

Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force Discussion Document

For March 23, 2010 Task Force meeting

This document consists of the Reston 2020 Committee's Proposed Planning Principles with proposed changes and comments from Task Force members.

The original Principle Headings proposed by Reston 2020 are shown with double-underline.

Text that is underlined has been proposed to be added as shown. Text that is shown with ~~strike through~~ has been proposed to be deleted as shown.

Text that is **highlighted** is a staff comment regarding a proposed change.

PLEASE NOTE: At this time, staff does not have a position regarding the planning principles articulated here. The staff comments included below provide an explanation or clarification re: current County policy or point out language that is oriented toward implementation, which should, in staff's view, be addressed later in the more detailed Plan recommendations.

Proposed Planning Principles for Reston Master Plan Special Study

A primary goal in presenting these ideas is to preserve the essential, special, and unique characteristics of the community of Reston as it grows and develops and build upon them based on both local and national experience over the last couple of generations, as we guide our future growth and development. Our vision of the future of Reston is embodied in the five characteristics listed below which we feel have made Reston the pre-eminent community it is, offering high quality-of-life and attractive work/life balance to its diverse population, and an advantageous business environment to the local, national and international companies located in northern Fairfax County.

- (a) Accommodation of a diverse population, including people of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, family stages, and income levels;

- (b) Diverse, safe, sustainable, and attractive neighborhoods and Village Centers;
- (c) Proximity to all types of public, professional, and commercial services, and cultural/religious/recreational opportunities;
- (d) Proximity to diverse employment opportunities;
- (e) Extensive open space and natural areas.

To achieve this vision of the future of Reston, good planning will be necessary. We suggest that this planning be guided by the following nine principles.

1. Comprehensive Planning – **Planning for future residential and commercial growth must consider the Reston community as a whole, that is, as a comprehensive unit.** Individual re-development projects must be viewed and evaluated in terms of their total impact on the community, as well as the specific impacts of rather than as individual, self-contained, projects. The most important aspect of this is the need to move toward a quantitatively balanced use – jobs, and housing, convenience retail, comparison-shopping retail, cultural, recreational, open spaces and facilities for concerts and performances, and other uses. Equally important, all existing planned high-density areas should be planned as urban, not suburban areas, including all of Town Center (not just the urban core), the rail transit station areas, the village centers, and the high-density sinews.

Private and public development and re-development should be phased to ensure that that planning objectives are achieved as the community grows. There should be close coordination between changes in the comprehensive plan and changes in the zoning ordinance. The cumulative impact of development and re-development must be continually assessed and evaluated at the county and the Reston community level.

Comments:

- *Place more recognition on importance of Villages as an important building block.*
 - *Need recognition that appropriate commercial uses including not-for-profit services for the community*
2. Excellence in Planning, Design, and Architecture – **Reston must continue to be held to the highest standards of excellence and innovation in future development.** The quality of the development and re-development in Reston must be of the highest caliber, in terms of Leadership in Energy and

Environmental Design (LEED) standards (Silver or higher certification) (Staff Note: The County's current policy re: Green Building Practices calls for certification under established green building rating systems, e.g. LEED but is not limited to LEED), architectural design, compatibility with the natural environment, livability and usability, consistent with Robert Simon's original goals, especially the need for development, in today's context, to be attractive to investors. This includes an orderly and creative arrangement of all land uses with respect to each other and to the entire community. In particular, development in the RCIG and Town Center should be an exemplar of innovative, architecturally significant, high quality and enduring community development. Architectural features and building placement should contribute to a safe, pleasant walking environment. Special care should be taken to respect the context of the site and character of surrounding existing neighborhoods.

