

Thoughts and Strawman on the Wiehle Transit Station Area
William Penniman
Alternate Member of Reston Special Study Task Force

A. Summary

Transit oriented development will dramatically alter the character of the Wiehle station area. Development must be channeled by a well-designed Comprehensive Plan in order to benefit Reston and its new residents and to maximize the value of the new transit system. The Comprehensive Plan should:

- increase the residential component of permitted mixed-use development;
- assure pedestrian and bicycle interconnectivity throughout the transit corridor;
- focus density increases on areas nearest the Wiehle station and more to the north of the toll road than to the south, particularly between Wiehle and Plaza America;
- implement mobility infrastructure improvements (including, but not limited to RMAG recommendations, interconnected pedestrian and bicycle paths) and transportation demand management strategies;
- provide attractive, publicly accessible open spaces (*e.g.*, plazas, parks, pedestrian/bicycle pathways) throughout the corridor so that new and existing residents can enjoy nearby outdoor and recreational opportunities;
- develop enough restaurants, other retail establishments and other attractions to keep the area alive with people both during and outside working hours;
- endeavor to attract businesses and educational and cultural institutions;
- add or upgrade non-mobility infrastructure (fire and rescue capabilities, schools, indoor recreation, library) that will be needed to serve the growing population of residents and employees;
- reprogram the planned, Wiehle transit parking, primarily to serving local uses, rather than commuters, after transit stations to the west are opened; and
- protect Reston's established residential areas from disruptions.

This memo is intended to prompt thinking about the Wiehle transit station area. It does not attempt to define a final outcome. It reflects very constructive input by a number of members of the community (including Reston 2020's RUDL Committee and some Task Force members), but, ultimately, I am to blame for its faults.

The memo divided into two main parts: (A) General Thoughts and Goals and (B) Thoughts on Specific Areas and Sub-Units. Both need to be considered, *along with a vision of the larger Reston community*, in order to achieve a rational redevelopment of the RCIG area. The memo is accompanied by a table summarizing the ideas by sub-unit.

B. General Thoughts and Goals

1. **Central Goals.** The main objectives for development near the Wiehle transit station should be to create a well-balanced area that

- (a) is alive both day and night, on weekdays and weekends--not just an office area that fuels traffic and peak period activity but is a dead-zone the rest of the time;
- (b) evolves as an urban neighborhood and educational and cultural destination, where Restonians want to come for employment, restaurants, culture, recreation, shops, parks and pedestrian/bicycle trails, in addition to the Metro;
- (c) is visually attractive from the perspectives of first class architecture, art, plantings, street life, lighting, green spaces and openness;
- (d) has substantial residential development (at least 50% of planned occupancy) throughout and has enough human traffic to be safe, to convey a sense of community, and to support a busy subway stop (with as little automobile traffic as possible);
- (e) has convenient, safe interconnectivity by foot, bicycle and public transportation—both internally and to village centers and Town Center—so that people can comfortably move within, to and from the area without using cars;
- (f) is adequately supported by timely road improvements that protect the community from unacceptable congestion, including new crossings of the toll road for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles, and that provide mobility within the land units; and
- (g) evolves as a part of the overall Reston community, not as a separate stand-alone place.

2. **Incentives.** The community's principal leverage to achieve desirable, mixed-use development lies in the facts that (a) RCIG property owners need to seek rezoning to a new zoning category in order to maximize the value of their property in light of the arrival of rail transit, and (b) application of consistently high standards to rezoning applications will enhance developers' investments and the community. Mixed use and higher densities are not matters of right under current zoning. A well-designed comprehensive plan is the necessary starting point to guide applications for zoning reclassifications. Absent a good individual application—which makes beneficial proffers and satisfies a well-designed comprehensive plan—landowners should live with the existing zoning designations for properties in the RCIG. Consolidations or coordinated applications that beneficially integrate development of roads, parks, plazas and pedestrian/bicycle paths should be encouraged (though perhaps not if the result is a large, cookie-cutter development)..

Density credits should be considered as incentives for developers to attract important development characteristics that are not universally required.. *The following illustrates the kind of density incentives that might be offered:*

- 5% for LEED Gold or extraordinary architecture
- 15% for large consolidation (20+ acres) with a network of streets, well-distributed parks/plazas and below-grade parking
- X % (in proportion to cost of) for constructing a substantial public facility (e.g., a recreation center, neighboring street improvements, crossings of the toll road)
- 10% for substantial, high-quality educational campus as long-term tenant
- 5% for minimum financial participation in approved Community Development Authority
- 5% for entirely below grade parking

3. **Timing.** This is a long-term exercise. Given the current economy, the number of unfilled (but relatively young) buildings along the RCIG, and the number of office-condominium owners, development will not proceed as fast as might have been thought a couple of years ago. *The Task Force should craft sensible recommendations for changing the Comprehensive Plan based on the community's long-term goals and needs, without cutting corners either to expedite development in a bad market or to reflect guesses as to what will motivate builders 10-25 years from now.*

Ideally, redevelopment would occur first at sites closest to the new transit station both to maximize transit usage and because early development away from the station could sap the commercial real estate market before development occurs near the Wiehle station. A wedding-cake approach to density would provide one incentive for development closer to the station, though the Task Force may wish to consider whether additional incentives are appropriate.

Another option would be for the Comprehensive Plan to limit development to existing zoning classifications and densities (or to existing densities with mixed uses permitted) at locations away from the subway station and then revisit the possibility of mixed-use development in those areas in 10-15 years. *For example*, densities might be increased now only in selected areas—north of the toll road, only within ¼ mile of the station, in Isaac Newton Square, and between the station and Plaza America; and south of the toll road, only within ¼ mile of the station and only north of Sunrise Valley—with permission for densities elsewhere to be re-examined after 2020 or 2025. [Note that the current Comprehensive Plan has a form of staging tied to the nature of mass transit development, *i.e.*, it would increase density to one level for bus rapid transit and to another for rail transit. This approach would allow time for necessary infrastructure to evolve.]

