

Vision for Herndon Monroe Metro Station Area

Prepared for
The Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force

By:

The Residence, Urban Design and Livability Work Group
Reston 2020 Committee
Reston Citizens Association

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Vision of Herndon Monroe Metro Station Area

The Herndon-Monroe station area provides a unique configuration of landmarks which will enable the transit-oriented community constructed there to achieve a complete integration of the community and the natural world. The Sunrise Valley Nature Park augmented with native plantings of wildflowers and flowering shrubs, with a new gazebo built on the site of the boardwalk to be used for bird watching, nature classes and weddings, well-designed pathways that connect the area to Polo Fields and to new TOD developments to the east and west, will create a place where Restonians can live graceful lives.

A small, green residential TOD village will replace the garage of the current park and ride. The village will house approximately 1,750 or more residents and will provide restaurants and support retail for those residents, for those using the station, and for Polo Fields neighbors. As planned for Comstock Wiehle, the parking will be underground. With the Dulles Toll Road on the north and with a southern exposure, design of sun-washed plazas will be possible. Plantings in the plazas and surrounding open spaces will feature native plants to celebrate the flora of Virginia and will reinforce the environmental focus at Herndon Monroe.

A Bridge City connecting Reston and Herndon could be built with air rights over the Dulles Toll Road and might include commercial, retail, residential units and be connected north and south with pedestrian and vehicular roadways into Herndon. The Bridge City will abound with parkland and public plazas.

The storm water management swale and pond east of the station will be re-configured, to the extent possible, to provide outdoor recreation for residents at the TOD village and other nearby neighbors.

The station area itself will be connected with new access roads from Monroe Street and Fairfax County Parkway that run parallel and contiguous to the Dulles Toll Road. Several different schemes to minimize traffic through the Sunrise Valley Drive station entrance have been proposed. Please see attached maps by Guy Rando and Terry Maynard (from Transportation Work Group Paper). Herndon Monroe will be a true pedestrian community.

Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, Reston Association, and the Town of Herndon will encourage environmental industries to move into the area. The new residents in the green village of Herndon-Monroe will be able to get to work using a system of connected pathways and a new trolley system north of the Dulles Toll Road.



Gazebo designed by Guy Rando at Occoquan Regional Park. Suggested addition to boardwalk at Sunrise Valley wetlands for nature classes.

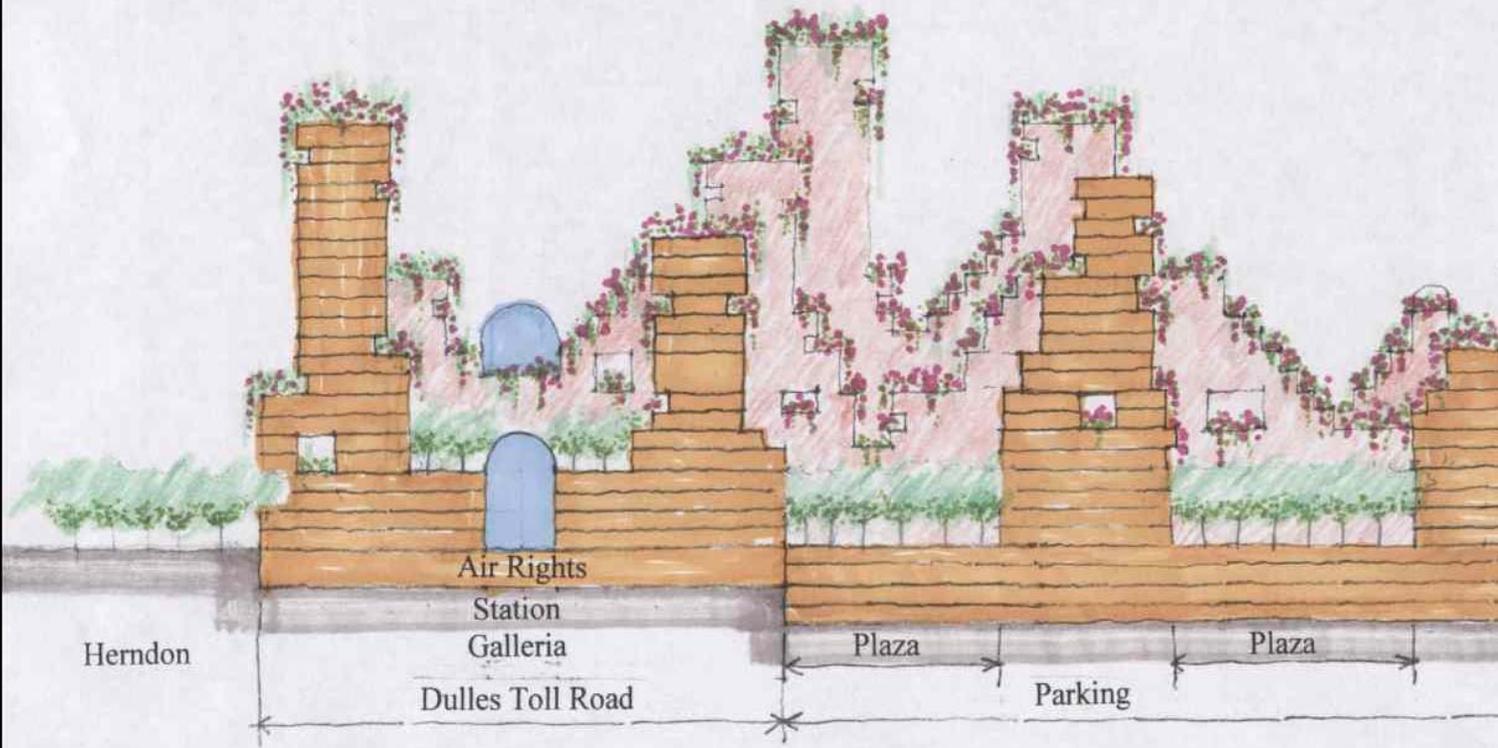


Woodland garden as example of augmented plantings at the wetlands with site-appropriate native flowering plants.

- Sunrise Valley Nature Park wetlands expanded to include existing woodland to the north.
- Stormwater swale conversion to recreation.
- New access roads, in and out with new traffic lights.
- Wooded buffer with pathway.

