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**Subject:** Density and Open Space

All -

Please consider the following:

## **DENSITY AND OPEN SPACE**

In my opinion the heated debate concerning what the correct resident to jobs ration for new redevelopment areas in Reston is getting a bit too complex. The ratio of residents to jobs guideline specified as 1:1 is an appropriate and logical **goal**. It is ridiculous, however, to jockey the numbers around by saying retail and hotel employees should not count because the retail and hotel usage patterns, commuting time, etc. are different from those of office uses. Retail and hotel uses provide jobs, and the **goal** should be to keep project residents and job opportunities in balance to the extent that is possible. A ratio of 1:1 is a very desirable overall **GOAL**. It may not be fully achievable goal in each case. It should not be a mandated absolute rezoning requirement. Projects that completely fail to come even close to the desired goal probably should not be approved unless they are clearly part of a broader complex that does meet or comes close to achieving this goal.

Let's keep retail employees, hotel employees, and any other sources of employment within the overall complex in the numbers mix when evaluating their relationship to residential projects as we consider broad development proposals made up of a number of individual projects.

**Waiver of Residential Mandates** - I do not support a permanent waiver of the residential components within any broad, overall development proposals. If the current market so dictates, I see no problem in letting the office – retail – hotel component proceed first, but with the clear understanding that the residential components are still clearly required at such time as office space market becomes overbuilt and the market shifts strongly to the residential component. The correct mix relationship between residential and non-residential components needs to be determined on a case by case basic. One ratio requirement does not necessarily fit all situations.

**Workforce Housing** - By the same token, I do not support a permanent waiver of the workforce housing requirements in any development proposal. If the initial market cannot support the workforce housing requirement then it may be appropriate, on a clearly specified case by case basis, to allow the first units to be built early in the TOD redevelopment process to be all market rate units. The overall workforce housing requirement, nevertheless, stays with the overall project's approval, and must be fully met at an agreed upon point in the project's future.

Fairfax County should be an active partner in the early development process of TOD projects in high-value revenue-generating areas such as Reston, not just the project reviewer and regulator. Rather than granting any complete waivers of workforce housing or housing in general, the traditional incentives of density credits or bonuses should be used where appropriate. Where necessary, however, unconventional tax abatement incentives may be necessary for the first pioneering residential projects in a new TOD environment, especially in time of down economy. Incentives should be used sparingly initially to help the county build momentum toward implementing its strongly-advocated policy of transit-oriented development. It should not be unheard of, however, for the county to finance essential infrastructure improvements as part of its incentive to encourage the first phase of desirable TOD projects.

**Recreation and Open Space Requirements** – While Park Authority urban recreation and open space requirements may be appropriate in aggregate, they cannot be rigidly applied to every individual Reston Town Center – RCIG TOD redevelopment project. If deemed to be absolutely necessary overall, at least some of the requirements should be permitted off-site through remote land purchase or cash contribution by the core area developer. Many creative ways should be found to meet on-site requirements, such as appropriate use of rooftops, interior spaces and multiple uses of appropriate spaces.

I continue to support the **reservation of 25%** of the overall development **at-grade site area** (independent of streets and vehicle spaces) as public “open space” simply to sustain the livability of the overall urban environment. By this definition, required open space would not vary with FAR or building use. Density incentives could be perfectly appropriate means, if needed, to implement worthy pioneering projects early in the TOD redevelopment process.

It is important to define **“public open space”** as any open area, paved, landscaped or natural, on any level that is readily available and accessible to the general public, and is not generally available to motor vehicles. Obviously, exceptions must be allowed strictly for emergency vehicles. However, street, alleyways, surface parking areas or loading areas would not qualify. Again, the factor of 25% of overall open space is strictly to sustain livability of the overall development area.

Such standards and guidelines should be simple enough to be readily understood by all parties evaluating the merits of a project with a minimum of exceptions and encumbering caveats.

Below ground open areas, certain accessible rooftop situations, and above-grade open plazas and walkways can qualify. The basic criteria should be that these spaces be **readily** accessible by the general public, and not to motor vehicles. Private open space and play areas, pools, tennis courts, etc. do not

qualify.

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