Other questions to consider include (i) *whether* approval of an individual rezoning application can be conditioned upon construction (at least construction of proffered improvements) being completed by a certain date or the property's zoning category reverts to the current low-density, non-mixed use zoning (subject to a new rezoning process)? (ii) *whether* enforceable commitments to build high-quality projects sooner could get a rezoning preference over proposals that do not make such commitments; (iii) *whether* rezoning could be conducted in a kind of competitive process with the rezoning granted to the best proposals while lesser

proposals are rejected or deferred? The proffers and hopes for beneficial development will not have much meaning if the developers never implement the rezoning or if mediocre projects crowd out better ones.

4. **General land-use profiles.** It would be undesirable to have uniform FARs or building heights throughout the corridor for a number of reasons, including traffic, density, and aesthetics. In general, *the collective “profile” of new buildings should place the taller buildings and denser development closer to the stations themselves*, with the height and density tapering off as one moves away from the stations. Similarly, taller buildings should tend to be located closer to the toll road and Wiehle with shorter buildings closer to Sunrise Valley and Sunset Hills. And, in general, *greater density should be permitted north of the toll road than south of it*. These concepts are embodied in the current Comprehensive Plan’s designations for sub-units, although this paper suggests a number of changes. One exception to a station-centric model might be to allow greater residential density and taller buildings near and at Plaza America.

Apart from building profiles, buildings should be required to be of high quality construction and to meet LEED (silver) or comparable standards. Truly extraordinary architecture that strongly adds to Reston’s public image could also be rewarded with a density bonus.

5. **Mixing uses.** Mixed use is clearly called for, but the issue is what mix(es) should be encouraged both in general and for particular sub-units? (Open space is discussed separately.)

- (a) **Residential v. Office.** The current Comprehensive Plan contemplates different mixes of residential and office space for the various sub-units; office space generally predominates in that plan. To achieve a living community that has human activity at nights and on weekends, development should include a larger component of residential units than the Comprehensive Plan currently contemplates. Promoting pedestrian traffic should be a major goal. Consequently, the revised Comprehensive Plan should set relatively high residential minimums (at least 50% of expected occupancy, as opposed to GFA) throughout the Wiehle TOD area though the residential component may vary depending on the sub-unit’s distance from the stations or other factors related to suitability.
- (b) **Retail.** The Wiehle transit area, should include restaurants (*for varying budgets*), shops and cultural attractions so that the area (i) becomes a vital destination, (ii) promotes transit usage, (iii) provides sufficient retail to support nearby hotels, offices and residents as well as attract other patrons, and (iv) provides sufficient foot traffic to create a sense of safety. Consistent with Reston’s image, it would be highly desirable to encourage local restaurants, not chains, and to encourage shops that have broader appeal than Gucci-type stores. Very large stores, such as Best Buy and Office Depot, belong in the Town Center area, not here. However, a binary distinction between “support” and “destination” retail is potentially misleading and harmful. By definition, a transit station is a destination, and it should be allowed to flourish as one, with an active human presence day and night. Retail should not be restricted in a way that either relegates the Wiehle station area to being just a commuter destination or forces residents to drive to meet their retail needs.

Relevant to future retail development, Bob Simon has questioned the idea of creating bands of first-floor retail that detract from the village center concept and that may not have sufficient economic activity to be viable. While this concern deserves careful consideration, strict adherence to such a view could defeat vital transit oriented development near the Wiehle station, whose existence and whose growing population were not contemplated when the original village centers were laid out. Providing retail and cultural options along key local streets in the transit area will encourage activity that does not require automobiles, a primary goal of transit oriented development.

Looking at existing retail options, Plaza America provides an existing retail center within the transit corridor, which is equivalent to a village center with a grocery store, pharmacy, eating establishments, and shops. It is walking distance (albeit a long walk, roughly one-half mile) from the Wiehle station, Isaac Newton Square and Reston Parkway. People may be willing to walk that distance for some needs *assuming* that (i) the pedestrian walkways are pleasant enough to attract people and (ii) pedestrian/bicycle bridges cross the major roads at suitable locations. Town Center is somewhat farther away (not a likely walk); there is a small, strip-retail area along Sunrise Valley between Soapstone and the golf course; and the South Lakes, Hunters Woods and Tall Oaks village centers are short drives.

Of these, only Plaza America is close enough for people to walk from the station area (though Tall Oaks might also be walkable from Isaac Newton Square and Chestnut Groves if there were a pleasant pedestrian connection instead of the current narrow sidewalk along Wiehle). However, Plaza America is already busy from Reston's current residents, and no one is going to ride Metro to Wiehle just to walk to Plaza America (though a retail-lined, pedestrian friendly streetscape between the Wiehle station and Plaza America might help draw people through the area including to Plaza America). Consequently, while Plaza America may satisfy near-term needs for a grocery and pharmacy to serve new residents near the Wiehle transit station, attractive retail, including restaurants and shops, will be needed closer to the station and east of Wiehle in order to make the area work. Ultimately, even a new grocery store (perhaps in G-6 or G-7) may be justified by a growing population.

6. **General character of the area.** It may not be possible to dictate the character of the Wiehle TOD, but *the community may benefit from promoting a unique character for development in the area.* The idea of encouraging development that emphasizes educational institutions and cultural attractions has considerable support. It would also be appropriate to try to attract professionals (including professional associations) and high-tech businesses, which would fit well with the educational theme and with existing businesses in the corridor. The corridor's overall reputation for high-tech should be a strength we play to.