Comments:

- *Innovation should not be a goal.*
- *LEED standards and other attributes must be cost-effective on a Net Present Value basis.*
- *Counterproductive to disregard economic realities by insisting on highest LEEDS standard.*

3. Infrastructure and Transportation – The required expansion and/or modification of all modes of transportation and infrastructure **should be planned and funded in concert with approved development projects, and should be completed concurrently with that development.** This must be based on an integrated comprehensive plan for transportation and other infrastructure, including—but not limited to—public safety and emergency services; educational, cultural, and recreational facilities; and water and sewerage. Special attention must be paid to ensuring safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access; mitigating increased vehicular traffic, the provision of safe, attractive, inexpensive affordable, cost-effective and frequent public transportation, including convenient bus service linking the community and servicing the transit stations. Development should take advantage of Reston's current network of paths and trails and include linkage with the existing trail network, and separation of pedestrian and bicycle traffic from roads. Both public and private resources should be used to fund such improvements, including utilizing portions of the funds raised through Small Tax District 5 to support infrastructure projects and programs for which the use of proffers are

inappropriate or ineffectual. One of the most important aspects of planning for high-density urban areas is that they should all have well-planned grids of streets and pedestrian-bikeways.

Comments:

- *Level of Service should be C or better. (Staff Note: Level of Service, if it is to be addressed, should be in addressed elsewhere in the recommendations.)*
 - *Alternative principle: Improvements in all modes of transportation should be based on the best recent urban transportation planning experience and planning practice, as discussed in the Reston Metro Access Study, and the Tysons Corner and Lake Anne studies.*
 - *The planning documents should identify the infrastructure needed to support specific phases of development. The documents should then require that what have been identified as necessary improvements to support specific phases of (re)development either: (a) be put in place before or concurrently with that phase of (re)development, or (b) have funding in place prior to commencement of the phase of development for which the need is triggered.*
 - *Re: RCIG Internal Connections – Planning should encourage internal connection of the parcels and land units to allow continuous travel through major portions of the Dulles Corridor. The connections could be a mix of vehicular and non-vehicular modes. The planning objective is to avoid the creation of a series of development islands connected only by major roads and adjacent sidewalks, and is consistent with the RMAG recommendation for internal streets.*
4. **Density – Higher densities for residential and commercial development than currently contained in the Comprehensive Plan principally should be confined to the RCIG, Town Center, and the various Village Centers and the high-density, pedestrian-oriented urban sinews of the original Reston Master Plan, which are intended to connect all the village centers and the Town Center, and which collectively comprise the largest portion of Reston’s planned high-density areas.** ~~While maintaining the overall population density at current planned levels, from an urban planning perspective higher than planned density in close proximity to mass transit facilities and commercial centers may be desirable.~~ These areas should be planned to redevelop, over time, into vibrant, urban, mixed use centers offering employment and housing options for existing and future residents. This will help provide the demographics needed to support mass

transit and local commerce while minimizing the impact to existing residential neighborhoods. In areas where higher densities are allowed, substantial parcel consolidation should be encouraged, as already stated in the Comprehensive Plan. Within consolidated parcels, transfers of allowed densities among development projects should be allowed, even encouraged, so long as the overall planned density restrictions for the sub land units are not violated.

Comments:

- *We have no assurance that the development will provide the support for mass transit. (This comment is related to the addition of the word “help” in the text above.)*
 - *Something is needed to define how to transition from high density to existing, low density such as transition in building heights. (Staff Note: Recommendations re: appropriate transitions should be addressed elsewhere in the Plan text.)*
 - *Something is needed on the use of barriers/shields/screens such as tree lines and vegetation between areas on major use differences or density differences. (Staff Note: Recommendations regarding the need for appropriate buffering or screening should be addressed elsewhere in the Plan text.)*
 - *The 13 people per acre residential density cap for the Reston PRC should be retained, and an appropriate limitation for within the RCIG must be established. Higher density residential development should be concentrated in the RCIG, Town Center, and Lake Anne (per its approved redevelopment plan). In the other Village Centers additional development could be allowed if there is demonstrated neighborhood support for it. Reston neighborhoods outside the RCIG, Town Center, Lake Anne, and the other Village Centers should retain their existing character and remain essentially stable at their as-built densities.*
 - *Concentrate retail uses in Town Center and in village centers (with RCIG considered an extension of Town Center).*
5. **Reston Urban Core – The Reston Urban Core (RUC) must be developed into an integrated, dynamic and vibrant urban center for northern Fairfax County.** The RUC is defined to include the RCIG and Town Center. It must comply with the planning principles of mixed use and transit oriented development as defined in the Comprehensive Plan. It must be developed to be a continually active element in the Reston community and

