

WHAT RESULTING COMMUNITY DO WE WANT TO SEE IN THE FUTURE

RESTON CORE

February 25, 2010

Definition: “**Reston Core**” – All of the Reston Town Center from Baron Cameron Boulevard on the north to the Dulles Highway on the south, plus all of the current RCIG area.

We want to see a vibrant, twenty-four hour, living urban mixed-use community, but a community that “works”. If you can’t get into it, or out of it, or around in it, it will not work. It will die. Having said that –

Specific Planning Principles and Guidelines:

1. The Reston Core should be an urban community. It should be vibrant and alive for up to 24 hours a day. What exists today outside the Town Center is a series of unconnected suburban office parks that are virtually dead for half the day. To change this we must add –

- Housing for the full spectrum of the demographics of Reston, but assuredly, plenty of housing for junior members of the workforce. Market rate housing seems to be able to take care of itself. “Affordable” housing, housing for seniors, and housing for people with handicaps does not automatically take care of itself. Somehow there must be enough incentive provided to make providing other-than-market rate housing feasible within the Reston Core. Housing must constitute at least 40% of the developed space in this area in order to generate the desired living environment.
- All residents and employees occupying the Reston Core and, to a lesser extent, visitors to areas outside of the Town Center should find the accompanying support resources they need to enjoy day-to-day life in the Core. This means providing eating establishments, basic personal service establishments, convenience food and drug stores, healthcare and fitness services, daycare centers, community use spaces, and the full variety of non-destination support facilities necessary for residents and daytime users.
- Hotels will be an essential element throughout the urban Core supported by conventional hotel retail services. With the exception of hotels and transit station services, most retail uses should be “support” uses not “destination” in nature, except for a very few carefully delineated retail complexes. The Town Center (broadly defined) should remain the primary “destination” retail and service center for Reston.
- A variety of urban amenities must be added, certainly including pleasant public gathering spaces, community use and cultural centers, civic art, and extensive effective landscaped areas.

2. Of most basic importance to the overall success of the Reston Core area must be its accessibility. If residents and users cannot get into, out of, or around within the Reston Core it will fail miserably. This means that –

- The Reston Core must cease to be primarily an auto-oriented area. Mass transit, in a variety of potential modes, must become the primary access system within the Reston Core. (Please see additional discussion of this in the accompanying Transportation Plan document.)

The transition from totally auto-oriented to a mass transit-oriented Core will be traumatic for all concerned, certainly for developers, residents and space leasers. This transition will not happen over night. Possibly it will take decades to fully implement, but it must take place. And the process must begin today.

- Absolutely essential to creating an accessible, livable community is the challenge of greatly up-grading pedestrian and bicycle linkages to the Reston Core and within the Reston Core. Central to creating an effectively functioning Reston urban core must be a concerted effort to build into the entire fabric of the Core area an exceptionally good pedestrian / bicycles walkway-pathway system. If the walking and the bicycle trips to, from and within the core are safe, comfortable, pleasant and even enjoyable, many hundreds of Restonians and visitors from outside will take advantage of this commuting opportunity to

the benefit of their health as well as that of the general transportation system. Special attention must be paid to –

- Safe and well-lighted street/roadway crossings – grade-separated where possible
 - Improved pedestrian / bicycle crossing design for streets where at-grade crossings are inevitable
 - Safe, patrolled, lighted, and reasonably sheltered and comfortable walk and accessways
 - Points of interest or diversion along the way – shopping, landscaped areas, natural features
 - Facilities for bicycle storage, showers and dressing designated especially for bicyclists at key central locations within the Core.
- Also essential to achieving effective accessibility in the Reston Core is establishing as many additional crossing points as possible across the Dulles Highway grand canyon.

Many in Reston have long advocated creating some form of air-rights development spanning the Dulles Highway to help bind the two de facto halves of Reston together. There have been indications that implementing this idea may even become economically feasible in the near future as Reston land values have escalated. Air-rights development over other major Reston arterials must always be held out as a desirable possibility.

