

Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force Draft Meeting Summary

March 23, 2010, 7:00 PM.
South Lakes High School, 11400 South Lakes Drive

Task Force Chair Patty Nicoson opened at 7:11pm

Administrative Items (7:11)

- Patty Nicoson stated that the Communications sub-committee met last week. They intend on hosting several planning seminars for the community in the spring. TOD will be on the list of topics.
- A Reston Town Center sub-committee has been formed. The charter will be sent to task force members. Patty Nicoson announced that she would like to form a Process sub-committee to help define how the Task Force should meet its charge and to develop a Task Force report regarding its recommendations.
- Heidi Merkel of the Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning (DPZ) stated that many of the Herndon-Monroe community meeting participants requested information about the legal status of the wetlands. This information will be provided at the next task force meeting.

Public Comment (7:15)

Limited to 2 minutes/person

- Rob Whitfield of the Dulles Corridor Users Group asked when staff would complete the existing conditions report. Heidi Merkel stated that the report should be finalized in the next few weeks.
- Elizabeth McKeeby of Walsh Colucci addressed the Task Force on behalf of Vornado Realty. Vornado owns property immediately adjacent to the Wiehle Avenue Metro Station on the south side. She noted the current Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the property and said the existing recommendations do not provide sufficient incentives for redevelopment. Vornado believes higher development intensities are necessary to achieve successful transit-oriented development.
- Dick Rogers voiced his concern that there has been nothing planned for the Town of Herndon side of the Herndon-Monroe metro station. He pointed out that a recent letter in the Observer stated that the Town Council is not doing enough to distribute the future impacts of the new station. He encouraged the TF to follow this issue!

Discussion of Community Input from Wiehle Ave Community Meeting (7:29)

The Chairman asked Task Force members to share key ideas and observations from the Wiehle Avenue meeting. The microphone was passed around the table and each Task Force member was given the opportunity to comment. The following is a summary of the points made:

- Grid of streets is necessary to allow more access and connectivity
- This station could be the cultural and educational center of Reston
- Idea of a "Beautiful Neighborhoods" movement to provide an environment "where people can be happy"
- Consider the perspectives of residents who are unfamiliar with Reston's planning history
- It is difficult to think of Reston 20-30 years from now
- Existing Design Review Board for the Reston Center for Industry and Government will cease to exist once the covenants are vacated – what/who will replace it?
- Vision statements were a helpful addition to the structure of the community meeting
- Concerns over access from residential neighborhoods to the metro stations
- How will the RMAG improvements be funded?
- Conflict with rail, garage, road network and pedestrian-friendliness

- Wiehle Avenue station will be a gateway station
- Desire to see excellence in design at this station
- The impacts of this development cannot be analyzed until it has been in place for a while. There will be an adjustment period.
- Concerns about the size of the garage. Could future development take over the some of the spaces when Wiehle is no longer the terminus?
- Concern that the TF is not looking at specific development densities and locations
- One breakout group had a concept of an urban core, a transition area, and a low density area around the edges of the transit station area
- Opportunity for redevelopment considering the numerous low-rise buildings in the area
- Compare RMAG recommendations with Comstock project and what additional RMAG improvements are needed
- TF should begin to make decisions on what the area could look like and how that relates to the input from the community
- One group expressed concerns about the size of the parking garage
- Overall support for a grid of streets
- Safety is a concern
- Support for a nature focus at the Herndon-Monroe station and education at the Wiehle station.
- Grade-separated access is desirable
- Define a clear vision for environmentally-friendly, pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development and include this in the Comprehensive Plan
- Feeder bus system is desirable
- Concern about the proposed extension of the Soapstone Drive
- Parking garage at Wiehle Ave should be removed
- One group voiced concern about establishing and maintaining affordability for residents and small businesses
- Robust circulator bus system with satellite parking lots would improve connectivity throughout the area
- Focus on pedestrian and bicycle access from both sides of the Metro station
- The right density is the key to success (e.g. Clarendon and Bethesda)
- TF should focus on densities, what development will look like and the necessary FAR incentives
- Don't repeat Woodland Park

General comments:

Patty Nicoson noted that she would like to invite one or more real estate professionals to provide an overview of real estate economics and the Northern Virginia market.

Arthur Hill suggested that it would be difficult to achieve redevelopment of some of the office buildings around the Wiehle station because there are multiple property owners.

Mark Looney suggested the following approach for next steps in discussion:

1. Determine what type of grid network is needed at each station area
2. Identify what public facilities and infrastructure are needed (in addition to RMAG recommendations) to support desired identity
3. Fill in grid with target uses and densities and identify which properties will provide the key infrastructure.
4. Test the draft densities from a transportation stand point
5. Finalize the recommendations and determine how to finance the infrastructure that cannot be provided by individual developers.

Arthur Murphy asked if the level of information necessary to work out Mark Looney's approach is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan or more like the level of detail with a rezoning. Mark Looney said he is not necessarily looking to impose zoning level requirements on properties, but instead that

the Task Force should decide on a grid network with specific additional connections in the Comprehensive Plan and then allow property owners and county staff to establish the details at the rezoning stage.

