

Reston Master Plan Special Study Community Meeting

January 26, 2010, 7:00 PM
Langston Hughes Middle School cafeteria
Approximately 100-110 community and task force members

Heidi Merkel, senior planner with the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, presented an overview of the purpose of the meeting – “to capture public ideas” and “express preferences about Reston’s prospective planning principles”.

Bob Simon's original 1962 goals were used to introduce the concept of principles and as foundation for further discussion.

Simon's goals focused on the following:

- variety of leisure options
- housing options
- phased development that provided for community amenities throughout the development life cycle
- housing for all stages of life and income levels
- living and working in the same community, etc

Heidi Merkel presented a draft “strawman” document drafted by staff. The draft “strawman” is a tool to begin discussion. The “strawman” included the following principles:

- Preservation of the long-term stability of Reston
- Transportation network that supports the planned land uses
- Connectivity throughout the community
- Housing diversity
- Wide range of mobility options, etc.

Task Force member Jerry Volloy (representing the Alliance of Reston Clusters and Homeowners) presented the group's position paper on planning principles:

- Study should determine how much development is possible versus how much is best for the community.
- Development should be well planned
- Transportation improvements should be in place before development occurs, etc

Kathy Kaplan (representing the Citizens’ Master Plan Group) presented proposed planning principles:

- World class design
- Building height limits
- 33 1/3 percent open space
- Parkland provided for residents on site by developer
- Complete separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic
- Cleaned water and clear air standards, etc

Ms. Kaplan also shared proposed changes to the staff’s draft “strawman” planning principles. An edited version was provided to the public.

Dick Stillson (representing the Reston 2020 Committee) presented that group's proposed planning principles:

- Planning must be for the whole of Reston
- Phased development
- Excellence in planning design in architecture
- Consolidation of parcels within land sub units
- Require transportation improvements that support development
- Confine higher densities to the Reston Center for Industry and Government, Reston Town Center and the village centers, etc

Upon completion of presentations, the floor was opened to community discussion and suggestions for additional principles to be considered.

Question: What is financial success? What does it mean to preserve neighborhood stability? What are we protecting from what and enhancing?

Answer: One example is that a key goal in the Fairfax Comprehensive Plan is to protect neighborhoods from commercial encroachment. We are concerned about neighborhood areas close the Metrorail stations.

Question: What is open space? Can the Reston Association (RA) or individual clusters sell parts of their property to developers?

Answer(s): There are three kinds of open space. RA has open space. Clusters have open space. Private properties including businesses have open space. RA would have to have a successful referendum to transfer property to another party. It did this in Southgate where it had a referendum, swapped land with Fairfax County and built a \$7 million dollar community center. A cluster could transfer its common property to others if the cluster board and the RA Board approved such a transaction. Fairfax County tries to preserve stable neighborhoods. It cannot prohibit a cluster from making a collective decision to sell their properties to a developer.

Note: Fairfax would not downzone a property unless it has compelling public purpose.

Question: What studies have been done that show that Metro can handle new demands from Transit Oriented Development (TOD)?

Answer(s): There are policies in the Comprehensive Plan that development cannot proceed without adequate infrastructure. Traffic impact analysis is required before a development can proceed. (Guided by a citizen task force, the county developed a Reston Metrorail Station Access Management Plan, which is available on the Task Force website.) This is a good question for discussion at an upcoming task force meeting on transportation. Studies have been done regarding future Metro capacity and can be made available.

Question: Can we stop development?

Answer: In Virginia, nothing can infringe on development that is already zoned and approved. Property rights are vested. Downzoning would be viewed as a taking. There is presently a non-degradation policy in the Comprehensive Plan that was adopted as part of the changes recommended in 2001 by a citizen task force. (Traffic should not get worse as a result of new

development.) The current pattern of office use has a more negative impact on traffic as compared to mixed use.

Reacting to density as an issue and the question as to whether Reston is urban or suburban, Bob Simon suggested that creating community is what is best. Some people like to live on large two-acre lots. Others like him like to live in a more urban setting. Reston offers both kinds of lifestyles. In his view, density makes community.

Other principles suggested by meeting participants:

- connectivity across bridges
- expanded bus coverage
- “level-of-service” for Reston’s streets as part of the development effort
- Reston as a place where people can “grow old and die”
- no additional taxes or tolls placed on Restonians
- more educational opportunities in Reston
- more public art

A preference exercise was conducted as the last step of the community meeting. All of the proposed planning principles were presented on 4 boards in 4 corners of the room. Attendees were given nine “dot” stickers to express their preferences regarding which principles in any list that they felt was important.

Planning Staff collected the boards and will compile the results to present to the Task Force at a future meeting.