers to come here and to do development as a matter of right.

Maintain commitment to beauty. Decide in advance what you want. You have got an extraordinary start. When my successor comes back from an astronomical vacation, he will see a successful community. Residents will provide adequate support for retail there.

Question. A resident who came to live in Reston in 1966. At that time, Reston needed a transportation system. Fran and Jim Grady had anchored their rowboat with a geranium flowerpot sitting in the back of the boat. They had come to shop at the Safeway in Lake Anne.

Jim Jones. The change now is Metrorail service. Garvin. When I first got here there was no exit from the Dulles Airport Access Road to Reston. I'm a New Yorker. **Let me assure you that the ability to get around on mass transit is a huge thing. Now we are going to be connected to Washington, DC. More people will want to live here. Start to think about the new Reston and the opportunities for growth around the village centers and at the transit stations.**

Reverse it. Don't talk about transit-oriented development talk about development-oriented transit. Think about it as an opportunity to exploit transit.

What you can't change is the green areas, the green sinews. Percentage of green space that Columbia New Town has is not that different. Go back and re-examine this. Saw that a creek bed was preserved. Time to look at the larger pieces.

This community is 46-year-old. It is time to think about the next phase of Reston.

Colin Mills. Born in Reston in 1979 and lived here all his life. Seeing the decline of the village centers. The density is not there. How do we redevelop? Garvin. I did not say increase the density. I said increase the customers. My guess is that higher density will help. What may be worth doing is hiring someone to come up with ideas that will work.

Walter Alcorn. In late January, we changed the Comprehensive Plan to do what you suggest. How do we sell Lake Anne? Garvin. It will be

difficult at the moment. The rules of the game are changing. It is very difficult to market Reston. They will come if sites are available at a price they can afford. Set it up. Forget about it for 2 to 3 years. There are sites accessible and easy to build on.

Question. Annette Gibson, five -ear resident. Lives in a condo with absentee owners. The profile of homeowners is different than an absentee owner. Attended Charette for Lake Anne revitalization. One idea was to attract a satellite center for a university or college. Garvin. I think there is a real problem with charettes. You talk about issues you know nothing about. Public participation only makes sense when you have real alternatives. Otherwise, you will decide on something that will never happen.

I don not believe in going to the community and putting up a blank sheet of paper and asking them what they want. I list things that are possible. The discussion should be about things that might be versus a list of "nice to haves".

Question Bill Penniman. TOD is the topic of discussion. What mixes are likely to work? Garvin. Let's start with what's possible. It starts with customers. For example, stores have no customers or office space is unattractive

I start out with who is likely to move here and what will attract them. Then you have a discussion about what is compatible with Reston. Otherwise you will be talking about is not likely to happen. When you say you don't want the consequences of office space, do you then want the retail to compete with Tall Oaks and Lake Anne? You already have such a competitive entity in the Reston Town Center. The Metro stations will compete with the rest of Reston. This issue is not easy to resolve. I don't know the market around here. One thing about the small grocery stores, they would not exist if we did not have the large numbers of immigrants we have. They are the people who are running small stores. Think about what kind of immigration laws we need. Big boxes usually dominate. See Spectrum. Very few places have charming new stores.

Question Mary Ellen Gray who moved here in 1971 and is on her third residence and now is a resident in Reston Town Center. Reston is exploding with more residents as redevelopment occurs. Can you provide guidance on the redevelopment of the Reston Town Center? There will be a lot more resident. Garvin. Put parkland there. It won't be like the rest of Reston. Creating parks may work now. Finding a

way to get recreational open space. Someone will have to buy the land and transform it, and maintain. Focus on open space. It could be the armature on which to focus development.

I did see people in the Reston Town Center carrying Starbucks coffee cups, but they were very few. I have a feeling that the Reston Town Center comes awake at 6 PM. We need to get things for people during the nine to 5 PM hours. You need to make 24-hour use of the streets. This will make a huge difference. People who live in the condos do have children but they can't play outside. Put in a truly great school with a particular program-computers or media. It means thinking about town center on a 24-hour basis. There is a paucity of real thinking about that.

Tom Wilkins. Came to Reston in 1969. There is no correct way. Always, people are vocal. Work with the local community leaders to do what you want. Marion Meader arrived in July 1967. How did Plaza America get approved without any residential? Bob Webb. Came in 1968. There is one additional initiative underway with great promise, the public art initiative. It feels not only great for residents but for visitors. It could be promoted as one of Reston's signatures.

Garvin. I have a comment about visitors. Most people who come here can't find their way around. You need help with marketing. Provide a map people could use. What are the important places of interest? For example, a map, a way finding map for pedestrians. It is more difficult for roads but also think about bicycles. There is increasing momentum around the country to do more for bicyclists. A bicycle system works only if it is comprehensive and safe. Retrofit streets for bicycles, don't just pander to bicyclists. Go to San Francisco's Embarcadero. In Copenhagen, there is Sounder Way(?) with transit, sidewalks, bike paths, trees, and roadways.

Get a transportation person. This means rethinking your transportation network. You have a great framework to begin with. Create a public realm, a framework of streets, green sinews, paths, public buildings, schools, spaces and village centers, the town center. This kind of connectivity makes everyone more comfortable. It is easy to live with.

Supervisors Cathy Hudgins. I am a political representative here. We appreciate the redeveloping parts. How can you afford to do it? Public-private partnerships? We know that business improvement districts work. We would love to get one at Lake Anne Village Center. Garvin. Great fan of business improvement districts (bids) and public-private

partnerships. However, they don't run themselves. Paul X. runs a bid in Philadelphia and has used it to make the city come alive. The trick is to find those entrepreneurial people.

Dan Renderman (?) in New York City is another entrepreneur. It is amazing what he has done at Bryant Park behind the Central Library in New York City. You need to think about who leads these efforts. We have 60 bids in New York. Focus on security, safety, and lighting. Can use taxes to pay for streetlights. You need to plan for the bid and how it works. What is it going to do? Create a board that really represents the community. Bryant Park is 6 1/2 acres and has a \$9 million budget. It includes kiosks, restrooms, shows, and movies. The city insisted on having a fashion show. The bid required them to replace the lawn. You need entrepreneurial management. The park-goers need the park. Don't know your community.

Question about other new towns. Compare the other new towns. Woodlands is younger but is doing surprisingly well. Irvine is quite different but parts of it are very nice.