

Task Force Statement on Intensity of Use

The task force has reviewed Scenarios E and G which are to be used in modeling the traffic impacts of future development. Scenario G was developed by staff to address unacceptable levels of roadway congestion at several key intersections. The overall allowable square feet (SF) of each scenario is similar, 65 million square feet of density, but Scenario G shifts a significant share of potential development from the Wiehle-Reston East and Town Center TOD areas to the south side of the Herndon (formerly Herndon-Monroe) station. Overall, Scenario G includes 3,000 more dwelling units and reduces the amount of commercial space by 5 million SF.

In developing their recommendations and reports, the three area subcommittees (Wiehle – Reston East, Reston Town Center, and Herndon-Monroe) reflected long-term visions (post 2030 time frame) for these station areas. Each group envisioned high quality mixed-use, transit-oriented developments creating attractive, walkable neighborhoods.

Scenario G allocates potential development within station areas by creating “buckets of density” from which developers may propose to draw, rather than allocating potential density levels to all properties in a given area. The intent of Scenario G is to afford flexibility in allocating development opportunities based on the view that not all property owners will seek to redevelop. During its discussions, task force members have expressed concern that the density carrot may be insufficient to encourage redevelopment of existing commercial buildings into high quality, mixed-use projects. There is wide spread concern that infill development would result if there were insufficient incentives to redevelop and that this would fall far short of good urban design. There is also concern that the “bucket approach” will encourage a rush of applications to secure future options to develop even by some property owners who have no intent to construct new buildings in the near term. The reduction in potential redevelopment opportunities will also reduce the economic basis for proffers to support community infrastructure and amenities.

The Task Force is asked to consider the following propositions.

- There must be sufficient incentives to create an appropriate balance of density and uses and community amenities and infrastructure
- Scenario G does not (may not) provide enough density to produce the full complement of amenities and infrastructure, which the community desires. Even Scenario E may need additional density “carrots” to provide the desired amenities and infrastructure.
- The amended Reston Master Plan should provide opportunities to exceed the density levels of Scenario G and provide benchmarks for the community amenities and infrastructure that should be provided to do that. It must be demonstrated that this additional density can be accommodated and that the cost of providing the additional infrastructure and amenities to serve this density can be financed by the landowners who benefit and other public and private sources.

Recommendations:

- The Plan should permit cumulative zoning proposals to exceed the development total of Scenario G if it can be demonstrated that the additional density will be adequately served by existing or planned infrastructure and community facilities and the cost of providing this additional infrastructure is reasonable and is assigned.
- The Plan should permit densities beyond those envisioned under Scenario G (bonus density). The rezoning process should tie density entitlement to the final development plan stage. This entitlement should be limited in time (not indefinite). Approval of additional density for larger projects should be tied to proffers that commit the developer to phasing and to demonstrating before commencing any stage of development that adequate traffic mitigation measures, infrastructure, and community amenities will be in place before or at the same time as the related phase of development occurs.
- Plan policies should distinguish between requirements for infrastructure/facility needs/amenities for specific sites and those that are needed for wider areas and provide broader community benefits. These will use a range of funding sources and mechanisms, in addition to proffers by developers.
- The Plan should include policies that provide the flexibility to move or reallocate density and uses (*e.g.* TDR – transfer of development rights) within a transit station area. This would help to address the unpredictability relating to which land areas will actually develop, with what uses, and in what time frame. The Plan should also permit the possibility of agreements to transfer existing, unused zoned development into a station area from sites located more than ½ mile from the station
- Densities for specific projects should be subtracted from a given “bucket” only when a final development plan is approved.
- As part of the rezoning and site development processes, the County Department of Planning and Zoning staff must work with applicants and the public to assure that the Plan’s standards and goals are satisfied by rezoning applications and proffers before approvals are given to rezone or to proceed with specific phases of development.