

Commentary on Reston 2020 Committee's Planning Principles
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Many of the principles in the committee's "Planning Principles" paper are already incorporated in the county Comprehensive Plan. In general we think the Plan is good, although it must be updated with the coming of Metro and other developments that will affect the community. That, of course, is what the Task Force is charged to do. There are, however, several ideas contained in our paper that we think are important that are not in the current Plan. We think they should be discussed and considered by the Task Force for inclusion in the Plan.

1. Planning must be for the whole of Reston. This is completely consistent with the Comprehensive Plan but not with the program of the Task Force. We understand the timing problem of the Special Study, but we think it is very important that the Task Force consider the whole of Reston, even while concentrating on the RCIG and the Town Center. For example, in planning for the RCIG and the Town Center, the Task Force should take into account the effect of their recommendations on traffic in the rest of Reston, and how developments that are currently planned in the rest of Reston, such as the Lake Anne and Fairway Apartments redevelopments, will affect the RCIG and the Town Center.

2. Public and private development should be phased to ensure that the goals of mixed use and transit oriented development are achieved. The current Comprehensive Plan requires development in the Town Center to be mixed use, specifying in several sub land units percentages of residential and commercial development. Yet, except in the urban core of the Town Center (D4), mixed use development has not occurred, and the sub land units tend to be concentrated areas of office space (for example D3 and D4) or residential housing (for example D1 south of New Dominion Parkway, and E3, E4 and E5). This violation of the principle of mixed use could be avoided by phasing allowed development and not allowing particular projects until there are additional projects in the relevant sub land unit which would achieve the objective of mixed use. We understand that this is not in the purview of the Department of Planning and Zoning, nor can the Comprehensive Plan require phased development. We feel, however, that a strong statement concerning phased development would be beneficial in pushing the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors in this direction.

3. A corollary to #2 is that public sector development should be phased with private development. The key here is transportation. Developments that adversely affect traffic should be postponed until the traffic mitigating infrastructure is at least financed and construction is planned. In general this goes beyond small improvements in infrastructure financed by proffers. For example, the RMAG recommendation for an additional crossing of the Dulles Toll Road at Soapstone is not likely to be financed by proffers, nor is the underpass of the Dulles Toll Road between the Town Center parkway and Edmund Halley Drive. Yet both of these are essential traffic mitigating investments and private projects that would increase traffic in these areas should be postponed until the crossings of the Dulles highway are financed and planned.

4. Another corollary of #2 is our suggestion that planning and zoning should be more closely coordinated than at present. In Maryland, apparently, changes in plans and changes in concomitant zoning occur at the same time and are thus closely coordinated. This seems to us to be sensible and that the Task Force should consider such a principle.
5. The current Plan encourages the consolidation of parcels within land sub units. We strongly agree and such a policy would be consistent with our idea of phasing development. In addition, we feel that a system of allowing developers to trade densities within land sub units would also be sensible as long as it is controlled, for instance by building height restrictions, and that the overall planned density within the sub units are maintained.
6. Conserving stable residential neighborhoods is a principle that is already mentioned in the Plan as a broad objective. We certainly agree with this objective. We have suggested, however, expanding this broad objective to include the policy that any residential redevelopment must strongly take into account the views of current residents and adjacent neighborhoods. This should be the case for rental as well as privately owned properties in a development. An example might be Fairway Apartments. The opinions of the current renters should be polled and considered before approval of the redevelopment. In this case, it is particularly important since the income mix of people likely to buy into the proposed redevelopment may be quite different than that of the current residents.
7. We have suggested that portions of the RCIG, the largest area of relatively undeveloped land in Reston, be reserved for open space which could evolve into natural areas. Consistent with the objectives of TOD, we would prefer relatively intensive development close to the transit stations, but still within the constraints of the Traffic Management Plan, but keeping substantial areas between the transit stations as open areas.

We realize that many of the above suggestions concern implementation. It seems to us, however, that planning without implementation is empty. We see no reason why these implementing policies should not be written into the Plan.