

Terry,

I need to be respectful of FOIA since I gather you've copied the entire Task Force on this, but since this e-mail exchange is very public, is informational only, and does not involve any effort to poll or use e-mail to take any decision, I think it is appropriate and important that I respond. I think people need a fuller understanding of why we are talking about these things because I am concerned your e-mail may create some unnecessary confusion (and knowing you and your strong bona fides and community spirit I hasten to add that I know such would be unintentional). I've copied Sandi Smith so she can post this as part of the public record as well.

As an important starting point, the GMU threshold is a jobs:**household** ratio, not a jobs:**employee** ratio as you cite. So even using the numbers you provided, that would put Ballston at closer to 3:1 jobs:household whereas John McClain suggested it was around 4:1. Further, if you see Mike Novotny's last e-mail, you'll see there is data to support the GMU position that Ballston is @ 4:1 jobs:**households**. I have no idea why your data and Mike's on Ballston is different. We ought to get to the bottom of that; perhaps you can. If Ballston is going to be held up as a relevant standard, we should know the numbers. But here's the big point for those reading this who are only going to glean the big message: whatever the final numbers for Ballston turn out to be, the order of error magnitude (*if there even is one*) in what our Committee is looking at is not a four times error as suggested in your e-mail. In your defense and my own, I have made similar mistakes trying to get my mind around these numbers; it is complicated stuff for folks like me who are not steeped in this kind of planning esoterica. But we all need to be careful that we are talking about the same thing, apples to apples, before we get folks chasing rabbits down holes.

Secondly, while you are correct in saying that TCN is outside the ¼ or ½ mile radii (it is within the 1 mile radius), much of Town Center is absolutely within the ¼ and ½ mile radii of the Metro. Our Committee is charged with looking at not only TCN (which we've done) but also what I am calling Metro North and South. Much of what is being talked about now is how we create an appropriate comm.:res mix for these TOD areas, so this data is very relevant.

Now to substance and why this dialogue is so important. As a residential representative on the Task Force I think one of my key charges is to ensure that the traffic/congestion issue is given appropriate scrutiny in anything we do (as I tried to make clear in my below e-mail). I think this is the #1 issue on the minds of residents when we talk about increasing density related to Metro. As I have gotten more educated about these issues over the last several months it strikes me there is broad agreement that one way to help mitigate the congestion issue is to ensure a "healthy" commercial: residential balance. So that begs the obvious question: what is healthy?

I have highlighted the GMU input because there seems wide agreement these are not fly-by-night folks. To the contrary, I'm hearing from multiple sources (within the development **and** residential communities **and** the County) that the GMU folks are respected as the best or one of the best sources on the region's demographics. I can't read everything. I'm sure there are lots of other sources out there (this fellow Cervero being one perhaps) but using GMU as one source of helpful information seems to me smart.

Moreover, my sense is that a 4:1 jobs:**household** ratio for TOD like Town Center is not a crazy number. What I am learning is there are really two principal ratios that are used to measure these mixes – sq. ft. or jobs:households. Most talk about a 1:1 or 50:50 sq. ft. mix as being relatively desirable (both developers and residents who have been involved in these kinds of discussions for years have referenced this ratio as a relevant touchstone; some argue 60:40 which is what is currently in the Comp Plan; still others argue as you get into real TOD you could go to 70:30 or even higher comm:res for some lots; but overall in a total area like Town Center getting to something closer to 1:1 sq. ft. is probably a good thing if we are going to have a fighting chance of mitigating traffic impacts – and again, for emphasis, that is **not** 1:1 jobs:workers but 1:1 comm sq. ft to residential sq. ft.) This is roughly equivalent to a 4:1 jobs:**households** ratio since that is based on 250 sq. ft./employee and about 1,000 sq. ft. in a more urban space like Town Center for a typical household (worth adding is that some feel the commercial number should really be more like 300 sq. ft./employee which would significantly affect the ratios). One of our Committee members, Joe Stowers, has argued that in Town Center going forward the ratio should be at least 2:1 sq. ft. residential:commercial (or higher) because the current commercial:residential ratio in TC is so heavily weighted commercial that we in effect need to "catch up" to get to 1:1. There are a host of issues associated with that that we have hashed out in Committee; and I know Joe and others will be strongly advocating this point of view later with the Task Force.