- Sunrise Valley only for pedestrians and bicycles.
- Grade-separated access to Fairfax County and Fairfax County.
- Air rights with...

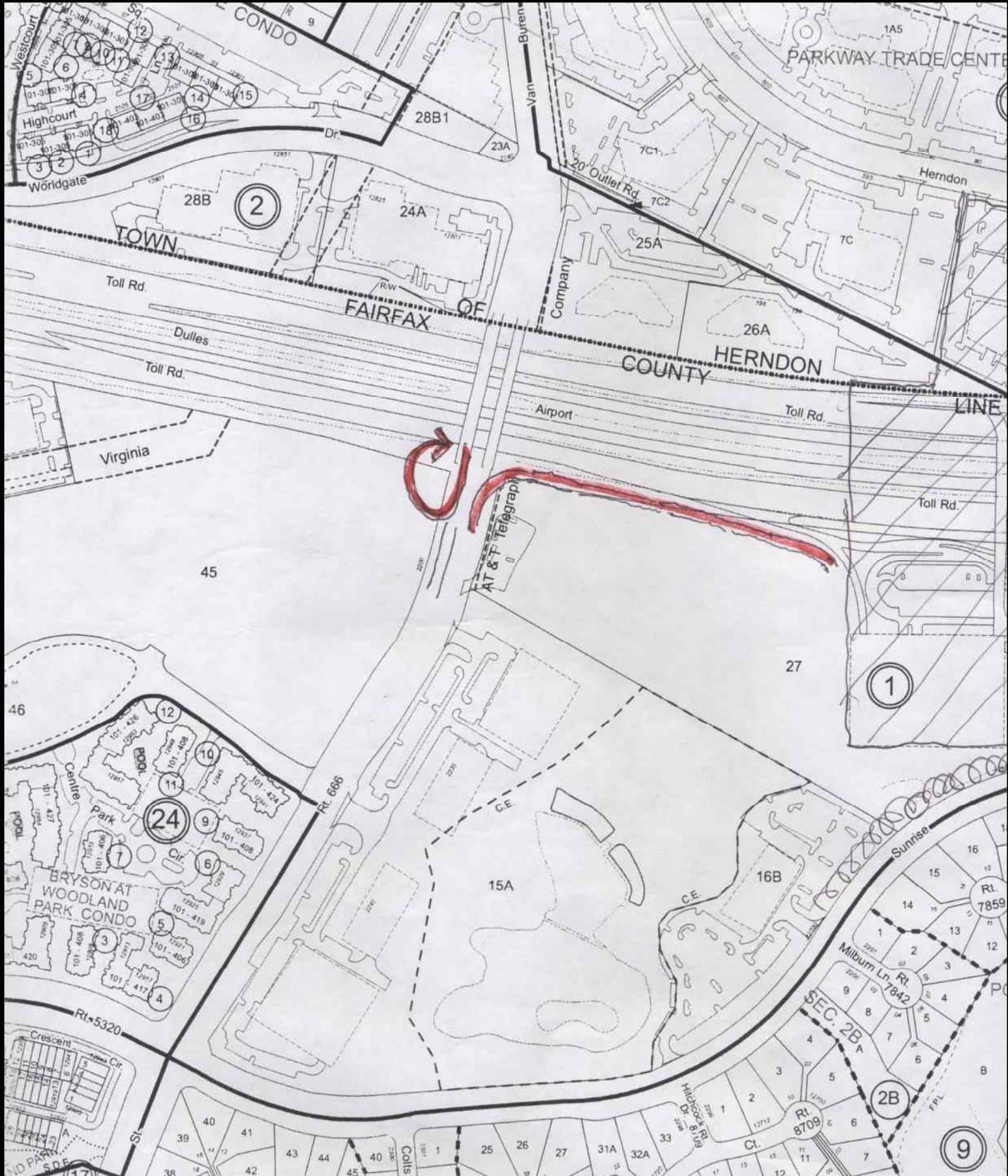


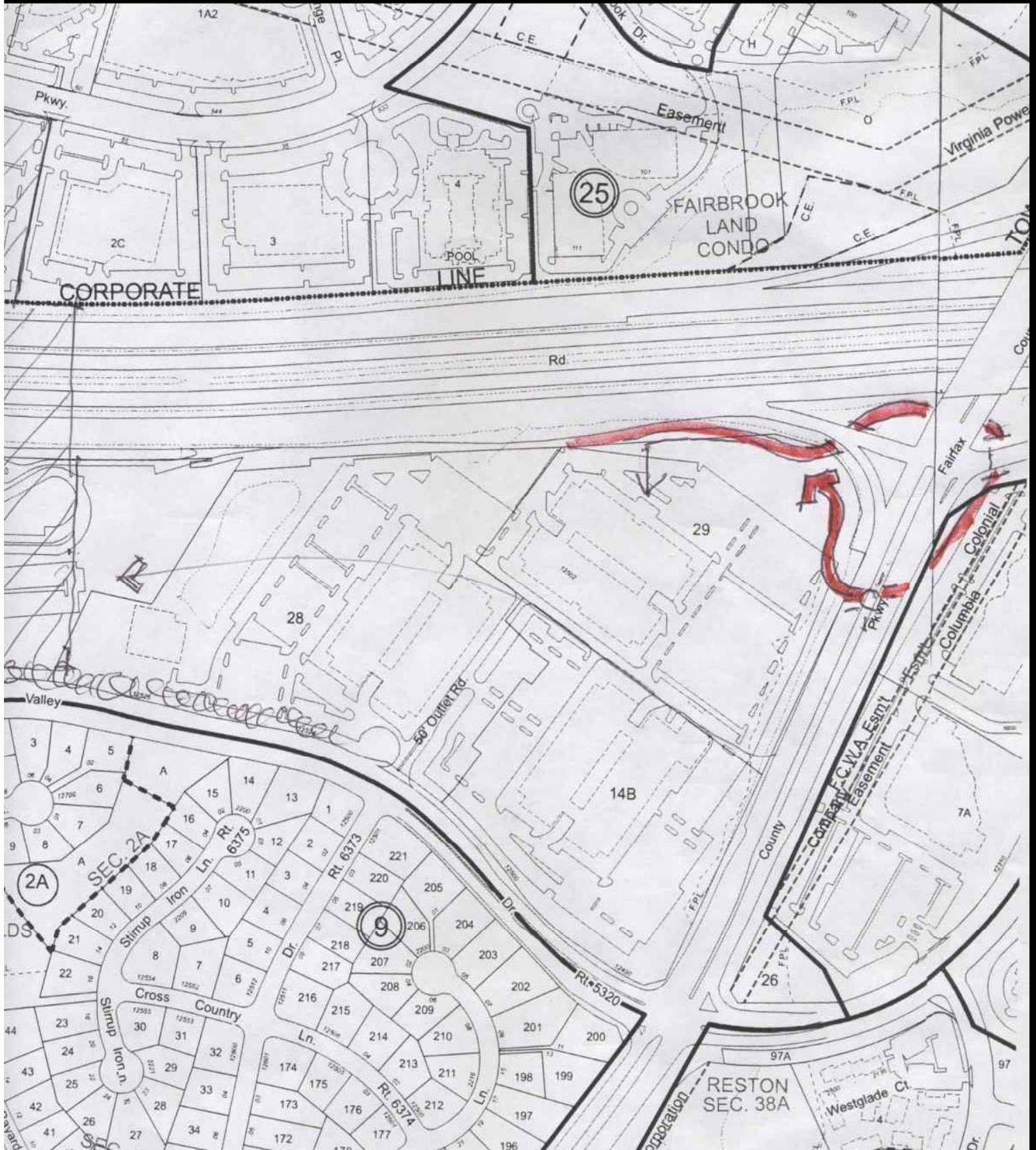


Diagrammatic Section
for Herndon-Monroe



Interchange





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

A. General Thoughts and Goals

1. **Central Goals**. The main objectives for development near the Herndon-Monroe 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 natural 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%) in every sub-unit and has enough human traffic to be safe, to convey a sense of community, and to support a busy Metro stop (with as little automobile traffic as possible);
 - (e) preserves and exploits the unique asset this area has in the Sunrise Valley Nature Park (the wetlands) as well as the other habitats;
 - (f) has convenient, safe interconnectivity by foot, bicycle and public transportation—both internally and to Herndon and Reston Town Center—so that people can comfortably move within, to and from the area without using cars;
 - (g) does not negatively impact the neighboring established residential community (Polo Fields);
 - (h) 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
 - (i) 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 benefit the community. Mixed use and higher densities are not matters of right under current zoning. 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 should be strongly encouraged with the potential for more generous rezoning. Likewise, density credits should be considered as incentives for developers who attract other employers and otherwise benefit the community.

3. Timing. This is a long-term exercise. Given the current economy, the number of unfilled 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 Metro station. However, encouraging early development nearest the transit station should not foreclose other beneficial development within a half-mile radius of the 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. Timing of development should be explored further.

[Relevant *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 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 Fairfax County Parkway with shorter buildings closer to Sunrise Valley Drive and Monroe Street. The buildings should be such that the wetlands receives sufficient direct sunlight and is visible from Monroe and Sunrise Valley Drive. Building lights and other developmental characteristics should protect the neighboring community from negative impacts, such as light, sound, or visual pollutants.

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. Consequently, the revised Comprehensive Plan should set relatively high residential minimums (at least 50% GFA) throughout the TOD area though the residential component may vary depending on the sub-unit's distance from the stations or other factors. To achieve a balance between jobs and residences, the GFA of residences should be two times that of offices¹.

- (b) **Retail.** The Herndon-Monroe 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 self-image, it would be desirable to encourage local restaurants, not chains, and to encourage shops that have broader appeal than Gucci-type stores. "Big Box" stores, such as Best Buy and Office Depot, belong in the Town Center area, not here. However, the binary distinction between "support" and "destination" retail is misleading and potentially 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 Herndon-Monroe 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 his point deserves consideration, strict adherence to such a view could defeat vital transit-oriented development near the Herndon-Monroe station, whose existence and whose growing population were not contemplated when the original village centers were laid out.

