

Review of the Reston Master Plan

Summary Notes from Reston Focus Groups

Key Issues & Concerns

July – October 2008

Strengths:

Positive Aspects of Living and Working in Reston **Things we like about Reston**

- Reston's Original Master Plan and Guiding Principles
- Sense of community
- Diversity of people (both in terms of income and ethnicity)
- Continuity and variety of neighbors – some have been here since the 1970s who have grandchildren, other newer families have young children, and some are single or are in partnerships
- Development that respects nature and the natural surrounding
- Clustering concept to protect open space
- Ease of getting from one point in Reston to another
- Variety of choices in terms of housing options
- Number of choices close by in terms of shopping, parks, recreation and entertainment
- Pools, tennis courts, and other recreational facilities
- Range of churches in Reston
- Number of civic organizations and degree of civic involvement by Reston residents
- Farmers market at Lake Anne
- Easy and quick access to Dulles Airport and the tech business corridor
- Natural beauty and the calm, serene feeling one gets in Reston
- Trees, green space, and autumn foliage
- Quiet, wooded neighborhoods (many with lakes)
- Number and variety of walking trails (walking around the lakes)
- Reston is open to new ideas
- Citizen involvement
- People in Reston come together to solve their problems
- Setting of Reston – green space in harmony with its natural environment
- Access to the W&OD Bicycle and Pedestrian Path
- Reston is self-contained - accessibility to a variety of retail, entertainment, and recreation options within Reston itself
- Reston Town Center – active during the day and evening
- The numerous opportunities in Reston as a retiree
- Reston is a safe place ... its feels safe.
- Great place to raise a family.
- Reston is not a location, but a community
- Reston is not a suburb, but a place ... a state of mind

Strengths, continued ...

- Public amenities – the government center, hospital, library, parks, and so forth
- Reston is a place where one can raise a family and retire (stay in one area)
- Business opportunities are strong.
- Employers are seeking to locate in Reston, especially in the Town Center. For the most part, the Town Center is completely leased with some of the highest leasing rates in the County.
- Reston is vibrant. It is a great place to live, work and play.
- During non-rush hours, one can get to almost anywhere to and from the major employment centers in Virginia, Maryland, and DC in 20-30 minutes.
- Close proximity to Dulles Airport is a major plus. The coming of Metrorail will make Reston an even more attractive place to live and work.
- Reston is full of smart people and has been listed as one of top places to retire in the country.
- Arts and culture of Reston
- Yearly art show at the Town Center and the summer concerts
- Accessibility to a variety of retail, entertainment, and recreation options
- High rise condo and apartment units in the Town Center Core have upgraded the amenities and entertainment options in Reston.
- The urban design of the Town Center offers an alternative to the suburban model
- Living in a place where an effort was made from the start to create something as an integrated whole in contrast to the typical disconnected housing developments, employments centers, and shopping malls that spring up piecemeal.

Weaknesses:

Negative Aspects of Living and Working in Reston

Items that need to be addressed and possibly changed or improved

- Traffic congestion and safety
- Inefficient road network and marginal alternatives
- Roundabout bike paths rather than direct, dedicated bike lanes along major roads
- Ineffective transit system as a convenient and reliable alternative to the automobile
- Limited shopping choices (for example, only one hardware store in Reston)
- Outdated village centers built on the “Strip Shopping Center” concept
- Aging housing stock and infrastructure
- Lack of a funeral home or a cemetery
- Lack of a County Recreation Center in this area
- Lack off incidental shopping and services within a 5-10 minute walk
- An up-to-date master plan ... a guiding vision statement for Reston for the next 40 years
- Too few roadways over the Dulles Toll Road putting stress on Wiehle Avenue and Reston Parkway
- Sterile and impersonal office complexes in many areas of Reston that are out-of-date
- Lack of places to place recycled items

Weaknesses, continued ...

- Lack of a master developer (this makes it difficult to achieve a consensus around the needed changes in density that needs to occur. Lake Anne is a good example of this problem.)
- Lack of specific design guidelines for future development and the link to infrastructure improvements that future development will require
- Lack of an up-to-date, comprehensive plan to build on the original 1962 plan and keep Reston as a “world-class” community in the years ahead
- Lack of affordable housing and workforce housing
- Many people who make up the support workforce (teachers, nurses, childcare workers, restaurant workers, police and fire personnel, etc.) cannot afford to live in Reston.
- Many senior citizens who would like to retire in a place like the Town Center often are priced out of the market and must move out of the area.
- There are currently multiple Restons, not one: the Town Center, the Toll Road Business corridor, the PRC residential areas (both north and south).
- Poor connectivity between north and south Reston. The Toll Road acts as the “Berlin Wall” separating Reston into two communities.
- Poor walkability and bicycle access across the Dulles Toll Road
- Safety on pedestrian and bike trails is a concern.
- There are places in Reston where it is somewhat difficult to bike or walk to work.
- Lack of lighting on most streets and in many neighborhoods, along with pathways and trails limiting nighttime use
- Safe, walkable areas and sidewalks are lacking in and near the Town Center, especially along Reston Parkway, New Dominion Parkway, and Fountain Drive. The roads are very wide. Traffic is traveling very fast. It is often difficult to cross the roads and walk to places like the Hospital and the Town Center Core.
- The width of streets and traffic congestion issues are impacting the Town Center.
- Often difficult for residents of the Town Center to feel a sense of community.
- Somewhat difficult to bike or walk to work in certain areas
- Too many affordable dwelling units (workforce housing) located in one area and not spread equally throughout Reston
- Some of Reston’s schools are not as good as schools in other parts of the County.
- The covenants within the RCIG (business corridor along the Dulles Toll Road) limit the kind of transit-oriented, mixed-use development that Reston needs in the future.
- There are parts of Reston that are showing its age and need to be redeveloped. Lake Anne is a good example of the difficulty in addressing this problem.