To this end, the county and community should attempt to attract one or more significant educational institutions to the Wiehle area, ideally at least one of which would offer graduate-level courses in the sciences (*e.g.*, computers, medical research) or engineering or business. Such an institution would benefit from the transit station and mixed uses, and it would potentially benefit the community by providing a magnet to attract other educational entities and

high-tech businesses. The community should set its sights high and try to attract a prestigious entity like University of Virginia or Virginia Tech or one of the major private universities based in the District of Columbia or Maryland. Establishing a significant campus for Northern Virginia Community College could also provide significant economic benefits to Reston, though it might not act as a magnet for high-tech businesses. Density bonuses could be offered to attract developments that are anchored by substantial educational or research institutions. The size of the bonus could be directly linked to the size of the campus and duration of the commitment. Sites in the G-2, G-5, G-6 and G-7 areas might be particularly well-suited to a large educational presence, though other areas could also be possible.

Establishing a government-funded incubator for new businesses, in the Wiehle station area, would also be very attractive. Such a space could offer potential entrepreneurs (a) temporary, low-cost office space with some office support (copying machines, for example), (b) training or mentoring, and (c) possibly assistance in finding private financing. By helping new businesses get off the ground, Fairfax County could help boost the local economy both within and beyond Reston. Locating such an incubator near a transit station would help broaden the range of people who might benefit from the assistance. “Graduates” from such a program might be drawn to office space in the corridor and contribute to Reston’s economic engine.

Other cultural attractions that have been suggested, so far, for the Wiehle area, include a Fairfax County library branch (or the Reston regional library if it moves from its current location at Town Center), a theater, art galleries (possibly with workshops like the Torpedo Factory), community meeting spaces, or a children’s science museum.

7. **Traffic must be addressed from the beginning.** Both government funds and proffers will be needed. The traffic problems will begin with construction near Wiehle; get worse when the Wiehle station and related parking open; and get worse still when new buildings are developed. The RMAG study provides an excellent starting point, but it is not an ending point. The county and state must commit to work with the developers to address these problems before the problems create a negative traffic reputation that kills quality new development in the Wiehle transit area. *Vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic will all need attention.* In addition to local roads and pedestrian/bicycle pathways within the corridor, a transportation demand management plan will be needed to keep traffic under control and to discourage reliance on private vehicles.

There needs to be a *circulator/shuttle bus system* to connect the transit station(s) both (i) to businesses and residences along the RCIG, and (ii) to the village centers and Town Center (the latter being less important after the Reston Parkway station opens). This will promote use of the transit system and reduce traffic in the area. To succeed, the system will have to run constantly with frequent stops, especially during rush hour, at locations close to businesses and apartments. Usage should be subsidized by the county and businesses that will benefit. Consideration should be given to converting the parking lots along the power lines west of Sunset Hills to dedicated bus lanes.

The parking lot at Wiehle is a near-term certainty, which will bring significant traffic problems, especially during rush hours. However, *over time, reducing traffic congestion will be helped if the large parking lot planned for the Wiehle station can be partially reprogrammed from Metro*

to serving on-site and nearby buildings once the Wiehle station ceases to be the end of the line. Commuters from farther west of Reston should be encouraged to use parking at Herndon-Monroe and the station to be built near Route 28, once those transit stations open. Substantial parking should be built at the Route 28 station for this purpose. To encourage a shift of commuting practices, weekday parking prices at the Wiehle station lot should be raised after the western stations open.

On the other hand, consistent with practices elsewhere, use of the transit parking lot at Wiehle should be free of charge at nights and on weekends. This will both help encourage transit usage in off-peak periods and help support the restaurants and shops that develop near the Wiehle transit station.

More generally, the parking goals should be to reduce the amount of needed parking (along with the level of vehicle traffic) associated with new buildings and to shift parking from ground-level lots that now dominate the area to structured lots, which are either below ground or screened (e.g., by offices, ground floor retail or other screening), so as to mitigate the aesthetic impact of parking structures.

Provision should be made for locating taxi stands, rental cars (e.g., Zip cars), and rental bikes near the transit station.

Streets will need to be developed to move people to and among the buildings to be developed in the transit corridor. *Networks of connected streets* should be designed primarily to serve the building users and patrons and selectively to provide connections to larger arteries, such as Wiehle, Sunset Hills and Sunrise Valley. Low speeds and attractive streetscapes should be the focus of a network of streets within the corridor, though circulator/shuttle buses and emergency equipment will need to be accommodated. The narrowness of the corridors between the toll road and Sunset Hills/Sunrise Valley place limits on the potential street layout, but there should be at least one “main street” with wide sidewalks, trees and outdoor seating, running through the new development on each side of the toll road.

Safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle paths are essential, as discussed elsewhere in this document. Given the already heavy and expected increases in traffic on Sunrise Valley, Sunset Hills and Wiehle, few bicyclists would dare to use those roads, and painting “bike lanes” on the roads would not provide a safe alternative. The corridor needs dedicated bicycle pathways or joint pedestrian/bicycle pathways (e.g., 10’-12’) on both sides of the toll road. *All offices and residential buildings in the corridor should be linked to the stations by such pathways.* To the extent possible, these paths should be located among the buildings to maximize their utilization.

8. Crossings of the toll road and nearby roads.

- (a) *Additional roads and pedestrian/bicycle routes across the toll road are essential if Reston is to avoid the RCIG’s becoming a sharp line dividing our community. There need to be as many ways as possible for pedestrians, bicycles and cars to cross the toll road. The Soapstone extension bridge proposed by RMAG should be matched by a*

similar crossing east of Wiehle, possibly extending South Lakes Drive across the toll road. Pedestrian/bicycle bridges across the toll road should be built as well.

- (b) Apart from new roads and bridges, *the walkways across the toll road at the three Reston-Herndon subway stations (which we know will be built) should be designed and managed so that they are open, 24 hours/day, to use by pedestrians and bicyclists* whether or not they plan to use the Metro. These pedestrian/bicycle paths should be open even though entrances to the tracks may be closed.
- (c) Pedestrians and bicyclists need to be able to safely cross Wiehle Avenue and Sunset Hills at a number of locations, including (i) where W&OD crosses Wiehle, (ii) from Isaac Newton Square area to the Metro station, (iii) across Wiehle at Sunrise Valley and at Sunset Hills, and (iv) across Sunset Hills east of Wiehle. Grade-separated crossings should be carefully considered, particularly where the W&OD crosses Wiehle.
- (d) Developing “air rights” over the toll road could provide urban space as well as interconnectivity. However, there is considerable question about the economic viability of using air rights for substantial development. Perhaps the initial attempts to use “air rights” should involve wide, pedestrian/bicycle crossings of the toll road with some landscaping and resting points.