surrounding region, and a destination unto itself. Special attention must be paid to adequate public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle access, parking, and traffic management to ensure the efficient movement of people and vehicles within the RUC and across the community. A mix of uses should be encouraged so that daily needs of residents of the development can be met without the use of a car. It must also include the urban planning and design principles of Principles 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Comments:

- *The Reston portion of the Comprehensive Plan referred to as the Reston-Herndon Suburban Center must be completely rewritten to reflect current conditions and Reston’s planning vision. This area includes the RCIG area, Reston Town Center, and other parcels in that vicinity.*
- *This distance from the Town Center to the Metro station poses a serious impediment to unifying the RCIG and Town Center.*
- *A definition of destination in this principle is needed. Although the Town Center may be a destination, the locations along the RCIG seem hardly suitable.*
- *Re: RCIG Land Use – Land use planning for the Dulles Corridor should consider encouraging distinct roles for specific areas. The roles could include regional retail, education, government, local retail, etc. This would not change the basic mixed use guidance for most of the corridor, but would add an organizing principle for the area.*

6. **Existing Residential Neighborhoods Outside the RUC –Residential neighborhoods of all types, serving all income levels, should be treasured and, where appropriate, protected. Any Re-development of existing residential neighborhoods should maintain the essential character of the neighborhood as defined by the current residents characteristics of Reston in terms of diversity, quality design and community.** ~~Community input, particularly that of the neighborhood and nearby residents, must be systematically solicited and considered in a meaningful way before redevelopment projects are approved-considered.~~

Comment:

- *Emphasis on “current residences” sounds insular. What about surrounding communities and changing times?*
- *Alternative principle: **Any redevelopment of existing residential neighborhoods that are planned for high-density areas should be***

based on the original Reston principles for high-density, pedestrian-oriented sinews and should strive to maintain the essential character of the adjacent neighborhoods as defined by the current residents.

7. All Ages / All Families – Reston, including the former RCIG, must **continue to accommodate people of all ages, physical abilities, economic circumstances, and families of all sizes and at all stages of family life.** This includes affordable and physically accessible housing, cultural and recreational facilities, educational facilities, medical and health care facilities, and multi-mode local and regional transportation capabilities.

Comment:

- *Should we cite 12% affordable housing that is County goal? (Staff Note: Any mention of a specific target should appear elsewhere in the Plan recommendations.)*
- *Alternative Principle: Reston, including the RCIG planned high-density urban areas, must continue to accommodate...*

8. Open Space – **Ample open space is an important determinant in creating Reston’s high quality-of-life. To sustain and nurture this valued asset, at least 25% of all future developed and re-developed land development and redevelopment must be reserved for contribute toward the establishment and enhancement of quality open space.** Open space includes areas such as parks, plazas, outdoor recreational facilities, and maintained trails to which the public has access, [but does not (*NB: underlining in original text*) include areas such as paved parking lots, road surfaces, and median strips. ~~It is particularly important that future development in the Reston Urban Core includes at least 25 percent open space within each sub land unit. Redevelopment projects should preserve both private and public open space at the greater of 25% or current level. The amount of open space preserved should be more than is required or available today.~~] [Alternate for preceding bracketed text - Open spaces should be appropriate to the needs of each part of Reston – e.g. wetlands and stream valleys should be preserved, restored and integrated with surrounding areas; high-density areas should include small urban parks, hard-scaped areas for entertainment, and smaller spaces for playgrounds and children’s activities; whereas lower-density areas should have direct access to a fuller range of recreation spaces.