Transportation & Infrastructure Planning

- **Infrastructure is Not Keeping Pace with Development**
 - The current planning process is done in a piecemeal fashion with no real foresight into how a development project fits together into an integrated, comprehensive plan. As a result, infrastructure is not keeping pace with development.

- Effective planning for the future needs to take careful account of the infrastructure enhancements (particularly roads and public transport) that will be needed to coincide with future density increases.
 - The current Comprehensive Planning process within the County (that sets the goals and guidelines for future development) has little or no authority for critical supporting infrastructure, especially transportation.
 - Reston is a special and unique place. It is important to maintain “the essence of Reston” where one can live, work, play, shop, and retire in one place. The key is “balance.” Many residents feel that Reston is currently out of balance when it comes to the recent development process by the County. Infrastructure and transportation improvements are not keeping pace with development which is resulting in deterioration of the quality of life in Reston.
 - The Dulles Toll Road corridor with mixed-use development should not be developed parcel by parcel. That approach is not “comprehensive” planning. When one looks at the three 1989 maps in the current Comprehensive Plan, it is obvious that the current development of Reston has rendered the transportation and community facilities maps obsolete.
 - The transportation map of 1989 does not support the land use map of 1989. The community is being told to only look at the land use plan for Reston, while transportation, infrastructure, and community facility planning are outside the scope of this process.
 - When it comes to problems regarding transportation and infrastructure, the County staff says there is not much it can do. Every time residents and County staff have these discussions, the residents hear “this same old line.” The residents don’t want lip service but they want a genuine change in the process that will result in legitimate changes.
 - Site plan amendments being considered today often apply to plans that were originally approved at the time of a rezoning to the PRC category that took place 25-30 years ago. This process poses a serious problem in Reston. Today’s plan amendments, which are allowed under PRC zoning, can now represent monumental additional future impacts that go well beyond any impact that could have been anticipated 25-30 years ago.
 - As the process currently works, our elected and appointed officials seem to have very little real power to assure that the developer effectively offsets the heavy adverse impacts that the new development plan will generate. Recent approvals of the Spectrum and JBG Reston Heights concept plans illustrate this point. Perhaps a statute of limitations, or a sunset provision, can be enacted to improve infrastructure planning.
- **Traffic Congestion – Key Hot Spots**
 - For many residents, transportation and traffic congestion are the most important issues facing Reston as it looks to the future.

- Traffic congestion is one of the most critical concerns requiring immediate attention ... especially the north-south connection.
 - Currently there is traffic congestion on Sunrise Valley Drive and Sunset Hills Road. With the high density development planned along the Reston-Herndon Suburban Center (Dulles Toll Road corridor), traffic problems will only get worse.
 - Traffic on Reston Parkway is a congestion hotspot not only during the morning and evening rush hours, but even in the middle of the day. Traffic backs up at Sunrise Valley all the way past the Town Center to Baron Cameron Avenue. There is great concern over what will happen once Metro arrives.
 - Wiehle Avenue and Sunset Hills is currently a congestion hotspot. With the planned Metro Stop at Wiehle Avenue being the last stop for many years before Metro is finally extended to Dulles Airport, and with the planned parking garage at the park-and-ride lot, traffic will only get worse. Many more people from the outlying areas will be using both Wiehle Ave and Sunset Hills to get to the parking garage. These narrow roads will not be able to handle the increased traffic.
 - Getting out of the residential clusters along Sunrise Valley Drive (especially making left turns) is difficult if you don't have signals.
 - The traffic backup on the Fairfax County Parkway between Sunset Hills and Fox Mills (and beyond) is very bad. It will only get worse in the future unless we deal with the problem in a comprehensive, far-reaching manner.
 - Traffic will increase, not decrease, with the coming Metro stations. We need to plan for the coming increase and how it will impact Reston as a whole.
 - Reston is not laid out with a grid pattern of streets. There are too few north – south crossings over the Dulles Toll Road. The question was asked, “What is going to happen when all the residential units get built out once Metro is funded?”
 - There are areas of Fairfax County that have higher levels of traffic congestion than Reston. However, it is not acceptable to Reston residents, as founders of a planned community, to destroy that plan so that we match the worse congestion in the County. A poor transportation plan for the introduction of Metro could make Reston an unattractive place to live or work.
 - Since Reston is an employment center, the larger problem of the number of commuters from outside Reston must be addressed. Traffic congestion along the north / south routes is approaching gridlock.
 - One participant noted that transportation is not a major problem in urban areas, but primarily in suburban areas. San Francisco is a good example of how people use different modes of transportation in an urban setting.
- **The Coming of Metro – RMAG Study**

- The coming of Metro will have a major impact on Reston. Transportation planning is one of the most critical components to the quality of life in Reston. The residents of Reston need to have a strong voice in type of development and the phasing that will be allowed with Metro. Traffic is already getting worse and surrounding neighborhoods are threatened because current infrastructure improvements are not keeping pace with development.
- The existing planning for the Reston-Herndon Suburban Center was done almost a decade ago and did not address the needed infrastructure improvements associated with additional mixed-use development allowed once Metro is fully funded. The issue of what would happen to traffic with the large additional density planned for in these areas should be thoroughly examined.
- The RMAG (Reston Metro Access Group) report should to be used in this planning process. RMAG recommendations should be included in the Revision of the Master Plan wherever possible.
- Some participants view the recent RMAG effort, with its emphasis on issues like Metro station access, as useful but narrow in scope. A much more comprehensive consideration of the macro effects of Metro Rail on the community is needed.
- The coming of Metro could have a major negative impact on Reston. Residents have concerns about all the people coming from neighboring jurisdictions driving through Reston and trying to park near the Wiehle Station when it is built and of massive traffic congestion. One participant noted that Reston does not want another Vienna style Metro stop in Reston with huge parking garages. The desire is to create a place with heart and synergy ... a community.
- One participant stated that Kiss & Ride areas at the Metro stops will increase traffic problems more than garages. Fewer trips will occur if people come to park. Others disagreed with this position.
- For many participants, transportation (traffic congestion) is the number one issue facing Reston as it plans for the future. An area of concern that came up numerous times in various meetings related to the coming of Metro and the possible negative impact on Reston. Residents have concerns about all the people coming from neighboring jurisdictions driving through Reston and trying to park near the Wiehle Station when it is built and the unintended traffic congestion. The recent Reston Metrorail Access Group (RMAG) report states that traffic will get worse over time. This is unacceptable. One participant noted that Reston does not want another parking garage (i.e. “dead zone”) like the Metro station in Vienna.
- If there is to be Metro along the Dulles Toll Road corridor, it must be rail to Dulles airport and not to Wiehle Avenue. Having Wiehle Avenue as the end of the line could significantly change the character of the community and present serious environmental impacts.