People may be willing to walk to the grocery store 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. Consequently, while the Harris-Teeter store may satisfy near-term needs for a grocery store and pharmacy to serve new residents near the Herndon-Monroe transit station, attractive retail, including restaurants and shops, will be needed closer to the residences in order to make the area work. Ultimately, even a new grocery store may be justified by a growing population.

6. General vision. It may not be possible to dictate the character of the Herndon-Monroe TOD, but the community may benefit from promoting a unique character for development in the area. The idea of encouraging development that emphasizes the environment has considerable support. It would also be appropriate to try to attract

¹ 800 sq.ft. per residence divided by the product of 1.6 office workers per residence and 250 sq.ft per office worker.

professionals (including professional associations) and high-tech businesses related to the environment, which would fit well with the theme of the station. This station, should, however, provide mostly residential development, to balance the mostly commercial development at the other stations in Reston and at Tysons Corner.

To this end, the county and community should attempt to attract one or more significant energy-conservation and renewable-energy corporations and associations to the Herndon-Monroe area. Density bonuses could be offered to attract developments that are anchored by substantial environmentally-friendly institutions. A nature center would surely benefit the area.

7. Traffic. Traffic must be addressed from the beginning. Both government funds and proffers will be needed. The traffic problems will begin with construction near Herndon-Monroe; get worse when the Herndon-Monroe station and related parking open; and get worse still when new buildings are developed. 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 Herndon-Monroe transit area. Vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic will all need attention. To aid the flow of traffic, left turns should be minimized.

There must be a Station Access Road that is parallel to and alongside the toll road that permits shuttles, buses, automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians to access the station so that use of Sunrise Valley Drive is minimized, thereby minimizing the impact on the Polo Fields community. Several schemes for achieving this minimization are illustrated below. All are designed so additional left turns are not required. A scheme with one-way traffic accomplishes the goal at minimum cost, having one-way into the station in the morning and one-way out of the station in the evening, with the Sunrise Valley gateway having an opposite one-way system.

The parking lot at Herndon-Monroe should retain its current capacity of 1750 automobiles if the agreement with the Federal government can be renegotiated from the planned 3500 on the basis that the additional development will provide the other 1750 riders. Additionally, the parking lot planned for the Herndon-Monroe station should be partially reprogrammed from Metro to serving on-site and nearby buildings once the Route 28 station is completed.