At a minimum, more vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle crossing points across the Dulles Highway must be planned for and given very high priority for implementation in order to form as effective a transportation grid as possible within the Reston Core area. Currently, with few available crossing points, all north-south traffic must be funneled through the few available highly limited and restricted passageways. As an alternative, such projects as the long-planned Town Center Parkway – Edmund Halley Drive Extension, and a Soapstone Drive – Isaac Newton Square Extension must be seriously planned for and eventually built. Other linkages may be possible. (See further discussion below)

3. The Reston Core must be urban in character, but it must also be highly sensitive to the Reston legacy of natural features and open space. How do we reconcile these apparently mutually exclusive qualities? Let's first define open space in the context of the Reston Core.

At least 25% of the total ground floor area of Core sites should be retained as common landscaped plaza, pedestrian / bicycle ways, and natural open space. Public plazas and open-space on levels other than the ground floor can be considered toward meeting this requirement subject to approval of a Special Exception. Such open space must not include any space frequently used by motor vehicles, however.

Special attention must be addressed to landscaping throughout the Core area. It is not unreasonable to require landscaped rooftop areas, where feasible, that can provide some natural relief to the harshness of the intensive development of structures. In addition, landscaped rooftop areas will help ameliorate the impact of storm water collected from extensive impervious rooftop surfaces. Fairfax County must adopt this requirement as standard in all new urban areas.

Highly effective stormwater management techniques must be employed to attenuate the adverse impact of oil and other automobile residue associated with urban development. A broader, district-wide effort must be initiated to effectively collect and utilize associated “grey water” from the Reston Core area. Great care must be taken to assure that stormwater runoff does not damage Reston lakes and streams.

It must be conceded that even the most citified high-rise resident of the Town Center or the new RCIC Core will yearn for open spaces and green athletic fields. While Reston open space resources far exceed most community standards with respect to its supply, with up to 25,000 new residents coming and using the limited existing Simon-mandated recreation and natural open space, Clearly future residents and employees of the Reston Core complex will seek to use the general Reston Association resources, facilities and services now paid for by current Reston Association members.

Developers within the Reston Core must conscientiously negotiate the future relationship for the long-term management and maintenance of their common open space properties with the Reston Association. It would be foolish to establish multiple entities to provide common facilities, services and to manage common grounds. To the extent possible the developers should clarify the long-term relationship of his properties with the needs and resources of the Reston Association as early as possible.

Reston Association and other Reston entities must aggressively find ways to create special agreements with adjacent Fairfax County park and recreation areas – Baron Cameron, Lake Fairfax, Fox Mill Park, Stratton Woods Park, etc – for preferential Reston usage. Of course, the existing Town Center residential development is not adequately served today, even with the few designated park areas in the Town Center including County-owned land there. One clear solution would be to buy some of the few remaining vacant or under-used properties on Reston’s periphery. Reston Association will have very difficult open space – recreation management challenges ahead that it is now only beginning to address. Including the Town Center, 20-30,000 present and future residents who will be underserved by parks and open space outside their immediate neighborhood, will need to be served somehow, somewhere. Let’s begin planning today for off-site (outside the immediate Reston Master Plan) parks, recreation and natural areas. We cannot expect significant ball fields and natural areas in the Reston Core. New Reston Core development must pay its fair share toward meeting Reston’s future park and open-space needs, however.

Incorporate energy-saving green technology as a standard requirement for all new development and redevelopment in the Reston Core. All such development within Reston must achieve LEEDS Silver certification or its equivalent. Some means must be established to assure that multifamily residential development in the Reston Core is able to achieve a comparable level of green technology as is now becoming standard for urban non-residential development.

4. Having identified the qualities we want the future Reston Core to exemplify, how do we get there? What can we reasonably expect private developers to be willing to do on their own? For exceptional new features, what incentives must be offered to justify private developers investing the necessary extra cost to provide a desired result? What additional responsibility must fall squarely to Fairfax County, i.e., to all of us as taxpayers? In the new world of urban development, Fairfax County must be a proactive leader in the funding and implementation process. It can no longer be simply the passive collector, regulator and distributor of very limited implementation resources. It must be an aggressive player in the implementation process. The new urban areas will become, and in many cases already are, revenue cash cows for Fairfax County. The county must invest general County resources to assure that these major revenue generators remain economically effective. (See discussion of Reston Infrastructure Escrow Fund attached.)