- The revised Master Plan should have “hurdles” with obstacles in it. For example, until Metro goes past Wiehle Avenue, development should be limited around the transit stops to prevent traffic congestion.

Growth and Density

• Density

- There is concern that the level of density that could occur in Reston under existing plans could lead to a deterioration of the quality of life in Reston. Saying that things will continue to get worse is not acceptable.
- A convincing study or argument must be made that the existing plans will improve things, not make them worse (especially in terms of traffic congestion). This should be a prerequisite for any future Reston plan.
- The employee / residential ratio should be brought closer to 1:1.
- The current population limits under the PRC guidelines are a disjointed way of dealing with the proper density. A comprehensive vision document that addresses the issue of overall population numbers in a wide-ranging fashion is needed to see whether it makes sense to put the majority of new growth in the Town Center, the Village Centers, the Dulles Business corridor, or a combination of the three.
- Some participants argued that population limits do not make any sense and should be removed from the Zoning Ordinance.
- Several participants declared that there is a difference between “urban” density and “suburban” density in terms of traffic congestion and livability issues. Reston could handle a great deal of density if it were designed properly and placed in the correct location.
- One participant stated that the original master plan of Reston called for a population of 80,000 people with a lot of density located at the village centers. This is a realistic and needed goal assuming the proper planning and vision is in place to handle this density.

• Growth

- Some participants expressed great concern over the quality of life in Reston with the density figures that have been proposed under the current Comprehensive Plan. The argument was made to limit growth.
- Other participants noted that they are not opposed to growth. Growth will occur and cannot be stopped. However, growth must be managed and planned properly in light of current transportation and infrastructure requirements. There are many places in Reston where growth can occur that fits the unique character of Reston (i.e. the Town Center, transit stations, village centers, etc). Questions were asked, “How can we redevelop the Village Centers into true Village Centers rather than the current strip shopping centers? What is the County’s long range plans with

the land it owns within the Town Center and how will that be integrated into the comprehensive plan for Reston?”

- Several participants stated that “no growth” is not an option in Reston. Growth is inevitable due to its location along the planned Metro line as well as its reputation and quality as a community. The focus should be on genuine planning.
- Many participants did not view growth, by itself, as either positive or negative. The essential question is whether growth, if it going to come, will contribute to the betterment of Reston. This will only occur if it is properly planned and if it is part of a larger comprehensive vision for Reston as a whole.
- Any discussion of growth must include the larger issues of adequate public facilities, infrastructure improvements to support the growth, improved pedestrian access (especially pedestrian crossways across main thoroughfares like Sunset Hills Road and Sunrise Valley Drive), and the safeguards to protect open space.
- Any new development should have more open space, walking paths, public squares, public art, and more community gathering places.

Alternatives to the Automobile Greater Pedestrian & Bicycles Emphasis

- Several participants stated that additional lanes along Reston Parkway should not be added except for dedicated bus lanes. The idea is to do everything possible to discourage the use of the automobile and promote public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrian alternatives. Reston’s problems cannot be solved by adding more lanes. More lanes only lead to more traffic.
- Several participants stated that there should be no new arterial streets or roads in Reston. It will only make traffic congestion worse.
- One person expressed the need to get the jobs to residences ratio from the current 2:1 closer to 1:1. This will increase density, but people who live in mixed-use residential areas behave differently from those in traditional suburban neighborhoods. They do not use their cars as much. They use public transportation and walk more. Many people who live near the Metro stations in Arlington do not even own a car.
- There is a need for better lighting along some of the streets and trails, better traffic calming measures, and dedicated bicycle lanes along the streets.
- Improve pedestrian connectivity across the Toll Road.
- Upgrade or install bus shelters if they don’t exist at bus stops.
- More robust bus lines are needed to provide strong links between the coming metro stations and village centers. They would spawn activity and vitality along their lines and serve as connectors between the station areas and village centers where currently there is little connection.
- Dedicated bike lanes are needed, especially to connect neighborhoods to the W&OD trail.

- The planning process should follow the principles outlined in the Reston Metrorail Access Group (RMAG) study. RMAG stated that priority should be given to 1) pedestrians, 2) bicyclists, and 3) transit users (buses) over private vehicles (drivers and carpools).
- The wider the roads (with more lanes), the faster the traffic. Narrow streets and traffic calming measures should be expanded to reduce speeding to make our streets safer.
- Mass transit inside Reston should be considered, including a circulator system (dedicated bus shuttle service or light rail) like the one proposed for Tysons.
- Park-and-ride facilities should be placed at the periphery of Reston and not at the core of Reston near the Toll Road. Commuter traffic using Reston Parkway and Wiehle Avenue will only get worse if they are placed near Metro. Sunset Hills and Sunrise Valley will not be able to handle the increase in traffic flow. Shuttle bus service should move riders to and from the parking lots and the transit station areas.
- Dedicated bus lanes (along Reston Parkway, Wiehle Avenue, Sunset Hills and Sunrise Valley) are critical to solving the traffic issue.
- Currently Reston has a poor transit system that fails to connect Reston to the rest of the county. This is especially the case with Reston’s transit disconnect from points to the south, like the Springfield and Fort Belvoir areas.
- The County needs to work on a public transportation system with a “spider web” design rather than the existing hub and spoke system. This would reduce the automobile congestion from residents outside Reston trying to reach their employment destination within Reston.
- One participant stated the concern that due to the type of offices and jobs within Reston, workers and residents will not use public transportation.
- Better lighting attached to bus shelters or bus stop signs are needed in order to clearly identify where these facilities are and provide for safety. Motion sensor technology to reduce light pollution and energy consumption should be considered.
- There are urban design guidelines that can make our Metro stations safe and friendly. Best practices should be thoroughly examined.
- Pedestrian bridges or tunnels should be considered across Sunset Hills and Sunrise Valley to improve pedestrian connections.
- More intra-Reston bus service (perhaps with smaller buses) to provide residents with quicker service and more options.