On the other hand, consistent with practices elsewhere, use of the transit parking lot at Herndon-Monroe 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 Herndon-Monroe transit station.

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. The grids of streets should be designed primarily to serve the pedestrians and bicyclists, but also to provide connections to larger arteries,

such as Monroe, Fairfax County Parkway and Sunrise Valley. Creating dedicated bicycle pathways is critical.

The traffic situation in the at the Southside of the Herndon Monroe station will be made worse if the town of Herndon does not establish effective kiss and ride and bus access to the station on the North side. At present, the town of Herndon has not established a clear policy regarding the station although it does have a consultancy contract under way. It is important for the Task Force, the Reston community, Fairfax County and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to closely monitor developments on the Herndon side. If necessary, these groups should bring pressure to bear on the town of Herndon to establish an effective policy on metro access.

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 communities. There needs to be as many ways as possible for pedestrians and bicycles to cross the toll road. The crossing at the station should serve this purpose.
- (b) Developing "air rights" over the toll road could provide urban space as well as interconnectivity. Perhaps the initial attempts to use "air rights" should involve wide, pedestrian/bicycle crossings of the toll road with landscaping that creates a park-like feel.

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 Fairfax County Parkway to Centreville Road, with a connection to the W&OD path east of Fairfax County Parkway, connecting to the bicycle trail along the Fairfax County Parkway. The trail should be set back from traffic and 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 Herndon-Monroe Metro station and the shops/restaurants to be developed in that area.
- (b) 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. 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. They should be discounted when considering a developer's proposals to meet open-space needs.

- (c) 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 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.
- (d) Cultural. Community support has been expressed for making the Herndon-Monroe TOD area a nature center. This idea 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 remains to be seen.

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 generally integral parts of clusters and neighborhoods. The RCIG has few remaining natural areas, but it has been developed with many trees and much landscaping. Transit oriented development must continue this pattern: 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 land funds might be considered if an acceptable, adequately funded project has been defined, but 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 immediately benefit the occupants of the developments. A minimum percentage of publicly accessible open space (e.g., 25%) should be considered as an aggregate goal. Open spaces can take many forms. Here are a few thoughts:

- (a) Apart perhaps from the few remaining natural areas in the RCIG, open spaces need to be designed so they are actually used.
- (b) Attractive pedestrian and bicycle paths that are bordered by trees, are separated from traffic, and run the length of the RCIG provide useful open space.
- (c) Plazas and parks should be user-friendly. 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 and low-key facilities where children and adults can sit or play.
- (d) Urban open spaces, including plazas, will be more likely to attract people if they have places to sit and are near restaurants with outdoor seating or carryout to available tables, coffee houses, kiosks, and other amenities.
- (e) 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.

- (f) Existing trees, streams and wetlands located in or adjacent to the RCIG should be protected.
- (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.

The Sunrise Valley Nature Park is a distinct asset in the area and should be protected and improved. These wetlands are a Reston wide asset since it attracts unique wildlife. There are a variety of habitats on this site. There is a meadow, an upland woods, the wetland, a briar shrub border and a thicket. Although small, it still provides homes to numerous species of wildlife--including the 122 bird species that have been seen here. It is regularly visited by school and wildlife oriented groups as well as individual Reston residents. It provides distinctive open space, around which could be grouped residential developments.

The area, which should be under the control of RA, could be improved with better maintenance and limited improvements. It could have features such as an additional board walk, a circumferential trail and a central gazebo. It does not need extensive parking since surrounding parking area could be utilized but it could profit from better access from Sunrise Valley.

11. Nearby neighborhoods must be protected. Development near the Herndon-Monroe transit station must not harm established residential areas. (a) A bright line should be drawn along Sunrise Valley from Fairfax County Parkway to Centreville Road clearly ensuring the communities that there will not be commercial buildings and or greater residential development on the south side of Sunrise Valley. A buffer zone on the north side of Sunrise Valley Drive will be needed to shield the single-family neighborhood (Polo Fields) from the high-density development on the north side. (b) Traffic and parking management steps (such as speed humps and parking permits) may be needed in neighborhoods on the south side of Sunrise Valley. (c) Some or all of the neighborhoods should get street lighting as a safety measure. (d) Natural sound barriers should be developed around these communities to protect them from the resulting increase in traffic-related noise.

12. Electric and phone lines should be buried throughout the transit area.

B. Comments on Specific Sub-Units in the Herndon-Monroe TOD Area (Also see attached table.)

1. West of Monroe Street

- a. Woodland Park West (Sub-unit A-1) is a prime location for a mixed-use village. There are no TOD recommendations in the current CP. It measures approximately ¼ mile by one mile, extending a little over one mile from the transit station; therefore, a shuttle bus, perhaps privately owned, will be needed to transport people along the Station Access Road to and from the station. Although a grid of streets may not be helpful, several streets should link Sunrise

Valley Drive to the Station Access Road. The walk and bicycle paths along the access road would be used primarily by those living closer to the station. This sub-unit would be suitable for a grocery store and other retail stores as well as office buildings. The architecture should blend with the existing buildings in Sub-unit B and the streets to the Station Access Road should have continuations in Sub-unit B.

The revised Comprehensive Plan should call for approximately 25% open space, 20% right of way, and the remaining 55% having 15% of the sub-unit's GFA as retail. The 85% GFA remaining should provide a balance between jobs and residences: 28% office and 57% residential. The balance, and the need for retail, should include Sub-units A-2 and B. A large, central park (or pair of parks) should be included, with attractive pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout and linked to the Station Access Road. If restaurants and other retail are developed next to the transit station, there may be less need for such facilities in this residential neighborhood, but that should be studied.