9. **Recreation and Cultural Amenities.** There will be a need for more recreation space, including year-round, indoor recreation, as the population of residents and office workers grows.

- (a) **Bicycle/Pedestrian along Sunrise Valley.** There should be a continuous pedestrian/bicycle trail along the Sunrise Valley side, running from the Hunters Woods Rd (or at least from the W&OD crossing of Sunrise Valley) to the Reston Parkway station (or, better, the Herndon/Monroe Station or the bicycle trail along the Fairfax County Parkway). *The trail should be set among the buildings, back from traffic and should be as visually attractive as possible* in order to attract users from the nearby buildings and beyond. *Rights of way should be obtained through existing parking lots within office developments along the RCIG in order to create a pedestrian/bicycle trail, which could be created with only minimal construction to link currently paved areas.* Businesses along the RCIG would benefit from such a trail because office workers and clients would gain better, non-motorized access to the Wiehle Metro station and the shops/restaurants to be developed in the that area.
- (b) **Bicycle/Pedestrian along Sunset Hills.** On the Sunset Hills side of the toll road, the W&OD already provides a bicycle and pedestrian path, which needs to be enhanced by building an overpass or underpass to allow safe, convenient crossing of Wiehle (comparable to Reston Parkway). The W&OD, however, is not enough. It will also be important to provide attractive, safe route for pedestrians and bicycles between Sunset Hills and the toll road, extending from east of Wiehle to Reston Parkway (or at least to Plaza America, initially).

- (c) Other Outdoor. In addition to user-friendly plazas (see open-space discussion below), well-located parks, perhaps with urban recreation options (e.g., basketball, bocce ball, chess/checker tables) and picnicking, are needed to enhance the experience and attract users. *Public accessibility to open spaces is critical*. Private pools, rooftops and enclosed areas for residents of particular developments (as opposed to community pools run by RA or RCC, for example) will not address the larger community needs or the needs of employees in the area. Such private spaces should not be counted when considering whether a developer's proposals meet its open-space obligations.
- (d) Indoor Recreation. Reston's year-round recreation facilities are already very busy, and the addition of thousands of new residents and office workers will further burden existing facilities. Reston will need additional indoor recreation space (swimming and multi-use courts), as well as additional community meeting rooms, as the population along the corridor grows. The facilities should be centrally located (e.g., in the in or near the transit corridor or Town Center area or in an underused village center, like Tall Oaks) so they are convenient to as many people in Reston as possible. Quality public recreational opportunities for residents and employees will be a draw for businesses and people. The Comprehensive Plan's definition of mixed use and its incentive structure for proffers should encourage development of such facilities.
- (e) Cultural. Community support has been expressed for making the Wiehle TOD area a cultural center, as well as promoting an educational focus. This is consistent with Reston's overall identity as a place that supports the arts. While public art is a minimum component, the varieties of cultural attractions to be encouraged remain to be seen. For example, while Reston would clearly benefit from construction of an arts center/theater along the transit corridor or in Town Center, it can be argued whether it would be best to locate such a facility closer to the Wiehle station (creating a magnet for utilization of that area) or the Reston Parkway transit station (providing better access to restaurants at Town Center in addition to those built near the transit stations). While the better argument favors locating a major cultural center near the Reston Parkway station, that should not foreclose development of other theaters or cultural venues in the transit corridor closer to Wiehle.

10. Open space. A central feature of Reston is the presence of publicly accessible open space within all developments and close to all residences. Spaces emphasizing natural beauty and trails are integral parts of clusters and neighborhoods. The Reston Association maintains a large network of open areas. The RCIG has few remaining natural areas, but at least it has been developed over the years with many trees, much landscaping, and substantial setbacks particularly along Sunrise Valley Drive.

Transit oriented development must continue Reston's open-space pattern, albeit as appropriately adapted to a more urban setting. There should be publicly accessible open spaces as part of every development with parks, plazas and sinews of pedestrian/bicycle paths and trees woven among the buildings along the corridor. Developers of neighboring parcels should be able (and encouraged) to combine spaces to create larger open spaces and linked spaces (especially linked, green sinews and bicycle/pedestrian paths extending throughout the corridor). Contributing to an

open-space fund might be considered if an acceptable, nearby, adequately-funded project has been defined. However, developers should not be able to buy out of their open-space obligation by contributing space (or money to buy space) at remote locations which will not benefit occupants of the corridor.

A minimum percentage of publicly accessible open space (*e.g.*, 20-25%) should be considered as both an aggregate goal and a requirement for each developer. Moreover, each developer's 25% *open-space obligation should be satisfied at a location close enough to benefit the occupants of the development. One way to do this, while providing some flexibility to develop larger plazas and parks, might be to require that half the open-space commitment be located within one-eighth of a mile (roughly a city block) of the developer's site and the rest within one-quarter of a mile.*

Open spaces can take many forms. Apart perhaps from the few remaining natural areas in the RCIG and some visually attractive landscaping (*e.g.*, preservation of the wide buffers that now exist along Sunrise Valley), *qualifying open spaces should be designed so they are actually used.* Here are a few thoughts:

- (a) Attractive pedestrian and bicycle paths that are bordered by trees and are separated from traffic are needed along the length of the transit corridor.
- (b) Plazas and parks should be user-friendly for adults and children. Large, bare plazas are cheap for the developer but not user-friendly. Parks and plazas will be cooler and more attractive if they have trees, other vegetation, fountains, comfortable benches and other low-key facilities where kids and adults can sit or play. (Consider the contrast between Freedom Plaza in Washington, DC. and Pershing Park, which is just across 14th Street from Freedom Plaza—which would you rather have lunch in?)
- (c) Urban open spaces, including plazas or plaza-like pedestrian streets, will be more likely to attract people if they have places to sit and are bordered by restaurants with outdoor seating (or with carryout to available tables), coffee houses, kiosks, and other amenities.
- (d) In addition to natural light during the day, well-designed night-time lighting is important in urban open spaces in order to attract people at night and to convey a sense of safety.
- (e) Existing trees, streams and wetlands located in or adjacent to the transit corridor should be protected.
- (f) The pipeline right-of-way that passes near Plaza America may be usable as a place for sports, a playground, or community gardens.
- (g) To count, open spaces should, in fact, be open to use by the public and should not include roads, driveways, parking lots or similar areas.