Planning Process

- **Original Vision of Bob Simon**
 - Any plans for the future of Reston should be faithful to the original goals of Robert Simon. His concept of Reston as a place where residents can “live, work,

and play” remains as powerful and appealing now as it was 40 years ago. That sense of balance, along with the strong emphasis on preserving our quality of life, is one of the main reasons why so many have chosen Reston as their home.

- It is important to maintain the special character of Reston and the original goals outlined by Bob Simon when he created the original Master Plan in 1962. Several goals stand out: diversity of housing and income groups, ethnic mix, and the ability to live in Reston one’s entire life if one chooses to do so.
 - Roberts Simon’s original goals from the 1962 Plan should be stated (in a slightly modified and updated form) in both the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. Currently, these goals are only listed in the Zoning Ordinance.
 - One participant reminded the group not to forget Reston’s origins (Bob Simon’s original philosophy), especially in terms of green buildings and tree preservation. Reston is unique. It is a destination. It is important to keep it unique. Other than the Town Center, Reston does not have a grid of streets. It has a network of trails that respects the natural terrain of the land.
 - In light of the fact that there is no longer a master developer for Reston, the citizens of Reston should have more control over the kind and placement of new development through the Planning and Zoning Committee and Design and Review Board. There should be a new framework of review between Reston citizens and the County’s planning staff before projects are forwarded to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.
 - The PRC Zoning Ordinance includes specific objectives that reflect Bob Simon’s principles for Reston that should be met when reviewing any development within the PRC district. The question was asked, “How can we re-evaluate the Reston Master Plan if we are not considering these objectives in the context of the County’s Comprehensive Plan?”
- **Long-range Vision for Reston**
 - Reston residents are tired of County staff telling us what the County cannot do. They want solutions. They want the planning staff to think creatively outside the box. They want visionary planning. Reston was initially planned by going against conventional wisdom of its day. That same attitude is needed today. Reston residents want a unique plan for Reston that fits Reston’s unique status in the County. Reston can continue to be a laboratory for innovative ideas as plans are made for the future.
 - The new Master Plan for Reston should have a 40-50 year perspective to be effective, rather than a shorter outlook.
 - The question was asked a number of times, “How does the Reston Planning & Zoning Committee evaluate our priorities without a big picture overview and vision? If Reston has room for about 16,000 more residents under the current cap, how do we prioritize our options?”

- In order to send the right market signals to the development community, bold planning needs to occur. The current incremental planning process does not send the right signals to create a “world-class” community that Reston has sought to create. The current process leads to disjointed development that does not fit within the larger context of Reston as a whole.
 - It was suggested by one participant that maybe we need to undertake a process similar to the Tysons Task Force where there is a macro view rather than a micro view. Everything impacts each other. There are unintended consequences that impact existing neighborhoods if we don’t have an over-arching plan to guide us for the next 20-30 years. The rate of change is accelerating.
 - Planners should think carefully about the impact of major upcoming developments, such as the arrival of Metro Rail, major increases in gasoline prices, the rising cost of all goods and services caused by high energy costs, and the consequent need for greater economic self-sufficiency and sustainability.
 - Discussion from several participants centered on the need to first define the “end product” before we try and come up with the planning process to amend the Reston Master Plan. First outline the main goals and then work out the process by which to reach these objectives.
 - A set of guiding principles and goals should be articulated first. One possible goal is to harmonize traffic planning with land use planning.
 - Developers are usually only interested in the single part of Reston they own. They do not consider Reston as a whole and the potential impact on the greater community.
 - Reston should evolve from a seemingly disconnected collection of suburban neighborhoods, shopping centers, and office buildings to a small satellite city between Dulles airport and the Tyson’s Corner area that is well-integrated internally with its surrounding neighbors.
 - This satellite city would have an urban core at the Reston Town Center connected to the multi-use village centers and more specialized business centers flanking the Dulles Toll Road.
- **Comprehensive Planning Process**
 - It is important to look at the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance at the same time as it relates to the Reston Master Plan (RMP) and the PRC District rather than just considering an update to the Comprehensive Plan by itself. The two documents are related to one another even though they serve different purposes.
 - Some participants expressed strongly that it did not make sense for the County to look at the Comprehensive Plan first before moving to potential changes in the Zoning Ordinance. Since both documents are intertwined, they should be reviewed at the same time rather than separately. The 2006/2007 changes in how

the density cap is calculated is an example of not reviewing both the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance together.