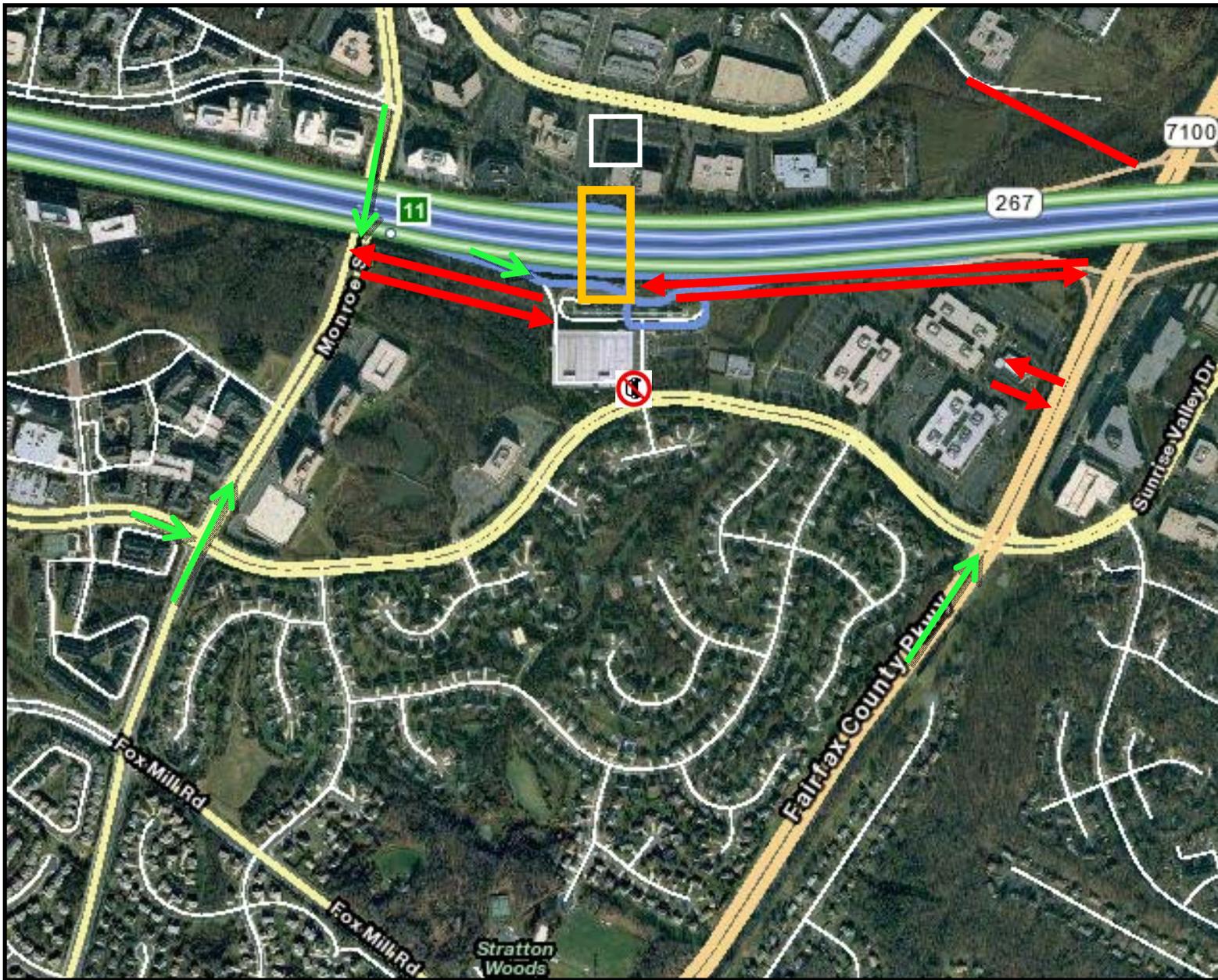
- b. Woodland Park East (Sub-unit A-2), being less than ½ mile from the station and measuring less than ¼ mile by ¼ mile, is ideal for residential development. The current Comprehensive Plan calls for approximately 50% residential and 50% retail; however, the balance between office and residential, and the need for retail, should use the 28%, 57%, and 15% cited above in conjunction with Sub-units A-1 and B. The 25% open space should retain much of the existing trees. A walkway along Monroe Street should be retained. Some of this land will be needed to provide for the Station Access Road under the Monroe Street bridge.
- c. Woodland Park South (Sub-unit B), which is between ½ and one mile from the station, is almost completely developed as a low-density urban area. Its north-south streets should be made more grid-like in connecting to Sub-unit A-1. Walkways and bicycle paths are needed to people in Sub-unit A-1 can more directly access the retail stores in this unit.