11. **Nearby neighborhoods must be protected.** *Development near the Wiehle transit station must not harm established residential areas.* (a) A bright line should be drawn along Sunrise Valley from Hunter Mill Rd. to Reston Parkway clearly assuring the community that there will

not be commercial buildings and or greater residential development on the south side of Sunrise Valley. (b) Traffic calming and parking management steps (such as speed humps and parking permits) will be needed in neighborhoods on the south side of Sunrise Valley. (c) RA and the nearby neighborhoods will need to consider the potential impacts of greater density on usage of existing pools, tennis courts, paths and docks. New RCIG residents who are not paid members of RA should not be allowed free use of RA pools, tennis courts, paths and docks though enforcement will be difficult for some of those facilities. (d) Some or all of the neighborhoods should get street lighting as a safety measure. (e) Similar protections are appropriate for the Chestnut Groves apartments.

12. **Other infrastructure issues.** Apart from the need for new roads, attention must be paid to the likely need for *additional fire and rescue capabilities*, and there will likely be a need for *additional schools and libraries* to meet growing demands from residents both in the corridor and in established neighborhoods as younger couples replace older residents. Wide sidewalks should be built on both sides of existing and new roads. Above-ground electricity and phone lines should be buried throughout the transit area. If possible, the large Dominion power line that runs along Sunset Hills should be buried or at least made less ugly. Consideration should be given to converting the parking lots under the existing power lines along Sunset Hills to a dedicated shuttle bus lane or to open green space (if anyone would use it) or some other useful purpose.

C. Comments on Specific Sub-Units in the Wiehle TOD Area (Also see attached table.)

1. North of Sunset Hills Near Wiehle

- a. Isaac Newton Square (Sub-unit G-1) is a prime location for a residential village within walking distance of the transit station. It is next to the W&OD and a golf course, and it is a short walk to the Wiehle transit station. With the exception of two mid-rise office buildings along Wiehle, the current buildings are low (1-2 stories) and old. Its large, parking lot already has a grid layout that might form the basis for a network of connected streets with short blocks. Unfortunately, it is currently listed in the Comprehensive Plan as mixed use with 35% -50% residential GFA (which would result in a small percentage of residents occupants compared to office workers given their relative requirements for floor area).

The revised Comprehensive Plan should call for a residential occupancy density of 80% or more, with office or support retail in the remaining space (not counting the two existing mid-rise offices if they remain in place). A treed buffer should remain between the buildings and the W&OD and golf course, with the wooded area now surrounding dish antennae preserved. A large, central park (or pair of parks) should be included, with attractive pedestrian/bicycle paths throughout and linked to a covered overpass across Sunset Hills near the Wiehle station. At least 25% of the land area should be open space. If restaurants and other retail are developed next to the transit station, there may be less need for such facilities in this residential neighborhood. It will be essential to have safe

pedestrian/bicycle crossings of Sunset Hills to the transit station area. They should include traffic lights with crosswalk lights and possibly a median as a half-way point. Consideration should be given to a grade-separated crossing. A grade-separated crossing by the W&OD over or under Wiehle (like at the Fairfax County Pkwy or Reston Pkwy) for the benefit of pedestrians and bicycles should be installed. There should be a grid of streets within G-1 and at least one road connection to Sunset Hills, possibly two. A more user friendly pedestrian/bicycle connection is needed along Wiehle to Tall Oaks.

- b. Across Wiehle from Isaac Newton Square (Sub-unit G-2), there are some mid-rise office space and some fast food outlets, with the Chestnut Grove low-rise apartments west of the office buildings. There is a wooded area behind the buildings, which should be protected if possible. There are no TOD recommendations in the current CP. However, development of this sub-unit could benefit nearby sub-units and benefit from the new transit station. It is far enough from the station to warrant less dense development than closer locations. Accordingly, consideration should be given to whether a higher FAR is appropriate at this time at G-2 (possibly 1.0 or 1.25 for the portion closest to the W&OD), provided that the new development is predominantly residential. As elsewhere, there should be a minimum level of publicly accessible open space, which may include preservation of woodland behind the properties. There should be a landscaped buffer between the buildings and W&OD. The unit is small but there is a potential for one or more internal street(s) with perhaps one street linked to G-7. As noted, a grade-separated crossing of the W&OD over Wiehle for the benefit of pedestrians and bicycles is needed. There is also a need for a safe crosswalk across Sunset Hills from G-2 to G-5. If development occurs, there will be a need to protect the Chestnut Grove apartments, which are just outside G-2. In any event, occupants of G-2 and Chestnut Grove should get good pedestrian/bicycle access to Tall Oaks, as well as the Wiehle station.