- The process of deciding how to update the Master Plan of Reston must consider not only the PRC District, but also the Town Center and the proposed mixed-use commercial areas along the Dulles Toll Road. They are all interrelated. Since the original 1962 Master Plan was written, there has not been a comprehensive planning process that considered all these elements and their interrelated dimensions at the same time. That is the essence of excellent town planning.
- If the Reston portion of the Comprehensive Plan is revised, it may be helpful to keep the three 1962-1989 maps as historical documents within the Comprehensive Plan.
- It is important that the planning process to review and update Reston's Master Plan be constructed to make sure that "we get it right." Regardless of the cost and time, the commitment must be made by the County to develop a quality master plan that is genuinely comprehensive in nature and involves all the residents of Reston to the greatest degree possible.
- As the community considers updating the Reston Master Plan (RMP), the process must involve a truly comprehensive and all-inclusive approach. The community needs to look at the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, transportation infrastructure and community facilities planning at the same time as it relates to the RMP, the business corridor along the Dulles Toll Road, the Town Center and the PRC District. Considering changes to the Comprehensive Plan by itself is not enough. All of these components are related to one another and must be considered at the same time to create a new master vision for Reston.
- Many residents believe that the planning and development process by the County is out of balance when it comes to Reston. Infrastructure and transportation improvements are not keeping pace with development which is resulting in deterioration of the quality of life in Reston. Projects are being approved in a piecemeal, project-by-project basis rather than taking into account the total impact on Reston as a whole. There is a need for a more comprehensive approach to planning.
- One participant expressed concern over the recent APR proposals recently submitted for the Reston Center for Industry & Government (RCIG) area and how they relate to the Town Center, the transit stations, and the surrounding neighborhoods without a "big picture" view of Reston.
- Market research or demographic studies should be done to address demographic shifts or patterns that are occurring or might occur in the future.
- The Reston Master Plan Study should be done on a dual-track. Due to the urgency for a big picture vision, the broader principles should be worked out at the same time the smaller individual plans for the Town Center and Village Centers are conducted.

- There should be a moratorium on new development in Reston for two reasons. One, this would temporarily put a pause on piecemeal development that does not fit the greater vision for the community. Two, it would put pressure on and create a sense of urgency for completing the Reston Master Plan Study as soon as possible.
- Additional mechanisms should be explored to promote more local (Reston) control over planning and zoning decisions beyond the current advisory capacity of Reston’s Planning and Zoning Committee.
- It is important to have a planning map in this review process that gives us the potential density options and figures (residential, employment, retail, etc) that would provide the basis to evaluate the different alternatives we could implement. The map needs to be easy for citizens to understand.
- In order to send the right market signals to the development community, bold planning needs to occur. The current incremental planning process does not send the right signals to create a “first-class” community that Reston has sought to create.
- **Greater Citizen Involvement in the Planning Process**
 - Several participants expressed the idea that the citizens of Reston, especially the Reston Association (RA), need a greater voice in deciding when and where development will occur in Reston.
 - The RA wants more interaction with the County’s DPZ staff. They do not want to just be a voice at the table, but to have power at the table. They want to be involved in the decision making process. One participant expressed a concern that the process should not be dominated by a few people with “loud voices.”
 - The Reston Association and the Reston Town Center Association should not be treated as a “focus group.” The County should create a framework where genuine collaborative planning could take place with these associations.
 - The planning process must involve all the citizens of Reston. All the various groups and interests must be represented in the discussion and recommendations.
 - Reston is a community and it is important that the entire Reston community have the opportunity to work closely with the County as the planning process goes forward. Every citizen of Reston is a “stakeholder” and has a vested interest in the shape of the community and the facilities available to Reston. The County should come up with innovative ways to involve many more members of the Reston community in this discussion than has been the case previously.
 - A suggestion was made to use the various stakeholders’ web sites (key citizen groups in Reston) to solicit greater citizen input regarding this planning process. Email each of the Cluster board members to invite the residents from each of the clusters to any public meeting.
 - In addition to the stakeholders on the interview list, the process of deciding how to update the Reston Master Plan should include a broad outreach to others in the

community. If a survey is used, the survey questions should be open-ended and not picking from a list.

- There was dialog regarding getting input from the Reston community at large. One idea expressed was to follow IPAR's (Initiative for Public Art Reston) survey approach. One participant stated that a traditional "task force" tactic would not work with the citizens of Reston unless the task force functioned as a facilitator of the various voices in the community.
- It is important to have a citizen driven process, not a developer driven process.
- If a Task Force is set up to guide this planning process, its main task would be to facilitate communication between the diverse interests in Reston and the decision makers in the County (Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and DPZ).
- Several participants expressed the opinion that the best way to approach the review of the Master Plan would be to appoint a community-driven entity (presumably a task force) composed of local citizens and representatives of local community groups. This would help ensure that the ultimate recommendations have community support. Although planning expertise probably should not be a prerequisite in all cases, whatever group is appointed must have individuals on it who do have planning expertise and the ability to handle complex issues.
- Consideration should be given to retaining an independent consultant with urban suburban planning expertise.

Dulles Business Corridor – Reston-Herndon Suburban Center

- Reston is a major employment center for the County generating a great deal of tax revenue. Much attention has been given to Tysons Corner as the economic engine driving the Fairfax economy. But there are more jobs in the Reston/Herndon/Dulles Airport corridor than in Tysons.
- As Reston outlines a vision for the next 40 years, it is important to focus on why employers currently want to locate in Reston and what will keep the area as a premier location for business leaders.
- Too much traffic and a lack of supporting infrastructure could change things for the worse if not adequately addressed. Reston could end up with a traffic mess similar to Tysons. Now is the time to plan ahead. Under the current incremental, piecemeal development process, Reston is headed to repeat many of the mistakes planners made with Tysons.
- It is important not to redevelop the Dulles Business Corridor with mixed-use development parcel by parcel. We need a big picture vision in place before the residential component is added.
- One participant stated that the FAR figures for the Dulles Toll Road business corridor that were developed back in 2000-2001 may need to be increased in order to get transit and mixed-use development planned for with Metro station areas. The current Tysons

Task Force process indicates that higher FAR limits may be required to get the amenities we want.