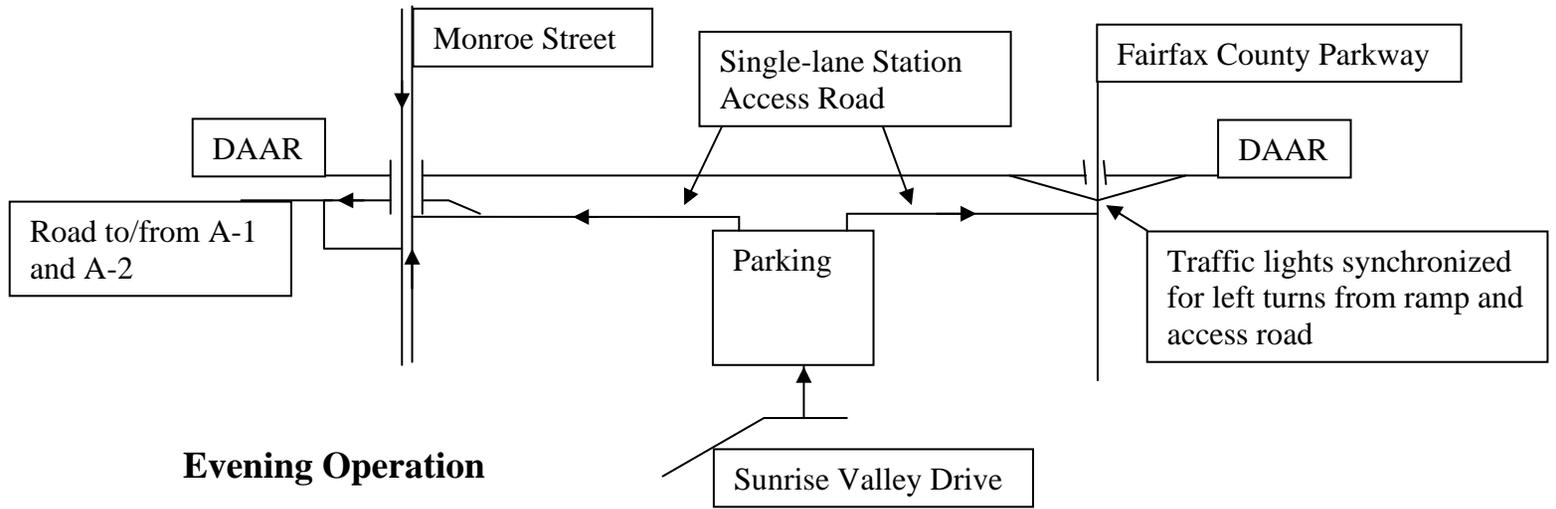
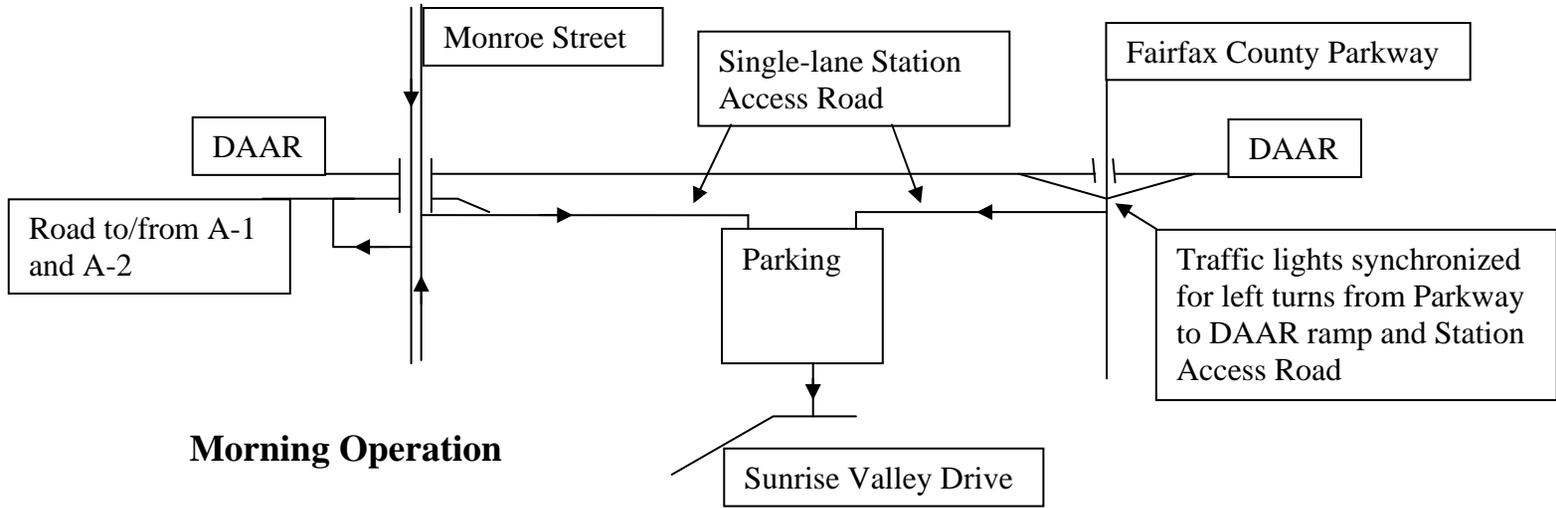
2. East of Monroe Street

- a. Reston Arboretum South (Sub-unit C-1) measures ¼ mile by ¼ mile and is within ½ mile of the station at its farthest point. The natural area, the wetlands, should be protected and enhanced with perimeter walkways and restful observation areas. The current Comprehensive Plan calls for 100% office development in the other areas, with a FAR of 0.5. This FAR should be retained, because residential areas are across the bordering roads of Monroe Street and Sunrise Valley Drive.
- b. County Land (Sub-unit C-2) measures 1/8 mile by 3/8 mile and encompasses the 1750-space parking garage. The other parts of this sub-unit should be used for the Station Access Road.
- c. Sprint West (Sub-unit C-3) measures ¼ mile by 1/8 mile and is within ¼ mile of the station – ideal for residential development. The current Comprehensive Plan

calls for 1.5 FAR near station with 55% to 65% residential and 35% to 45% office and retail. Because C-1 will remain primarily office and access to C-3 requires the use of the semi-residential Sunrise Valley Drive, this sub-unit (C-3) should not include office space but rather residential with, perhaps, some convenience retail stores along the Station Access Road. Open space should occupy 25% of the land area. Building heights and the FAR should be less along Sunrise Valley Drive than elsewhere in this sub-unit.

- d. Sprint East (Sub-unit C-4) measures $\frac{1}{4}$ mile by $\frac{1}{8}$ mile and is within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the station, which, like Sub-unit C3, is ideal for residential development. Some of this land may be needed to provide for the Station Access Road from the Fairfax County Parkway, depending on which scheme is selected for this Road. Possible schemes are illustrated in the following diagrams. No through streets are needed in this Sub-unit; however, walkways and bicycle paths will be required to connect to similar paths along the Station Access Road. The current Comprehensive Plan calls for 1.5 FAR near station with 55% to 65% residential and 35% to 45% office and retail; however, this sub-unit (C-4) should not include office space but rather residential with, perhaps, some convenience retail stores along the Station Access Road. Open space should occupy 25% of the land area. Building heights and the FAR should be less along Sunrise Valley Drive than elsewhere in this subunit.





Low-Cost Design (no fly-overs)