2. Between Toll Road and Sunset Hills

- a. Between Sunset Hills and the toll road from Wiehle to Reston Parkway (Sub-units G-4 (including Comstock proposal), and G-3 (next to Plaza America) in the Wiehle station area). Development in these areas will have significant impacts on traffic but no direct impacts on established residential areas. These are good locations for taller buildings, greater density and mixed use. The mix of uses should have enough residential (at least 50% of occupancy) to encourage transit usage, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as restaurants and shops within walking distance. Fairly dense development could extend from the station all the way to Plaza America. On this side of the highway, there is already access to a grocery store, pharmacy, coffee shop and numerous other amenities at Plaza America, but developing restaurants and some commercial activity close to the Metro station is important. Locating retail along two sides of a “main” internal street with pleasant streetscapes and adding a couple of parks or plazas between the station and Plaza America could benefit both. (The pipeline right of way near Plaza America) also creates a possible open space for recreation or gardening.) It is important to add attractive pedestrian/bicycle interconnectivity and a network of streets with short blocks for internal movement for connections to Sunset Hills. RMAG calls for significant road changes, including a new bridge across the toll road from Soapstone. It is important to

bury the existing electric and telephone lines in the area, lest the eyesore discourage high quality development.

- b. Development along Sunset Hills east of Wiehle (Sub-units G-5, G-6). Here, there is a very good opportunity for development that will make use of the transit station, at least if crossing Wiehle on foot or by bike can be accomplished safely and, particularly, if a decent circulator/shuttle bus system extends among the buildings along Sunset Hills. There should be a network of connected streets, including one that extends across Wiehle to G-4. Construction of a grade-separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Wiehle is needed. Reasonable development should be encouraged, including residential (50% or more of occupancy), office, and possibly ground-floor retail. This would be a good area for one or more educational institutions. If an educational theme is going to be encouraged, one should be careful not to encourage development that prices such institutions out of the market.
- c. Farther from the Wiehle station, Sub-unit G-7 has a complex mix of office, commercial (including an ice rink) and residential. The current Comprehensive Plan makes minimal recommendations for permitting revised zoning. Maintaining existing densities seems reasonable for the foreseeable future, though consideration might be given to permitting mixed uses after the Wiehle station opens. However, this area might provide a good location for a large campus provided there is an adequate circulator/shuttle bus system, and that might justify an exception from existing zoning constraints.

3. Between Toll Road and Sunrise Valley

- (a) On the Sunrise Valley side of the toll road, the potential for adverse impacts to established residential areas is greatest. For that reason, no development should occur along the south side of Sunrise Valley (except possibly an update to the small strip shopping center next to the golf course, but not a high-rise development); taller buildings should be closer to the toll road; and there should be a good buffer along Sunrise Valley. There should be a good layout of streets that are connected internally and to Sunrise Valley, but the narrowness of the land area between Sunrise Valley and the toll road may restrict the network to one continuous street paralleling those roads. Currently, the office buildings and landscaping (trees along drives and parking lots) along Sunrise Valley are fairly attractive. They are rather “Restonian” in appearance: mid-to-low density; many trees; no long, straight views along roads; and set back from Sunrise Valley with a reasonably green buffer. The impact of adding traffic along Sunrise Valley needs attention, and early action is needed to extend Soapstone across the toll road. Apart from the sites closest to the Metro station (e.g., H-2, H-1 and I-1), there should be no rush to allow rezoning or construction of taller buildings.
- (b) As previously noted, a pedestrian/bicycle trail (possibly with an under-Wiehle tunnel), should extend east from the Metro station to Hunters Mill Rd. (or at least to the W&OD where it crosses Sunrise Valley); and it should extend west from the Wiehle transit station at least to the future Reston Parkway station (or, better still, to the Herndon-

Monroe station or beyond). If rights of way can be obtained through the existing parking lots (*e.g.*, for a 10'-12' combined path or two separate paths), this could be accomplished without damaging the buffer between Sunrise Valley and the current buildings and with minimal laying of new asphalt. Such access to the subway would benefit the office workers, as well as create a recreational pathway. Sunrise Valley is too heavily trafficked and most of the sidewalk too narrow to be a safe bike route or a pleasant pedestrian route. (The RMAG proposal to put such a path along the toll road has apparently been rejected by the toll road operator and, in any event, would be less beneficial to office workers interested in walking to the station.) Attention is also needed to improving ways for pedestrians and bicycles to cross the toll road either on the Wiehle bridge or on a dedicated bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists. Currently, the only link is a sidewalk along the Wiehle bridge which is used by both pedestrians and bicyclists. One link will be established if the Wiehle station's pedestrian bridge is available for use by pedestrians and bicyclists whether or not they are using the train. Widening the bridge sidewalk to accommodate both bicycles and pedestrians would also help.

- (c) East of Wiehle (Sub-units I-1, I-2, I-3) the current Comprehensive Plan does not seem to contemplate changes along Sunrise Valley outside of I-1, *i.e.*, once you go a modest distance from Wiehle. This makes sense because of the potential adverse impacts of intense development on stable residential areas. A prudent course may be to propose no change to the Comprehensive Plan with respect to I-2 and I-3, but at some date in the future (*e.g.*, after 2020 or 2025), the Comprehensive Plan for I-2 or I-3 could be reconsidered for future development in these areas. Another possibility would be to permit mixed use development, but not to increase the maximum permitted density. Before such expanded development were to occur at any sites, there should be a good pedestrian/bicycle pathway extending from the transit station to at least the W&OD and, ideally, there should be a new crossing of the toll road (for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians), possibly from South Lakes Drive to Sunset Hills.
- (d) Sub-units H-1 and H-2, which are located west of Wiehle between Sunrise Valley and the toll road, have a good potential for development. Construction of a new bridge from Soapstone across the toll road (per RMAG) would provide more convenient access to Plaza America, though Hunters Woods and South Lakes village centers are nearby as well. Both sub-units have substantial office development currently and the developments are fairly attractive. As discussed above, it will be important to develop an attractive, continuous pedestrian/bicycle pathway to the Wiehle station and, eventually to Reston Parkway and beyond. (i) Sub-unit H-2's proximity to the station makes it a very good candidate for greater density mixed use development with a significant residential component (at least 50%). Given the current quality of development, a significant increase in the FAR or permission for infill building closer to the toll road may be needed to trigger investment. (ii) Sub-unit H-1 lies west of H-2 toward the hotels. It is also a good candidate for development with a significant residential component given its closeness to the Wiehle station. However, further development of H-1 should perhaps await construction of the Soapstone extension and bridge across the toll road.