Comments:

- *Need more information about 25% number. In high density development, use of open space must be functional and attractive and directly related to the development. Some flexibility should be worked in.*
 - *Should be usable, convenient and accessible without sacrificing quality of various components.*
 - *Need to determine optimal open space. A range might be used, such as 15-25%.*
 - *Not prepared to say if a percentage of open space is appropriate or what that number should be. Advocate strongly for adequate open space.*
 - *Re: recommended mandate that there be 25% open space in each project and that natural areas be incorporated throughout the area of new development - I am familiar with New York City as well as Washington, DC. I have no idea as to what percentage of open space is included in either of these cities. What I do know is that each city takes justifiable pride in its parks, water fronts and major avenues although natural areas constitute but a tiny percentage of their total open spaces... future development around Reston's Metro stations, its Urban Core and village centers is, and should be, planned for urban densities. 25% open space and natural areas are not compatible with urban areas. Mandating such is in direct contradiction to planning principle, 1. Comprehensive Planning, enunciated in the first principle.*
9. **Natural Areas** – **The natural areas in Reston must not be developed, and should be extended to the extent possible-practical.** The natural areas, part of open space, such as the common lands of the Reston Association, are part of Reston's identity. These areas include woodlands, meadows, lakes, ponds, streams, wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive areas, and drainage and runoff catchment areas, which are maintained in their natural state. These areas, including along with the privately owned natural areas in clusters, condos and other residential areas and detached houses, are crucial in protecting the natural environment in Reston. Creeks, riparian habitat, slopes, and other sensitive environmental features should be conserved as natural areas and incorporated into the design of the new developments. In addition, the development plans for the RCIG should include areas set aside for open space that can evolve into natural areas. To the extent possible,

natural areas should be connected to provide natural corridors for movement of wildlife.

Comments:

- *Alternative Principle: **The natural areas in Reston should be preserved and enhanced, and made accessible to all of the community for environmental education, meandering, relaxation and meditation.***
- *Perceive that part of Reston's strength is that it appeals to a cross-mixture of needs – more suburban in some areas and more urban/exurban in others. It's not clear that concepts of open space and natural areas in more suburban areas of Reston should apply to denser, mixed-use areas (like Town Center). Advocate for adequate natural areas.*

10. Proposed NEW Principle: Market Incentives – The Comprehensive Plan should provide sufficient incentives to encourage property owners to pursue redevelopment opportunities. The Comprehensive Plan should provide sufficient incentives to encourage property owners to pursue redevelopment opportunities in order to create the urban, mixed-use environment desired for Reston Urban Core and to permit such redevelopment to contribute to the implementation of necessary infrastructure improvements.

11. Proposed NEW Principle: Environmental Preservation – To protect the environmental health and ecological integrity of our community, future development in Reston should conserve, protect, and restore the community's natural resources, including its soils, water, and native flora and fauna, in both qualitative and quantitative measures by using best management practices. In keeping with this principle:

- Stormwater management practices should comply with Stormwater Management Criteria for Reston Redevelopment to protect stream channels, protect against flooding, preserve water quality, and control sediment loading;
- Invasive exotic plants (as identified by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage) should not be used in landscaping, and landscape species should be indigenous or proven adaptable to the local climate;

- Existing mature trees should be preserved to the extent practical and the quantity of trees and wooded areas should be increased, consistent with the Fairfax County Tree Action Plan;
- Energy conservation should be a goal of both site and building design, and may include strategies such as passive solar, natural ventilation, daylighting, and simple shading; and
- Development should be pursued in a manner that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions to help achieve 80% greenhouse gas reductions within the region by 2050 in accordance with the Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Initiative adopted by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.