**Herndon-Monroe Transit Area
Comprehensive Plan Now and As Recommended for the Future**

Sub-Unit	Current Zoning, Use	Current CP for Transit Oriented Development	Recommended CP for Transit Oriented Development
A-1 (Woodland Park – west of Monroe)	PDC: Primarily 4-story apartments	0.7 FAR. Mixed use: 33% residential; open space concentrated into park space; 0.4 FAR to 0.92 closest to station, except 2.4 for small section.	0.7 FAR mixed use. 33% residential GFA. Access including roadway next to DAAR ¹ . Open space ² .
A-2 (Woodland Park east, west corner of Monroe and DAAR)	Vacant land	0.7 FAR. Mixed use.	1.5 FAR in 12 acres near Monroe St; 1.0 elsewhere. Mixed use. 40% to 60% residential; 50% to 60% retail facing walkways, hotel, office; 0% publicly accessible open space. Need for landscaped buffer between the buildings and DAAR. Pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout area.
B (Woodland Park south of Sunrise Valley, west of Monroe)	PDH-12 and PDH-30	12 to 30 du/acre	0.5 FAR; mixed use; 33% high-quality residential. Active recreational facilities, walkway connectivity.
C-1 (Arboretum, east of Monroe, at Sunrise Valley and Monroe)	PDC; four office buildings	0.27 to 0.45 FAR; office and retail	0.5 FAR; office use only
C-2 (Wetlands and station parking)	I-4; 1700 parking-space garage; station	Retail, child care	Government and institutional; 1750 to 3500 parking spaces. Screening from local residential area. Measures needed to reduce traffic on Sunrise Valley
C-3 (Sprint west, adjacent to station on east)	I-4; 0.7 FAR; one 1-story office building	0.29 FAR; 70% Office and 15% retail; 100 ft height limit near DAAR, 35 ft elsewhere	1.5 FAR near station, 55% to 65% residential; 35% to 45% office and retail. Access including roadway next to DAAR ¹ . Open space ² . 150 ft height limit near DAAR.
C-4 (Sprint east, at Fairfax County Parkway)	I-4; 0.7 FAR; two 2-story office buildings	0.34 to 0.5 FAR	1.0 FAR; 35% to 50% residential, less than 50% office; 15% retail. Access including roadway next to DAAR ¹ . Open space ² .

¹ Grid of streets with traffic calming plan. Connector road to Metro station next to and parallel to DAAR, under existing bridge(s), including pedestrian/bicycle lane with landscaped buffer from DAAR. Pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout area.

² 25% publicly accessible open space, including a central park or pair of parks, and attractive walkways with trees throughout.

**Sunrise Valley Nature Park:
A suburban wetlands park**

Prepared for
The Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force

By:
The Environmental Work Group
Reston 2020 Committee
Reston Citizens Association

June 1, 2010

Environmental Work Group
Diane Blust, Chair & Principle Author
CJ Basik
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Fran Lovaas
John Lovaas

Sunrise Valley Nature Park: A suburban wetlands park

Sunrise Valley Nature Park (SVNP) is a 15.75 acre privately owned wetlands located within ½ mile from the future Herndon-Monroe metro station in the northeast quadrant of the Sunrise Valley Drive/Monroe Street intersection, bordered by Sunrise Valley Drive, County land, the Herndon Monroe Park and Ride and office buildings fronting onto Monroe Street. In view of the unique environmental and ecological value of this park, the updated Comprehensive Plan should include language which requires dedication of this property to Reston Association for maintenance and preservation. Additionally, development around this ecologically important site should adhere to LEED for Neighborhood Development standards and guidelines for wetland areas.

History:

SVNP was developed as offsite mitigation for all remaining parcels of land in Reston in 1993. The site consists of approximately 3.3 acres of created wetlands, a restored farm pond, natural wetlands and natural upland buffers. It is an environmentally and ecologically significant site, fulfilling the environmental functions of water purification and filtration, some storm-water management and sediment reduction. SVNP is a sanctuary for plants and animals found only in this type of uncommon habitat. The site is home to a myriad of wildlife ranging from small insects to medium to large mammals; it supports a rich food web providing sustenance for these inhabitants, including migratory birds. It is, perhaps most significantly, host to 122 bird species, some permanent residents, others migratory species. At least 50% of the site's wetlands are shallow marshes containing plant and animal species found nowhere else in this part of the County. Although there are several ponds in the Reston/Herndon area, this is the only significant marsh. The only other comparable site in the County is Huntley Meadows Park, some 30 miles away.

SVNP is protected by a conservation covenant managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Initial plans to turn this property over to Reston Association (RA) were never realized; the property has changed hands several times since it was developed as a wetland nature park. Reston Association, which uses the park as an outdoor classroom for nature programs, has expressed an interest in this property and making a long term maintenance commitment to keep this asset in a natural state.

Economic value:

SVNP holds a good deal of economic value in its current state, particularly if one views it as a natural park for future residents of the Herndon-Monroe metro station area. SVNP, if retained in a largely natural state, can fulfill the following functions:

- a. Recreation area for residents (both as a destination and as a pass through en route to the metro station – “feel the stress of work melt away as you stroll home through a forested upland buffer surrounding a unique wetland park”
- b. A buffer between the established Polo Fields neighborhood and more dense development to the north of Sunrise Valley Drive and west of Monroe Street
- c. Outdoor classroom for RA, Osher Life Long Learning Institute at GMU, local schools and the Fairfax County Park Authority
- d. Filtration of storm-water runoff (which will become increasingly important with increased development in the area)
- e. Water purification and sediment removal
- f. Habitat for numerous species of insects, small and large mammals and birds – both residents and migrants

It is indisputable that access to natural areas and parklands increases the value of residential property.

Current Comprehensive Plan Treatment of Environmentally Sensitive Areas:

The current Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan for the Upper Potomac region provides guidance for planners dealing with SVNP; this guidance can be found in the environmental and parks/recreation sections of the comprehensive plan.

The environmental section of the Upper Potomac plan calls for the implementation of County Environmental Quality Corridor (EQC) policy to ...”protect steep slopes, problem soil areas and wetlands.” This section goes on to recognize the ecological and water quality benefits of large undeveloped parcels. The Environmental section of the overall Comprehensive Plan discusses the desirability of dedicating EQC parcels to the Fairfax County Park Authority where such dedication is in the public interest. Although County staff has decided that SVNP does not meet the requirements for designation as an Environmental Quality Corridor, it is an environmentally significant area worthy of continued protection.