- (e) The small strip mall across Sunrise Valley near the golf course is the only commercial development on that side of the street between Hunter Mill and Reston Parkway. It looks old and in need of an update. However, a high-rise building would be inappropriate there.

**Strawman for Wiehle Transit Area
Comprehensive Plan Now and As Suggested for Consideration
William Penniman**

Sub-Unit	Current Zoning etc.	Current CP for Transit Oriented Development¹	Recommended CP for Transit Oriented Development²
G-1 (Isaac Newton Square)	0.5 FAR office use or residential up to 30 dwelling units per acre (DUA); Currently - low offices, 2 midrise, surface parking	1.0 FAR. Mixed use: 35-50% GFA residential; office up to 50% GFA; support retail (on ground floor facing pedestrian paths or streets) up to 15% GFA	[1.0?1.5?]FAR. Not counting two existing mid-rise offices: 80% or more residential occupancy; 1 st floor support retail up to 10-15% of GFA facing pedestrian paths or streets; grid of streets with traffic calming plan. 25% publicly accessible open space, which should include a central park or pair of parks, and attractive walkways with trees throughout. ³ Taller buildings toward Sunset Hills with shorter buildings (up to 45 feet) along edges. Preserve treed buffers between the development and the W&OD and golf course, including the trees that now surround the dish antennae. A large development may need more than the lone current vehicle crossing of the W&OD to Sunset Hills. It will need more than one safe (grade-separated?) pedestrian/bicycle crossings of Sunset Hills to the transit station area. A grade-separated crossing by W&OD over or under Wiehle for the benefit of pedestrians and bicycles is needed. Burying power lines would be highly desirable. Consider converting the parking under the existing power lines to dedicated shuttle bus lane or to green space.

¹ Subject to Urban Design Guidelines

² Subject to Urban Design Guidelines, as amended per recommendation of Task Force, and RMAG recommendations.

³ Reston should continue to have trees and publicly accessible open spaces within all developments and close to all residences. Transit oriented development should have publicly accessible parks, plazas, remnant natural areas, and sinews of green with pedestrian paths and bikeways woven among the buildings to the transit station. Developers of neighboring parcels should be able (even encouraged) to combine spaces to create larger open spaces and linked spaces throughout the corridor, provided they are close to the developments. Developers should not be able to buy out of their open-space obligation by contributing land (or money to buy land) at remote locations which will not directly benefit occupants and neighbors of the development.

<p>G-2 (Across Wiehle from Isaac Newton Sq)</p>	<p>0.5 FAR office use or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently- mid-rise offices, fast food. (Apartment development begins to north)</p>	<p>No TOD recommendation. General language about conforming to Urban Design Guidelines, pedestrian walkways to facilitate circulation, providing active recreation on-site or by agreement; permitting one parcel (1775 Wiehle) to be considered for infill office development up to 0.7 FAR</p>	<p>[.5 FAR? 1.0 -1.25?] FAR for area closest to Wiehle. At least 50% residential; up to 50% office; up to 15% first-floor support retail facing streets and walkways. 25% publicly accessible open space, which may include preservation of woodland behind the properties. Need for landscaped buffer between the buildings and W&OD. Internal street(s) with at least one street linked to G-7. As noted elsewhere, a grade-separated crossing by W&OD over or under Wiehle is important. Also need a safe way for pedestrians to cross Sunset Hills from G-2 to G-5. Burying power lines would be highly desirable. Need to protect the Chestnut Grove apartments and be sure that its residents get good pedestrian/bicycle access to the Wiehle station and to Tall Oaks.</p>
<p>G-3 (East of Plaza America)</p>	<p>0.5 FAR office use or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently, offices.</p>	<p>1.0 FAR. Mixed use: 35-50% GFA residential; office up to 50% GFA; support retail (on ground floor facing pedestrian paths or streets) up to 15% GFA</p>	<p>[1.0?1.5?] FAR. Mixed use: 60% residential; office up to 40%; retail (on ground floor facing pedestrian paths or streets) up to 20% GFA. Network of connected streets with at least two streets paralleling the toll road and a “main” street with wide sidewalks connected to G-4 and D-7 and to smaller streets to Sunset Hills. The “main” street should be lined with trees and retail and linked to at least a couple of parks/plazas to draw people from the station toward Plaza America. Need continuation of attractive pedestrian/bicycle paths linked to Wiehle station and neighboring sub-units. Taller buildings should be located closer to the toll road than to Sunset Hills. There should be a 25% publicly accessible open space requirement, possibly linked to open spaces in neighboring units. Plaza America should be allowed to redevelop to include residential and office space in addition to retail that is similar to what it currently has, <i>provided</i> that Plaza America is opened to the east to link to the streets from the station and</p>