All of this tells me that a 4:1 jobs:household measure is not out of whack at all. That said, I am not defining this as the “gold standard.” I and all of us need to rely on true experts for that kind of assessment. John McClain doesn't seem a bad source, especially given it tracks with everything I am hearing from Joe Stowers to Mr. Developer to County staff and everyone in between. I agree 100% that whatever we look to as a guiding principle here it needs to be an intellectually defensible and prudent target. A 4:1 jobs:**household** or the equivalent 1:1 sq. ft. ratio seem in the ballpark. (I tend to prefer the jobs:household ratio as a bit simpler and maybe easier to get one's mind around since I think most average folks like me have no idea what a 1:1 sq. ft. ratio means since we typically don't know the conversion data. But I don't care what we use so long as it has an intellectually honest and defensible history.)

To the implication that we are talking about ratios here that are weak and very heavily pro-developer: Forget the GMU projections and let's just deal with the GMU data on the ground. See the slides at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/projects/reston/presentations/dulles_rail_preliminary_forecasts_for_reston.pdf. Along the Reston-Herndon rail corridor, the **current** jobs:household ratio is **15:1** (77,300 jobs to 5,200 household). I repeat: 15:1. That is what is on the ground now, not some hypothetical. So before we start decrying 4:1 as insane pause and reflect on current reality. Within TC (which for the data includes Metro South, arguably a bit unfair since residential wasn't even permitted for much of that) it is 15.4:1 (but even without Metro South the ratio is probably something like 10 or 11:1). **This is critical to understanding just how much we are trying to bend the curve here.** What the TC Committee is talking about is trying at least in TC to get that ratio going forward closer to 4:1. We are talking about trying to compress this ratio **by essentially four times** and get it more in balance with what we are being told by leading experts is the model for the VA rail corridor (Ballston). That is a quantum step forward. So I don't think folks should leave this e-mail exchange with the misimpression that we are talking about silly stuff that of course the developers love because they won't have any trouble complying with this. That would be a terrific disservice to what we are trying to accomplish. I'd emphasize another piece of what I relayed below in my original e-mail: historically and across the Nation we see that getting residential built in TOD areas is very hard (for obvious economic reasons – commercial typically yields higher ROI, at least in recent years). So let's not get sidetracked with misassumptions about this being a walk in the park for developers. We are talking about hard criteria to meet and there will have to be real incentives to get folks to go there. And, by the way, many of these lots are not now built to their by-right zoning, and of course the RCIG lots that folks spent a lot of money for were already zoned exclusively industrial/commercial. So there are some real challenges here to try to get us moving toward a more healthy res:comm mix.

I think we can and should have a very healthy discussion about whether 4:1 jobs:households is the right standard (as Joe has argued against); whether we are being too “Big Brother” by even trying to tie developers to this kind of thing; and whether the market would even allow you to do that. My goal is the same as yours: we need to be cognizant of the elephant in the room – congestion – and make sure whatever we recommend has sought in good faith to try to address that in some way. You have my continuing promise to try to do that. There is nothing written that says we have to agree to higher densities (albeit these folks paid a big chunk of what it cost to get Metro here). I think we do that only if we are persuaded it will be a good outcome for the community. But at least in TC I think there can be a good outcome. This is where density should be if it is to be in Reston. As I have said publicly many times, I am an original owner in TC (1998), and TC is better today than it was in 1998. And that is because it is denser than it was, which allows more options for live, work, and play. TC can handle more growth if we do a good job of planning it, and allowing that growth allows us to create the TC Station as a true destination station – which I think would be a win for the community.

I hope that is helpful in clarifying. Let me also offer this: we of course will be making a full presentation to the Task Force on this in open meeting. The Committee is going to use its meeting on July 27 to receive community comment on the fulsome TC report, the draft of which we will be attempting to finalize in the next two weeks. But beyond that, I am happy to meet with 2020 or any other resident or resident group that would like to talk more about these issues (as I already have). If there is more than one such group and we can combine that to respect my personal time, that would be great. The more we talk about it the better the work product will become. Let me know. Many thanks.