- The community would like to know how many offices and residences could be built along the Dulles Toll road if and when Metro is built and full funding is granted.
- We have a “golden opportunity” to develop residential standards (similar to residential zoning standards) for the area encompassed by Reston Center for Industry and Government (RCIG) limits. If and when the covenants in the RCIG are amended to allow for residential units and Metro Rail gets its full funding, some people fear a huge rush to develop without these standards/safeguards being in place. Now is the time to clearly articulate these standards and design guidelines.
- Future planning for the Dulles Toll Road corridor must go far beyond the typical County two-dimensional, “colors-on-a-map” approach. A three-dimensional design system should be instituted that includes the actual appearance of the building and its design features.
- Residential zoning should be put in place in the Dulles corridor well before Metro arrives.
- Many participants expressed the desire that there be a moratorium on the Toll Road APR (Area Plans Review) nominations until after the Reston Master Plan Review is completed. It would be difficult to evaluate these nominations without a comprehensive, big-picture view of Reston and how it should develop in the coming years.
- The new Reston Master Plan should address issues such as pedestrian connections; otherwise, JBG-type projects will be approved that increase density without truly planning how people can walk and bike to Metro.
- The Dulles Business corridor needs a better jobs / housing balance.
- Reston mixed-use development near the Metro stops should look more like Ballston in Arlington rather than the Vienna transit station area.
- This planning process provides an opportunity to reexamine the current RCIG covenants, whether the RCIG should be subject to the PRC ordinance or have its own zoning requirements, along with the fairness and economics of any RCIG residents accessing and using Reston common areas.
- Better bicycle and pedestrian connectivity over the Toll Road needs to occur at the International Center (and surrounding JBG property) to the planned Metro transit stations.
- One participant stated that future development should occur primarily on the north side of Reston. The south side along Sunrise Valley has too many existing neighborhoods that will be negatively impacted with the coming of Metro.

Better North / South Connectivity

- Much of the current traffic congestion is a result of only three choices to cross over the Dulles Toll Road: Fairfax County Parkway, Reston Parkway, and Wiehle Avenue.
- The Toll Road acts as the “Berlin Wall” separating Reston into two communities.
- Many participants expressed the need for better connectivity over the Toll Road between North and South Reston. It is difficult to create a grid of streets like Bethesda or Silver Spring given the design of Sunset Hills and Sunrise Valley roads. Nevertheless, the new Reston Master Plan should consider adding several more automobile crossings over the Toll Road along with several new bicycle/pedestrian bridges.
- Reston should be joined and contiguous for drivers and pedestrians.
- One member suggested that the entire Reston Toll Road corridor be decked resulting in both the Dulles roads and Metro tracks being placed “underground.
- Air rights for development above the Toll Road should be considered, along with better connectivity for pedestrians and bikers on both sides of the Toll Road.
- Developing air rights over the Toll Road would allow for vehicular traffic and pedestrian connections north and south. When mixed use (residential) is included in this development, then it will be possible to create public plazas and pedestrian connections that would be used throughout the day and evening. The park over I-66 in Arlington is an example of air rights development. However, if there is not a mixed-use component, the area will be dead most time.
- Reston does not have a traditional grid of streets, offering alternatives for automobiles. Currently there are only three major crossing points between north and south Reston: Wiehle Avenue, Reston Parkway, and the Fairfax County Parkway. There is a need a strong grid pattern, especially across Toll Road

Town Center

- **Town Center Vision - The Planning Process**
 - The Town Center should be viewed as a comprehensive unit rather than a variety of separate projects that are reviewed separately.
 - Future planning in the Town Center must go far beyond the typical County two-dimensional, “colors-on-a-map” approach. A three-dimensional design system should be instituted that includes the actual appearance of the building and its design features.
 - In order to plan for the future, it is important to study several items:
 - 1) FAR limits in the Town Center and whether they are appropriate
 - 2) Limitations on future growth due to public facility (infrastructure) confines like water, sewer, storm drainage, schools, and transportation, etc.
 - 3) height restrictions
 - 4) the population cap.

- FAR limits and height limits can often have a negative impact in terms of the design of a project. The conceptual plan for the Spectrum property is a good example.
- The County should immediately formulate a specific vision for its portion of the Town Center for the Reston Design and Review Board to review and comment upon.
- Urban rather than suburban standards should be employed in the Town Center in terms of developing a new library complex, an elementary school, recreation center with an indoor swimming pool, community center, and a police station.
- The suburban guidelines used historically by the County will not work in Reston. An “Urban Design” capability should be developed.
- Incentives, such as density credits and waivers of certain conditions, should be considered to improve design of the Town Center through better view sheds, access to sunlight, streetscapes, varied heights, less structured parking, and more underground parking.
- The Town Center must be bicycle and pedestrian friendly. This probably requires more private streets in the Town Center to allow developers greater flexibility to create an urban place that doesn’t have to conform to VDOT’s suburban and rural standards.
- One participant stated, however, that private ownership of roads is bad idea. Poor signage in the Town Center was given as a reason.
- Several participants expressed the opinion that retail that services regional markets (big box retail like Best Buy) is good for Reston. Reston residents do not have to drive great distances to get what they need.
- Other participants stated that regional retail should be limited in order to curb traffic congestion. It is not that far to drive to Route 7 or to Tysons Corner to find what is needed.
- Since there is no longer a master developer for Reston, the County should assist the residents of Reston in deciding what the Town Center to look like. A “macro-view” / “big picture view” of the Town Center must be developed as soon as possible that can give guidance to the developers as they think about how to plan for the future. The current planning process regarding the Spectrum Center illustrates the need for such a plan.
- It is critical to look at Reston as a whole and how everything ties together. There seems to be no “grand” master plan for the Town Center that creates a link from the Metro transit stops with the Town Center North areas that is pedestrian and bicycle friendly, protects open space, and utilizes urban design standards rather than suburban standards.
- Several participants stated that the planning process for the Town Center appears to be totally developer driven. Developers don’t live in the Town Center and often to fail to understand what it takes to make it more liveable (and thereby

enhancing their investment by improving the entire Town Center area). As a result, we cannot trust the developers to plan accordingly. We need the County's help to come up with a better vision for the future. Residents will be live here long after the developers have finished their projects and left the area.

