



ISSUES BULLETIN 2012-3

July 25, 2012

ARCH Input to the RMPSSTF: Ensuring the Phasing of Needed Infrastructure with Development

ARCH strongly endorses Planning Principle #3 that the Task Force adopted requiring that new “[d]evelopment will be phased with infrastructure.” This tracks one of the six core issues we identified in Issues Bulletin 2010-1 (sent to the Task Force) as essential to Reston’s future growth: that infrastructure “identified as necessary improvements to support specific phases of (re)development be put in place before or concurrently with that (re)development.”

By “infrastructure” we include (and understand the Task Force to include) common assets/needs (such as road improvements like additional Toll Road crossings to name one of the most important examples, sewers, water, schools, fire, police, community amenities, and larger open spaces) that aren't triggered by any one development. These raise different considerations than community assets/needs that are specific to a particular site, which can be secured via proffer with individual developers or, as some of the Task Force’s Committees have suggested, as essential prerequisites to granting higher FARs.

Our concern arises with how common infrastructure needs will be secured in a time of scarce public resources given that no one developer is likely to be responsible for these types of improvements. How will the balance between land use and infrastructure be established and maintained? What will be the process for establishing priorities for funding allocation should infrastructure funding be made available?

ARCH and others early in this process suggested that there be an Infrastructure Committee to address these needs. County Staff and the Task Force leadership have to date declined to establish such a committee. At a recent Task Force meeting County Staff indicated for the first time that the Task Force would not be doing “a Tyson’s-like” exercise of identifying and prioritizing key infrastructure components and determining how those would be funded. In the colloquy with Task Force members that followed it was suggested there may be “other ways” (undefined) through which this could be addressed.

We feel it is timely to reinforce with you just how important ARCH views this concept of phasing. It is essential that this not just be a planning aspiration but an actual prerequisite to future development. Indeed, if ARCH is to recommend to its members that they support the Task Force’s proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan then assurances on phasing will likely prove critical. We doubt ARCH is alone among Reston community organizations in feeling this way. This is especially important since certain development rights rise to the level of entitlements in Virginia.

At a minimum, we think County Staff should schedule a Task Force meeting devoted solely to this topic and outline how it (Staff) proposes to implement the crucial Planning Principle #3. That should occur before the draft Plan amendments are offered for consideration so the community can have an opportunity to digest these proposals, comment, and inform the drafting process.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. ARCH stands ready to continue to assist the Task Force and, as appropriate, support its important work.

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