			to a pedestrian/bicycle pathway from the transit station (and beyond). Building heights should probably not exceed buildings currently on west side of Plaza America,
G-4 (includes Comstock)	0.5 FAR office use or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently, multiple offices and parcels, some condo-ownership.	2.5 FAR, declining to 1.5 FAR closer to Sunset Hills, 40-75% residential; a combination of office, hotel and retail may comprise 25%-50% with office up to 40%. Consolidation encouraged; direct pedestrian access to station, preferably grade-separated; 140 foot max building height; retail facing pedestrian walks, drives; Transportation Demand Mgmt (TDM); 2 nd point of access to Sunset Hills. Comstock proposal pending.	[Continue current FAR recommendation?] The tallest buildings and greatest densities should be allowed at and perhaps immediately adjacent to the Comstock site. Mixed use: at least 50% residential; office up to 40%; retail (on ground floor facing pedestrian paths or streets) up to 20%; attractive pedestrian/bicycle paths linked to Wiehle station and neighboring sub-units; buffer between buildings and Sunset Hills; 25% open space. Needs a continuation of internal streets with wide sidewalks linked to G-3 and to G-5 with a safe way for pedestrians to cross Wiehle. At least one of those streets should have ground floor retail.
G-5(Across Wiehle from G-4)	0.5 FAR office use or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently office buildings.	1.5 FAR, 40-75% residential; a combination of office, hotel and retail may comprise 25%-60% with office up to 40% of total and retail on ground level facing pedestrian paths or drives. Both parcels should be consolidated; bridge or tunnel across Wiehle; TDM plan;	[1.5? FAR.] Residential of at least 50%; office/hotel/retail up to 50%; first-floor retail facing streets and sidewalks up to 15%. Offer increased FAR if higher educational institution or cultural institution is a major, long-term tenant of the project. 25% publicly accessible open space. Network of connected streets, including a central street with wide sidewalks extending from Wiehle through G-6 to Sunset Hills, and linking G-5 to a corresponding street in G-4. Principal street through G-5 should have ground floor retail. Need a grade-separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Wiehle to G-4 and transit station and a safe way to cross Sunset Hills to G-2 area.
G-6 (East of G-5)	0.5 FAR office use or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently, office buildings.	Mixed use up to 1.0 FAR, 35-50% residential; up to 50% office/hotel; retail up to 15% to located on ground level facing pedestrian paths, drives.	Mixed use [up to 1.0? FAR], at least 50% residential; office/hotel up to 50%; retail up to 15%. Offer increased FAR if higher educational institution is a major, long-term tenant of the project. Continue streets from G-5.
G-7 (Both)	Mixed office,	Complex mix. No overall TOD	Revisit after 2020 or 2025, but grant a

sides of Sunset Hills east of G-2,G-6	industrial, residential	plan; a few parcel-specific incentives suggested.	density bonus sooner if a campus is built for a higher educational institution, it is linked to the transit station by interconnected streets, attractive pathways, and a shuttle bus, and there is 25% publicly accessible open space.
H-2 (Bet. Sunrise Valley and toll road closest to Wiehle station)	0.5 FAR office or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently, mid-rise office buildings with large parking lots and a garage.	1.25 FAR declining to .5 FAR closer to Sunrise Valley, 40-65% residential; 35%-60% office/hotel/support retail; 100' height closest to toll road; 35' height closest to Sunrise Valley; substantial consolidation should be achieved; direct pedestrian access to Wiehle station; quality site layout with consolidated vehicular access, parking structures that do not front on pedestrian areas, shared parking; TDM plan.	[Should FAR be higher than 1.25 next to station?] Mix of uses should include at least 50% residential, and, at most, 15% first floor retail. Taller buildings and offices should be closer to toll road, with lower residential buildings closer to Sunrise Valley. 25% publicly accessible open space. Treed buffer of at least 100 feet along Sunrise Valley. Need network of connected streets. Need excellent pedestrian and bicycle access to the transit station. ⁴ An existing parking structure may present interfere with maximizing the value of the transit station.
H-1 (Bet. Sunrise Valley and toll road immed. West of H-2)	0.35 FAR office or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently, low or mid-rise office buildings.	0.75 FAR, 35-50% residential, up to 50% office and support retail up to 15%	[FAR of .75? 1.0? keep at .5 FAR until Soapstone bridge built or 2020/2025?]. Mixed use with at least 50% residential, office up to 40% and first floor retail up to 15%. Need network of connected streets linked to H-2, possibly with one linking buses from Wiehle to transit station. Need excellent pedestrian and bicycle access to the transit station (per footnote 4). 25% publicly accessible open space. Need to fulfill RMAG's recommendation for Soapstone extension and bridge, which should be constructed to include a wide pedestrian/bicycle pathway. Need a treed buffer of 100' or more along Sunrise Valley.
I-1 (immed. East of Wiehle bet. Sunrise Valley and	0.35 FAR office or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently	0.75 FAR, 35-50% residential, up to 50% office with support retail up to 15%. Needs pedestrian walkways throughout and connecting to	[.75? 1.0 near toll road and .5 near Sunrise Valley?] FAR. Residential at least 50%; office up to 50%; support retail up to 15%. If additional development occurs, there should be

⁴ Must include a continuous pedestrian/bicycle path between Sunrise Valley and the toll road, extending among the buildings from Hunter Mills to Reston Parkway (or, better, Herndon-Monroe), possibly with a wide, grade-separated passage under Wiehle. This enhanced access to the Wiehle transit station will benefit residents, office workers, and businesses.

toll road)	developed as low, mid-rise offices.	walkways/trails in adjacent units.	additional roads and wide sidewalks. Need excellent pedestrian and bicycle access to the transit station (per footnote 4). 25% publicly accessible open space. Density and building heights greatest close to toll road, with much lower buildings closer to Sunrise Valley. 100-150-foot green buffer between development and Sunrise Valley.
I-2 (Bet. Sunrise Valley and toll road and two ends of Upper Lake Dr.)	0.35 FAR office or residential up to 30 DUA. Currently developed as low, mid-rise offices.	No change proposed	–Leave FAR as is [?] or raise to .5 FAR[?] , but permit mixed use, including at least 50% residential in connection with new buildings. Density may be revisited after 2020 or 2025. Under either option, need excellent pedestrian and bicycle access to the transit station (per footnote 4). Preserve existing buffer between buildings and Sunrise Valley with ultimate goal of 100-150-foot green buffer in the event of new construction.
I-3 (Bet. Sunrise Valley and toll road east of Upper Lake and Sunrise Valley	0.35 FAR. Currently almost fully developed as office use.	No change proposed	Leave density as is for now. Density and issue of mixed use may be revisited after 2020 if TOD area closer to station is substantially built out, and if a new crossing of the toll road is built (possibly connecting to South Lakes Drive). Need excellent pedestrian and bicycle access to the transit station (per footnote 4). Preserve existing buffer between buildings and Sunrise Valley with ultimate goal of 150-foot green buffer.