- The Town Center needs improvement in several areas to make it more liveable:
 - 1) Open spaces and parks
 - 2) Dog parks (places to walk dogs)
 - 3) Tot Lots (In addition to families that live in the Town Center residential units, there are grandparents and divorced parents with visiting rights that need a place to take their children and grandchildren within walking distance of the Town Center)
 - 4) Recreation Center / Community Center
 - 5) Safe Pedestrian Access (to improve its walkability)
 - 6) Affordable Housing (More options need to be created as developers submit their plans and as the northern part of the Town Center is planned)
 - 7) Improved Crossings (a better way to get across Reston Parkway)
- It is important to have a planning map in this review process that gives us the potential density options and figures (residential, employment, retail, etc) that would provide the basis to evaluate the different alternatives we could implement. The map needs to be easy for citizens to understand.
- Town Center is an “urban” setting that needs urban design guidelines. Too often the County and DOT use “suburban” guidelines in their planning process.
- **Town Center (Core)**
 - There are too many high-end condos in Reston and not enough affordable housing. The demographic mix is changing and leading us away from the original goals set forth when Bob Simon founded Reston. There is concern about the trends. It is important not to drive away the working poor and elderly.
 - There is a concern that there are currently two Restons, not one. There is the original Reston with its trails, open space, village centers and clustered neighborhoods. Then there is the Town Center with limited green, open space and few community facilities.
 - A related concern is that there could soon be “three Restons” with the development of mixed-use residential units near the Metro transit stops if they are planned parcel by parcel without a vision of how it fits into the larger RMP. The challenge facing this planning process is to create “one” Reston where everyone has a stake in the larger community.
 - One participant stressed that we are not against density in the Town Center. The proper density gives us the commercial and retail base we need to make the Town Center a truly liveable place.
 - One resident expressed the opinion that the high-rise, luxury apartments in the Town Center have upgraded the amenities and entertainment options in Reston. Others complained that there are too many luxury condos thereby changing the

original goal set forth by Robert Simon in terms of maintaining a diversity of housing options when Reston was founded.

- It is important to connect the Reston Avenue Metro Station with the Town Center with a better grid of streets pattern, more bicycle lanes, and improved pedestrian walkways.
- **Town Center (North – Government Center)**
 - Some participants stated that if the Spectrum property within the Town Center is developed poorly, it will make the traffic congestion along Reston Parkway even worse.
 - The Spectrum property’s conceptual urban design is too uniform in a negative way. It is a “Maginot line” in terms of building height.
 - It is important to conduct a review of New Dominion Parkway and the parking structures along New Dominion to create better link between the Town Center (core) and the Town Center (north) / Government Center with in an integrated way that will promote easy pedestrian movement throughout the entire Town Center area.
 - The parking structures along New Dominion create a massive “dead zone.” They need to be redeveloped by surrounding the sides with 3-4 story mixed-use (residential, office, and retail) development to create a streetscape that is alive.
 - The community debate surrounding the Spectrum Center illustrates the need for a comprehensive plan for all of the land making up the Town Center. Without such a vision statement, it is difficult to evaluate competence of a development plan.
 - The land from the library to Barron Cameron is primarily owned by INOVA and the County. There is not a “world-class” comprehensive plan for this valuable and strategic land similar to the current Reston Town Center. One participant stated that we are several years late in developing this plan. We cannot afford to wait any longer.
 - This plan should include a grid of streets and a good connection to the current Town Center Core that has already been developed, along with a good connection to the RCIG and the Metro transit stops.
 - The plan for the northern part of the Town Center should include a grid of streets and a good connection to the current Town Center Core that has already been developed. The Spectrum Center development along Fountain Drive needs to be part of this plan in order to make sure that both sides of Fountain Drive support one another.

Redevelopment - Stable Residential Neighborhoods

- The planning process should focus on potential redevelopment of older areas of Reston as well as the disposition of undeveloped areas. As Reston ages, redevelopment decisions must be analyzed and evaluated in step with new development to ensure that we

recognize the consequences of all decisions about our future, particularly for stable residential neighborhoods.

- We need to define what is exactly a “stable residential neighborhood.” Some neighborhoods are aging to the point where they need to be redeveloped. We need to identify which ones are “stable” and which ones need to be redeveloped.
- A reclassification from the current PRC zoning to the more standard form of residential zoning currently used in the Zoning Ordinance might be useful to preserve and protect existing neighborhoods. One participant stated that we should address the “stable neighborhood” question by having traditional zoning in certain neighborhoods the Community wants to keep “stable” while the flexible PRC zoning should be maintained for the rest of Reston.
- One idea presented at a meeting consisted of an option where a majority of the current homeowners in a neighborhood (cluster) could opt out of the PRC zoning with its potential higher density. This could bring them into conformity with what currently exists now that development has already occurred.
- Several participants expressed little concern for “stable” residential communities remaining established. They thought that the factors making them stable now would continue to be factors keeping them stable in the future.
- Some people expressed that we should not attempt to maintain all stable residential areas in their current form. Demographic changes (age) will lead to market changes and this should not be ignored or regulated away.

Village Centers

- The planning process should focus in how to shift the village centers from their current form (strip shopping centers) to what they were originally meant to be with mixed-use development.
- It is worthwhile to consider certain kind of density increases at the Village Centers to provide housing that is accessible to seniors, is affordable, incorporates universal design, and utilizes elevators.
- More residential units at the village centers will be needed in the future. The village centers must be made more pedestrian friendly and remain centers of commercial activity.
- There appears to be a loose consensus that additional development (or redevelopment) should be in the Dulles Toll Road corridor, the Town Center, and around the Village Centers. However, there is something of a mismatch between what residents currently like and what is commercially successful. Therefore, it is essential that good planning take into consideration how to reduce transportation requirements in an attempt to reduce this mismatch.

