

**Statement of
Colin Mills, President
Reston Citizens Association to
The Fairfax County Planning Commission
Regarding Reston Master Plan Special Study, Phase I – Reston Transit Station Areas
ST09-III-UP01(A)
November 13, 2013**

Good evening. My name is Colin Mills, and I am president of the Reston Citizens Association. RCA has participated in the Task Force review of the Comprehensive Plan since its beginning. In addition to attending every meeting, we submitted over a dozen papers to the Task Force containing detailed analysis and recommendations, and we submitted several rounds of comments as the draft Comprehensive Plan emerged over the last several months.

Given the amount of time and effort that has gone into this process – by RCA and many others – as well as the excellent support provided by County staff, you would hope that the plan would be thorough and complete, and one that we could all support. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

RCA's Reston 2020 Committee reviewed the Comprehensive Plan as it stands, and graded it section-by-section (see the attached report card). The bottom line? Overall, the plan received a grade of "D." It should come as no surprise that RCA's Task Force representative voted "No" on the plan.

Why are we dissatisfied? Because the plan lacks balance. One goal of this Comprehensive Plan revision is to redevelop the areas around the Silver Line stations into dense, mixed-use, transit-oriented areas with a real sense of place. By this measure, the new Comprehensive Plan is fairly successful. However, it falls well short in another area: sustaining Reston's values and quality of life.

If you read the report card, you'll see that we felt the plan could be improved in many areas. However, some parts concern us more than others. Therefore, I will focus on the areas where we believe the plan really missed the mark.

One of our greatest concerns is transportation. The Dulles Toll Road corridor is Reston's biggest transportation bottleneck; it divides our community in half and generates our biggest traffic jams. The Silver Line will bring a lot more traffic to our community; careful and thoughtful planning is needed to avoid gridlock on our streets. Sad to say, this plan lacks that.

The plan calls for an overall Level of Service goal of E in the transit station areas. But it doesn't specify when that goal is to be achieved. Can we expect that E during the peak hour? The peak period? On weekdays? As an overall average? The answer has a huge impact on our community. How much congestion should we in Reston expect?

As written, this plan will mean multi-minute delays at the intersections near the Toll Road. The County Department of Transportation's own modeling demonstrated that. String a few of those intersections in a row and add in spillover effects, and the Toll Road turns into a virtual wall between north and south Reston during the rush. That doesn't work for us.

There's also an open question about who's going to pay for our transportation improvements. Keeping the traffic moving will require a lot of improvements, including multiple new crossings of the Toll Road. The price tag will run in excess of \$1 billion. Someone's going to have to pick up that tab. More likely, a

lot of someones. A combination of state and county funding, developer proffers, and other sources will probably be necessary to build these improvements. With a need this great, and the sources so diverse, we need careful planning and guidance on how these items will be paid for.

Does the plan provide that guidance? Unfortunately not. The brief section on transportation funding contains only a list of possible money sources. It provides no concrete guidance on how to acquire the funds we'll need. We in Reston are left with an uncertain future: more traffic is coming, but we don't know how much or who's going to pay for the relief we'll need. The placemaking around the stations could come at the cost of the place we live.

Another area of serious concern to Restonians is parks and recreation facilities. The planned development will bring over 35,000 new residents to Reston. Those residents need places to play: not just pocket parks and playgrounds, but athletic fields as well. The plan calls for only 3 fields to be built in the transit areas. There aren't any fields there now, and the Park Authority calculates that the new residents will demand the equivalent of 12 new full-size turf and lighted fields.

If the residents need 12 fields and the station areas will have only 3, where will the rest of the demand go? Into the rest of Reston. The Park Authority expects that existing Reston fields will be turf and lighted in order to meet the demand. The plan is silent on where these newly lighted and turf fields will be. We believe that the fields serving the transit areas should be located within the corridor or at least within walking distance.

It's also not clear exactly how these field improvements will be funded. Reston's existing fields are well-used, and many of them are paid for by us through RA assessment dollars. Is Reston's future going to find the existing residents fighting for field time with the new residents, and paying for the improvements to boot? That's not acceptable to Restonians. The plan needs to make clear that any new or improved fields to serve the station areas will be paid for by the development in those areas. The rest of Reston shouldn't have to foot the bill for the park infrastructure that the transit areas will need.

Another issue that concerns Restonians is open space. We were greatly disappointed when, at its last meeting, the Task Force cut back on open space requirements, dropping from a minimum requirement of 20% of net lot area as publicly accessible open space to a "goal" of 20%. Open space is central to Restonians. We support reverting to the staff's language mandating a 20% minimum, not just a fuzzy goal.

Our last major concern about the plan is implementation. Here we're not concerned about what's in the plan, but rather what isn't there. That is, any meaningful guidance about achieving the goals laid out in the plan, or ensuring that its constraints are met. In 2010, RCA produced a paper on this subject, and its title has become a mantra for us throughout this process. That title: "Planning Without Implementation Is Empty." We never dreamed that, over three years later, we would be looking at a completed plan with virtually nothing on implementation.

Implementation isn't just a planning issue; it's a political issue. It's where the rubber meets the road. If the desired transformation of the Toll Road corridor is going to happen, implementation is crucial to that. If this vision fails, or if the development comes at the cost of Reston's quality of life, our citizens will have our elected officials to blame. It's in everyone's best interest that we get this right.

We look to the Tysons plan for inspiration here. We support having a single entity responsible for implementation issues. Tysons called it the "keeper of the vision." In addition to promoting

coordination between developers, citizens, and government, this entity would formulate an implementation strategy, and determine how the necessary infrastructure will be paid for. The key benefit here is that there would be a single point of responsibility for carrying out the plan's vision. If implementation isn't someone's responsibility, it's no one's responsibility. We can't let that happen.

In fairness, there are aspects of this plan that we like. We strongly support the references in the plan encouraging new development in the transit areas to become members of either the Reston Association or the Reston Town Center Association. These two entities are essential to maintaining Reston's character and identity. Creating another new association – or several new associations – would only fragment our community and increase the disconnect between the transit areas and the rest of Reston. We urge that this language be preserved in the plan.

On the whole, though, the plan's problems outweigh its merits. Its fuzziness in key areas, especially transportation and parks and rec, and the lack of implementation guidance run the risk of creating a divided community and harming our overall quality of life, instead of making Reston stronger into the future. We urge the Commission to defer approval of the Comprehensive Plan amendment until these areas are strengthened. Thank you for your time and attention.