The parks and recreation section of the Upper Potomac plan points out the sensitive nature of lands within the nearby Sugarland Run Stream Valley system and goes on to state: “A variety of resource protection mechanisms, including acquisition of conservation/open space, scenic, and historic preservation easements, land dedication and purchase by the County should be utilized to protect identified resources not currently in public ownership. The intrusion of non-recreational development should be restricted and the impacts of offsite development should be mitigated.” Although SVNP

is not part of the Sugarland Run Stream Valley System, it is an ecologically sensitive area within UP 5 and should be afforded the same protections as other environmentally sensitive lands in UP 5. Indeed, if preserved and enhanced by modest improvements, such as an educational gazebo or pavilion, additional benches and improved pathways, SVNP would remain a significant natural resource for the Herndon-Monroe station area, Reston and other neighboring communities, similar to Huntley Meadows Park.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

The Reston community places a high value on its open spaces and natural areas, as evidenced by citizens' use of these areas for passive recreation and activities such as bird watching and environmental education. Citizen participation in the variety of nature programs offered by RA and community involvement in the preservation and improvement of the Walker Nature Center and the new Nature House are further evidence of Reston's desire for these kinds of areas. Given the community interest in natural areas and the economic value of SVNP in its current state, we urge the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force to place the following language in the comprehensive plan which specifically addresses this ecologically significant area by recommending dedication of the area covered by the conservation covenant to Reston Association for preservation and maintenance as a community-wide natural recreation and educational park:

Sub-unit C-1 (part of Herndon-Monroe Transit Station Area)

Sub-unit C-1 is located in the southeast quadrant of the DAAR and Monroe Street. The land unit includes office uses and the Sunrise Valley Park Wildlife Habitat and Nature Preserve. It is planned for office use up to .50 FAR.

In view of the unique environmental and ecological value of the Sunrise Valley Nature Preserve, this 15.75 acre park, which is currently covered by a conservation covenant with the Army Corps of Engineers, should be dedicated to the Reston Association to be preserved and maintained in perpetuity as a community natural recreation and educational park. Pedestrian access to the park should be improved by maintaining the current network of paths and adding a surface pathway and/or boardwalk just to the north of the wetlands in the area of the boundary between sub-unit C-1 and sub-unit C-2, thus permitting easy pedestrian and bicycle access from Monroe Street to the future Herndon-Monroe Metro Station area.

Appendix 1

LEED for Neighborhood Development

In order to protect the Sunrise Valley Nature Park from the impact of surrounding TOD, we suggest the LEED for Neighborhood Development guidelines be used for development at the Herndon-Monroe Metro Station. Specifically, program guidelines pertaining to wetlands should be followed by developers.

See attachment: Excerpt from the LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System, Copyright © 2009 by the U.S. Green Building Council, Inc. All rights reserved, pages 12-13.

SLL Prerequisite 3: Wetland and Water Body Conservation

Required

Intent

To preserve water quality, natural hydrology, habitat, and biodiversity through conservation of *wetlands* and *water bodies*.

Requirements

Limit development effects on wetlands, water bodies, and surrounding buffer land according to the requirements below.

OPTION 1. Sites with No Wetlands, Water Bodies, Land within 50 Feet of Wetlands, or Land within 100 Feet of Water Bodies

Locate the *project* on a site that includes no wetlands, no water bodies, no land within 50 feet of wetlands, and no land within 100 feet of water bodies.

OR

OPTION 2. Sites with Wetlands, Water Bodies, Land within 50 Feet of Wetlands, or Land within 100 Feet of Water Bodies

a. Locate the project such that *preproject* wetlands, water bodies, land within 50 feet of wetlands, and land within 100 feet of water bodies is not affected by new development, unless the development is minor improvements or is on *previously developed* land.

OR

b. Earn at least 1 point under GIB Credit 8, Stormwater Management, and limit any impacts beyond minor improvements to less than the percentage of buffer land listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Maximum allowable area of impacts within buffer zone, by density

Residential density (DU/acre)*	Nonresidential density (FAR)*	Percentage of buffer land** where impacts beyond minor improvements are allowed
> 25	> 1.75	≤ 20%
> 18 and ≤ 25	> 1.25 to ≤ 1.75	≤ 15%
> 10 and ≤ 18	> .75 to ≤ 1.25	≤ 10%
≤ 10	≤ .75	≤ 5%
DU = dwelling unit; FAR = floor-area ratio.		
* For this option, a mixed-use project may use either its residential or its nonresidential <i>density</i> to determine the percentage of allowable impacts, regardless of which is higher.		
** For this option, buffer width may vary as long as the total buffer area is equal to the area within 50 feet of wetlands and/or within 100 feet of water bodies, minus excluded features (see below). The minimum buffer width, however, is 25 feet for wetlands and 50 feet for water bodies, measured from the edge. In the minimum buffer, only minor improvements and/or improvements that result in no ecological impairment of the wetland or water body, as determined by a qualified biologist, are allowed.		

AND

FOR ALL PROJECTS

Comply with all local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to wetland and water body conservation.

The following features are not considered wetlands, water bodies, or buffer land that must be protected for the purposes of this prerequisite:

- a. Previously developed land.
- b. Man-made water bodies (such as industrial mining pits, concrete-lined canals, or stormwater retention ponds) that lack natural edges and floors or native ecological communities in the water and along the edge.
- c. Man-made linear wetlands that result from the interruption of natural drainages by *existing* rights-of-way.
- d. Wetlands that were man-made incidentally and have been rated “poor” for all measured wetland functions. Wetland quality assessment must be performed by a qualified biologist using a method that is accepted by state or regional permitting agencies.

Minor improvements within the buffer may be undertaken to enhance appreciation for the wetland or water body, provided such facilities are open to public access. Only the following improvements are permitted:

- a. Bicycle and pedestrian pathways no more than 12 feet wide, of which no more than 8 feet may be impervious.
- b. Activities to maintain or restore native natural communities and/or natural hydrology.
- c. One single-story structure not exceeding 500 square feet per 300 linear feet of buffer, on average.
- d. Grade changes necessary to ensure public access.
- e. Clearings, limited to one per 300 linear feet of buffer on average, not exceeding 500 square feet each, for tables, benches, and access for nonmotorized recreational watercraft. Off-street parking is not considered a minor improvement.
- f. Removal of hazardous trees; up to 75% of dead trees; trees less than 6 inches diameter at breast height; trees under 40% condition rating; and up to 20% of trees more than 6 inches diameter at breast height with a condition rating of 40% or higher. The condition rating must be based on an assessment by an arborist certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) using ISA standard measures.
- g. *Brownfield* remediation activities.

Direct impacts to wetlands and water bodies are prohibited, except for minimal-impact structures, such as an elevated boardwalk, that allow access to the water for educational and recreational purposes. Structures that protrude into wetlands or water bodies may be replaced, provided the replacement structure has the same or smaller footprint and a similar height.