Regards,

Robert Goudie

-----Original Message-----

From: Terry Maynard .com; rae moritake; Stephen cerny
Subject: RE: Town Center Committee: update to GMU info

Robert--

Thank you for including me on this important e-mail. As you might expect, I would like to comment on some of thoughts you shared based on your telecon with Mr. McLain.

On #2: Although Mr. McLain may have restated that the jobs:residential ratio is 4:1 at Ballston, according to PRIMARY sources, specifically Mr. Bob Brosnan's presentations to the Task Force, this is NOT true. Data presented by Mr. Brosnan in his "40 Years of TOD Development" at the Saturday, May 15, Reston community seminar (p.44) and also in his 2/23 presentation (p.23) to the Task Force, Mr. Brosnan laid out the following development data re Ballston TOD (1/2 mi. radius):

- Office space: 6,972,000 SF
- Residential units: 10,500

Using common factors for calculating jobs and residents from these numbers, one arrives at:

- 27,888 jobs @ four jobs/1,000 SF
- 21,000 residents @ two people/RU

That's a ratio of 1.3:1--nowhere near 4:1.

More broadly, the entirety of the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor, including hyper-dense Rosslyn, has an employee:resident ratio of roughly 1.5:1 using the same calculation approach. Rosslyn alone, with 4,415,000 SF of office space and 2,500 residential units, has a 3.4:1 jobs:residents ratio. Nowhere in the R-B corridor does the ratio reach 4:1, and I doubt you or anyone else would seriously proposed ratios as high as Rosslyn's, much less higher, for the Dulles Corridor in Reston.

On #3: Consistent with the previous statement, no responsible TOD advocate, including SmartGrowth, Robert Cervero (leading national thinker on TOD development), federal housing and transportation research reports, or others I'm aware of would recommend a 4:1 jobs:employment ratio. Most strongly believe that a balance--1:1--provides that best outcome for the cliched work, live, & play. I could quote reports, but even our Transportation Work Group report cites Cervero on the need for balance between office and residential use in TOD areas.

On #4: Wilson Boulevard at Virginia Square is one of seven intersections Mr. Brosnan presented data for over a recent 10-year period (1996-2006) (p. 53). During that period, that intersection showed a 15.8% drop in traffic. Two other intersections showed smaller declines over the same period (14.1% and 11.8%) while the major of the intersections showed increases.

Moreover, this metric is only for the most recent reported decade of TOD development--the fourth such decade. I'm sure that if you look at traffic development in the R-B corridor over the last 30-40 years at these same intersections you will find that traffic has increased from 30-60%. Brosnan's presentation does not show this information, but it does show a similar trend on other Arlington arterials (p.53)--including a slight decrease in traffic in the most recently reported decade.

None of this addresses the difference in commitment between Arlington and Fairfax County is moving people to Metro via public transit. We need a major change in Fairfax policy or the slight decreases Arlington has seen in traffic in its most recent decade will never occur here.

Applicability to TCN: TCN is NOT in a TOD area; it's well outside the 1/2-mile radius established for TODs based on the maximum distance people will walk to/from Metrorail and can not use County TOD policy as a refuge for extremely dense development. To place very high densities in this area--balanced or not--will only assure maximum traffic congestion notwithstanding hoped for improvements in public transit. (I would add that Mr. McLain's argument for a 4:1 planning horizon/target appears to be at odds with GMU CRA's analysis for the 2030 Group--some two dozen of the largest area developers--which notes the likely shortfall in metro-DC area housing over the next 20 years with adverse economic consequences. Certainly further limiting housing in Reston's TOD areas would aggravate that problem.)

I am extremely disappointed in this extremely selective and limited use of secondary research information when primary data on Rosslyn-Ballston corridor--set as a national model for TOD development--is so readily available. I hope that you will research this issue more thoroughly than a single phone conversation with a secondary source. Too much is at stake for Reston.

Regards,
Terry Maynard