

Judith and R. Doug Pew

Judith is an at-large member of the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force but not representing the task force in these comments

## **Comments Related to November 13, 2013 Planning Commission Hearing**

Thanks to the members of the Fairfax County Planning Commission for patiently listening to concerns at the hearing. Thanks to Fairfax County staff for all the work they have done on the comprehensive plan document. Here are some of our responses to issues brought up at the hearing and also some issues not covered.

While the plan is a successful blueprint for the future TOD area, there are areas that need to be adjusted or improved. The goal for all is to keep what is special about Reston while moving forward in this new upcoming era. How can we keep what works as we add the new? We have to value the many groves of trees lining the roads. Driving through Reston is like driving through a forest. We have to keep the sense of place. Plazas work but there are other ways where plazas are not practical. We have to add more trails and work on a cross Reston route to encourage walking and cycling. We have to acknowledge the sports focus and needs. We have to appreciate RA and at RTC the RTCA. Importantly, we have to value the business community which makes everything else in Reston work.

Reston is a successful community. An important part of that success is the thriving work community as described in the vision statement. Therefore, we have to consider the needs of the businesses and developers when developing the TOD area. We need to be aware and thoughtful of what is needed to achieve this. Out of this comes the strong need for parking even in the new areas. For this reason maximum parking for commercial is not in anyone's best interest, As one developer said, they will not put too many spaces in, just what is needed. If they do not add adequate parking spaces, the companies will move out to a location where parking is provided. The companies will probably move to Herndon, Ashburn, or Centreville. If there are fewer cars as a result, it will be due to companies leaving Reston. This will hurt the Reston business community

Conversely, we need minimum parking standards in the new residential areas for a different reason. Here the developers will put in the minimum. After units are sold, residents will realize there is a parking problem. There will be no "fall out" parking locations available in the TOD areas. Therefore the residents, with difficulty, will use surrounding non-TOD neighborhoods for car storage. People's car needs change over time. The millennial generation will have job changes, have children. The vision statement talks about affordable housing/workforce housing as a goal. Without at least two spaces per unit, craftspeople, electricians, and lawn care small businesses will have no place for their work trucks. Since work trucks are not allowed in non-TOD areas, those with small businesses will have to park their trucks in their one space allowed and find a neighborhood for their cars. They may have to park in the spaces for mixed use retail. Rather than think of people with cars as the enemy, we need to make parking work for them. There are some other parking solutions, however. When developers build, it should be with the idea that parking should be shared on weekends. These are times for festivals and cultural events which also need parking.

When we think of Reston, we think of festivals and the farmers market on the plazas. We think of stands of trees along the road. We don't think of trees lined in a row, although in cities this is fine. In South Reston the feeling of being in the forest is valued. In keeping what is special in Reston while moving into the future, the treescapes need to be preserved.

Looking at the streetscapes, safety needs to be the issue here. Narrow streets have been requested for the new TOD areas. This has been said to cause problems with access to emergency vehicles. Also, in mixed use areas, delivery trucks will block roads. Roads cannot be widened later but they can be narrowed later. In terms of the grid of streets planned for the South Reston Town Center location, more attention may be needed here. A grid of streets may not have the desired effect

because it is unlikely that any grid street can join up with Reston Parkway. The VDOT will probably say that is too many intersections on a busy through street and not enough car storage. Maybe this section should be a joint venture area for a cultural center or one of the other wish-list items instead.

We do need more athletic fields and schools than allowed in the plan. Fixing up some fields is a partial solution but many other fields are needed. Like RA mentioned, fields outside Reston could benefit Reston because it would take from the numbers using RA fields. We are not only adding residents to the TOD areas but other residents as well. Condos are being built where small units were previously. This is happening near Fairway Drive and will probably occur on Colts Neck Road. In terms of schools, high schools should not operate over capacity because high school is academic and social. A theater group, lacrosse team, and bands will have to have sign up limits. Therefore solving both of these problems is crucial.

The sports issue may be solved in other ways, though. Indoor sports like swimming, tennis and racquetball might be accommodated by using public/private partnerships in the lower floors of new commercial buildings being constructed in TOD and RTC areas such as Woodland Park next to Herndon Station, and North RTC. That would be a win/win solution. Developers could get extra FAR in response and no valuable outdoor playing fields would be used. Some of this could even go to the 20 percent. We think it is crucial we keep this 20 percent and not make it a goal.

Thinking about sports and trails, we need to keep the phrase in the plan that states that new areas need to be in RA. The RA comments were pertinent. Also new residents need to have access to the many pools and facilities. They will have to each build their own facilities, otherwise.

Now, here are some issues that were not brought up. Cross county transportation is lacking. Therefore, the car congestion problem will not be solved until Reston becomes a "hub". Rather than put extra lanes for cars down Fairfax County Parkway, put a light rail there. That would help commuters, and non-drivers, go both ways. Fairfax County Parkway connects to Fort Belvoir with its own congestion problems. Reston would become a transportation hub because the parkway is close to the future Herndon Station. That is a long term solution just as three Dulles Crossings in Reston (and possibly a cycle/pedestrian crossing between Reston Heights and Plaza America) are a long term congestion solution.

Talking about metro stations, the Reston Town Center Station, as Reston evolves, will be a major transportation hub and an urban station. No provisions have been made for this. The station area is limited by geography and surrounding streets. The extras an urban station needs may have to be provided by public/private partnerships. The following amenities are needed for an urban station and need to be planned for: taxi waiting areas, more bus bays than planned or even a relocation of the bus terminal, convenience store, a covered crossing of Sunset Hills Road. Again, a public/private partnership could benefit the developers as well as the county.

In conclusion, here is our list of the above needs

- No maximum parking for commercial buildings in TOD areas
- Parking minimums for residential housing in TOD areas
- Reston Landscapes
- More athletic fields than planned
- Schools that are not over capacity
- Indoor sports public/private partnerships
- Major urban station at Reston Town Center Station
- Reston as transportation hub/fixing cross county transportation needs
- 20 percent open space not goal of 20 percent open space
- RA membership for newcomers

**Fairfax county employees and the task force have worked tirelessly on this plan for four years. Much is right with the outcome. However, some areas need to be reevaluated for Reston to move on with the times and also keep its special charm.**

**Judith Pew and R, Doug Pew**