Mike Corrigan said people are concerned about creating a wall of buildings separating the north and south sides of Reston and are also concerned about the current conditions report showing a lot of development potential under the current zoning. He suggested that the Task Force have a design competition for the Herndon-Monroe properties. Judith Pew stated a desire to bring north and south Reston together and suggested the County evaluate more bridges and air rights development.

Discussion of Reston Planning Principles (8:16)

Heidi Merkel opened the discussion of planning principles by stating that some of the draft principles in the Reston 2020 document may be combined and some detail can be removed to focus just on key concepts while leaving additional detail to the more specific Comprehensive Plan recommendations. A copy of the draft planning principles is available at this link:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/projects/reston/communitydocs/revised_2020_planning_princ_compilation.pdf

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Discussion of general Reston Planning Principles (8:16)

Patty Nicoson stated that she and John Carter would form a committee of 2 to edit the current Planning Principles document for further future discussion. Some discussion followed about what Patty and John would do, including the following points:

- Question re: legal validity of the planning principles document
- Reminder that the Policy Plan portion of the Comprehensive Plan is countywide
- Consideration should be given to the type of zoning that would satisfy the demands of the TF recommendations
- Suggestion to move some of the proposed planning principles, such as the detailed environmental principle, could be placed in the Area section of the Comprehensive Plan
- Planning Principles should be simple
- Environmental and market incentive principles are important
- Final document should be a compromise document
- Suggestion to remove references to small tax district 5 revenue; its way beyond the TF charge
- References to this tax district and density transfers are too specific to the planning principles
- Can the Reston-Herndon Suburban Center renamed? Name is inappropriate.
- Could area specific recommendations be revised?
- Additional standards could be identified
- Outline to be provided by staff
- Both additions are good
- Make principle 1 an opening paragraph
- Principles 2 & 3 are doable
- Principles 4 and 10 should be combined
- Principles 6, 7,8,9 seem ok; broaden open space
- Combine principle 11 with principle 2 (LEED)
- Pay attention to the properties outside the core (e.g. Woodland Park in the Herndon-Monroe area)
- Simplify the principles – simplicity is the beauty in the original principles

Concept of the Herndon-Monroe Station Area (8:53)

- Transit to green space location; benefit to having an identity
- Question re: current quality of the Wetlands
- There are ~112 bird species; functional and ecologically viable wetlands
- Questions re: what improvements could make the wetlands a focal point
- Improvements could be made such as better access and better board walks
- Will it be turned over the RA at some point? Wetland sanctuary.
- Concern that the TF should take on the preservation of the wetlands or a wetlands-themed metro station area
- Suggestion made that metro station areas should be planned in context not isolation; the most appropriate use of the wetlands area may be development close to the station considering the limited opportunities for transit-oriented development
- Should the wetlands be given to Reston Association?
- The wetlands are hidden, small and otherwise unnoticeable; should not be the focus of transit station area
- Very difficult to imagine what the Herndon-Monroe station area could be without knowing what will happen on the Town of Herndon side and with the Fairfax County parking garage
- Parking garage exit is not safe for pedestrians

A question was asked about what the county's future plans are for this garage. Heidi Merkel noted that staff believes the best opportunity for TOD is along the eastern side of the area and that there are no specific plans for this site to be redeveloped. A task force member stated that perhaps the County should rethink its approach and capture some value by developing their property.

Additional comments from the Task Force included:

- Good pedestrian and bicycle access is needed; areas to the east and wetlands area to the west side could be improved.
- Wetlands should include paths to adjacent land bays
- Environmental preservation often prevents development
- Does the effort to preserve the wetlands mean opposition to development?
- Wetlands could be saved or filled in by the property owner
- Wetlands are not ready to be a destination, but there is potential

Announcements (9:25)

- Next TF meeting is on April 13th and will be held at Lake Anne RCC
- April emphasis is Reston Parkway not the Town Center area as reflected in the current schedule.
- The May TF and Community meetings will cover the North Town Center area
- A revised schedule will be sent out on Friday, April 2nd

Adjourned (9:27)

Members Present

Bauer, Nicholas
 Carter, John Anderson
 Cooper, Michael
 Corrigan, Mike
 Costello, Frederick
 de la Fe, Frank (EX OFFICIO)
 Foster, Van

Goudie, Robert
Hill, Arthur
Keefe, William
Kennedy, Richard
Looney, Mark
Murphy, Arthur
Nicoson, Patricia (CHAIR)
Ottenti, Peter
Pew, Judith
Schlichting, John
Simon, Robert
Thomas, Paul
Tobey, Phil
Volloy, Gerald
Walker, Robert
Bowman, John
Gilley Sr., Wade
Matthews, Milton
Mills, Colin
Noritake, Rae
Penniman, William
Pfeilmeier, Frank
Phillips, Terri
Stowers, Joe
Strange, Anne