- There is a market shift in housing today that is reflected in recent developer proposals. More people want smaller units with smaller yards to in a more mixed-use arrangement that is more pedestrian friendly.
- Large parking lot strip centers only encourage people to use their cars instead of walking. The proposed planning process should study the demographics and market shift taking place in America.
- It was suggested by one participant that the Town Center in Rockville, MD, Kentlands, MD, Pentagon Row in Arlington, and the Columbia Heights area around Metro are good examples of a traditional neighborhood design (a neighborhood shopping center and mixed-use residential units) that is attractive to many developers. These projects have the appropriate scale and could be good models for the Village Centers in Reston.
- One participant stated that they like the current suburban model of the village centers with plenty of parking. They appreciated the ease of driving to their favorite stores.
- As future growth is targeted to village centers, each village center's redevelopment plan should be drawn up separately by its local residents and businesses. Environmental Impact Assessments should be done for any redevelopment of village centers.
- Village centers should have public plazas with multi-story buildings framing them. One-story retail structures should not frame the plaza. They should be designed as gathering places within walking distance of residences where people, parents, young adults, and children can congregate.
- In addition to the planning exercise now underway at Lake Anne, there should be master planning exercises for the other village centers in Reston, the Town Center, and the business corridor along the Toll Road. Each of these smaller exercises will be part of the larger review of the Master Plan for Reston.
- The village centers (like Lake Anne and Hunter Mills) have lost their momentum. There are two competing needs: how to establish the TOD (transit-oriented development) areas and survive in light of the Town Center, while at the same time breathe new life into the Village Centers. The question relates to the proper residential and retail niche for the Village Centers.
- Zip car and Flex car stations should be placed at each village center to provide individuals an option of not personally owning an automobile.

Affordable Housing / Workforce Housing

- Higher energy costs, reduced wages in terms of purchasing power, and deteriorating rush hour conditions are creating pressures for shorter commutes. Affordable housing that is a relatively short walk (or public transit ride) to places of work, shopping, and services promises to be attractive to employers and employees alike. Affordable housing will help keep Reston an attractive place to attract business.

- There is concern that the children who grew up in Reston will not be able to afford to live here if they wanted to move back to the area after college. This is not in keeping with Robert Simon’s original vision statement that he outlined in 1962.
- There are too many high-end condos in Reston and not enough affordable housing. The demographic mix is changing and leading us away from the original goals set forth when Bob Simon founded Reston. There is concern about the trends. It is important not to drive away the working poor and elderly.
- There is reason for concern that one of the original principles of diversity in Reston will be undermined in the future. Economically, many people are being priced out of the Reston market and new residential construction is aimed almost exclusively at high end condos. This is not consistent with the original goal (and current language in the PRC Zoning Ordinance). Approval of new development plans do not appear to provide a range of housing options that meet the original goal of economic diversity.
- Additional affordable and accessible housing for people currently living in townhouses (that become disabled due to aging or other factors) should be expanded so residents have the option to continue to live in Reston if they so choose.
- There is an abnormal concentration of “workforce” housing in south Reston. It should be spread out across all of Reston instead of concentrated in the southern portion.
- Housing options for senior citizens of the community (such as single level housing, or access through elevators) is desirable to allow for “aging in place.” Currently too many neighbors have to move out of Reston due to this deficiency. “Aging in place” is not just a bunch of Sunrise Assisted Living developments.
- Affordable dwelling units should be located near Metro and other transit stops to reduce the demand for automobile use.
- It is important to create housing options for Reston’s support workforce (teachers, nurses, childcare workers, restaurant and retail workers, police and fire personnel, etc.).

Public Facilities Planning – Financing Options

- It is important to move beyond the traditional “proffers” approach in terms of funding public facility improvements. They are limited to rezoning requests which do not meet the ever-growing needs of Reston. This approach usually provides the community with some minor enhancements, such as an additional roadway lane or intersection widening, along with some limited cash contributions to help with County goals like affordable/workforce housing. Something far more visionary and comprehensive is needed to address public facilities planning and financing.
- Special tax districts should be considered, but are not adequate by themselves to meet the long term community needs.
- Reston pays out more revenue to the county than the services that it receives. This imbalance must be addressed.

- There is a need for a big picture vision, a new guiding document for Reston. Everything impacts each other. There are negative consequences that impact the character of Reston if there isn't an over-arching plan to guide Reston for the next 20-30 years. This new document should specify exactly what public facility improvements are needed and when. This list should carefully prioritize the cost / benefit analysis of each project in terms of time sensitivity and urgency.
- New funding mechanisms (like the Tysons Task Force is considering) need to be considered like tax increment financing (TIF), business improvement districts, public-private partnerships, transfer of development rights, and possibly a new implementing authority that would oversee, manage, and implement future development and assure the broad goals and objectives of the new RMP are implemented.
- On June 10, 2008, the County's Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment (OCR) proposed a set of principles for public investment in support of commercial redevelopment. In the document, it mentions the use of TIF, transportation improvement districts, general obligation bonds, and Community Development Authorities. One participant stated that these approaches might be useful in helping Reston explore new sources of funding for infrastructure and public facility improvements.

Environmental Concerns

- **Protection of Open Space**
 - All planning for the future should involve state-of-the-art provisions for protecting the environment, reducing pollution, preserving our open spaces, and improving energy efficiency. It is important for Reston to be a leader in green development and redevelopment.
 - County officials and Reston residents need to work together to make sure that the trees along the W&OD trail are protected.
- **Environmental Protection**
 - Sustainable architecture and design guidelines such as LEED certifications should be mandated or should be put in place with incentives or covenants for the Reston Master Planned area.
 - Runoff from impervious surfaces is a concern, especially the new parking lots.
 - Future development in Reston should follow guidelines for sustainability that take into account impact on the watershed, preservation of open space, protection of natural areas, and maximum efficiency in energy use.