

From: Robert
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2011 5:50 PM
To: 'Nicoson, Patty'; Merkel, Heidi T.
Cc: Darab, Faheem; Lambert, Richard; Beaulieu, Sandi
Subject: Proposed redlined edits to the Vision and Planning Principles

Patty/Heidi,

I attach a redline with my minor proposed edits to the excellent Vision and Planning Principles document. I explain each below:

Vision

1. Only change is to the second bullet. There are two:
 - a. Adding the “village centers” to those areas of greatest densities in Reston (this in response to the point Bob Simon raised at our last Task Force meeting; I proposed this simple edit to him and I think he agrees it solves his concern on that point). Note I also added Town Center since that is broader than the station area and of course will also be an area of greater density (conforming change made throughout the document).
 - b. The current bullet says that appropriate res:office balances are needed “to address congestion.” While that is an extremely important goal of balancing it is not and should not be singled out as the only one. Other very important community goals associated with balancing include creating a diversified TOD housing stock and supporting an 18/7 dynamic at Town Center. I think if “to address congestion” is deleted the statement is strong as it is; but if folks feel there needs to be a more fulsome explanation of why appropriate balances at these TOD areas is important then I’ve included optional language.

Planning Principles

2. PP#2: Not all natural areas in Reston can be “protect[ed] and restore[d]” with oncoming growth. My concern is that perhaps this is too static/prescriptive. E.g., note the wetlands at H-M were created as mitigation wetlands because other wetlands in Reston were being overtaken by new development. Likewise, there will be what are now natural (undeveloped) areas in Town Center and the other stations that will be subject to growth. I think returning to what the Steering Committee draft said makes sense – that these areas will be “given special emphasis” in planning. This appropriately elevates them in the discussion but gives the community some flexibility. And it is importantly augmented by the next sentence that says environmental impacts will be “minimized” and “best practices will be used to protect environmentally sensitive areas” (excellent additions from prior drafts). Working in tandem I think these sentences, as edited, work well. I accept this is a hard thing to write and there may be a better formation to make the point. I just think we need to be careful about being too static in that formulation.
3. PP#4: The third bullet in PP#4 was significantly changed post-Steering Committee. It now says there will be a variety of housing stock – a principle already enunciated in PP#7. What the Steering Committee draft was trying to get at was this notion of “keeping stable neighborhoods stable.” As I noted at the last Task Force meeting, that is a hard concept to state (and the word “stable” is not apt) but the concept is important. With Metro’s arrival Reston is going to change from essentially suburbia to a mixed suburban/urban area. PP#4 was trying to make that point but offer some assurance that new growth will be targeted in the Town Center, rail corridor, and village centers and the rest of suburban Reston will be protected. I think this is what many residents want to hear. The attached edit tries to get at that. **Note:** the edit does not prevent an individual cluster from renovating or being torn down to be replaced by something better (something I know the Supervisor and others want to protect). What it does prevent is a change in the residential/suburban character of that neighborhood, so that the neighboring clusters or single family homes don’t wake up one day and see a 10-story

tower next to them. That is the issue I think folks in suburban Reston are concerned about, not preventing an individual cluster from being refurbished or redeveloped.

4. PP#5: see comments in #1 above on Vision. Same applies here. I also added the word “approximately” when talking about the ¼ and ½ mile radii. Some land units, indeed parcels, straddle these radii so I don’t think we want to be slavish about the ¼ and ½ mile limitations. The point is made that we want to maximize transit development within the +/- ½ mile radius (since that maximizes walking potential to transit) and I think that captures the essence.
5. PP#8: I’m concerned about the new add saying Toll Road tunnels/bridges “are of the highest priority.” I (and I think most everyone) completely agree that improving north-south connectivity across the Toll Road is a very important priority. But “highest priority”? By way of example, I think building out TC is a higher community priority than the TCP tunnel extension. The build out would be better with the tunnel, but the tunnel is not the higher priority. I’d be willing to accept build out even if we don’t get the tunnel. The edit reflects the critical importance we attach to improved north—south connectivity without making it an absolutist “highest priority.” I also think at some point as a community we have to recognize there are scarce resources and not every single thing we want may happen. So, suppose I was told that I could do only one or the other – have a shuttle bus service to unify the Town Center District with Metro or I could build the TCP tunnel. These are both high priorities, but I’m not prepared to say right now that the tunnel is the highest priority. I’d want to see data, cost/benefit analyses, etc. I think the edit makes very plain that we “must” (not should or could) pursue better north-south connectivity but doesn’t say it is the highest priority in this whole replanning effort. Different people are going to have different views about what is the highest priority in all of this, and I think the document otherwise helpfully avoids making absolutist characterizations. Relatedly, I also changed the characterization of existing congestion from “already excessive” to “already severe.” Again, little less absolutist.
6. PP#9: The word “Abundant” was added post-Steering Committee to describe open space. I understand the impulse to add this (and here I applaud the efforts of 2020, ARCH, and others who continue to keep pressure on the open space issue), but “abundant” is a subjective and contextual term. What any 10 of us think qualifies as “abundant” might be 10 different answers. And what might qualify as “abundant” open space in Town Center is probably not the same thing as would qualify as “abundant” open space in suburban Reston. I assume this is precisely why the County came up with an Urban Parks Standard, which is different than a suburban parks standard. Both may be appropriate to the context but some folks may not consider one to be sufficiently “abundant.” *Open space has to have priority and it must be appropriate to the paradigm being designed.* That it seems to me is the point. And the attached edit, by simply deleting the word “abundant,” says unambiguously that “Active and passive open space . . . are *essential* components of the high quality of life in Reston.” (Emphasis added.) I think this is concise, capable of adaptation to the different context, and very strong. I’d add that I am concerned that if “abundant” stays we will be subjected to relentless repetition of this word in letters to the editor, hearings, community meetings, etc. once we adopt open space standards – you said “abundant” in the Planning Principles and you are betraying that, you didn’t mean “abundant” when you said it, this is not “abundant” open space, and on and on. I think eliminating the word “abundant” does not weaken what is a very strong statement and commitment to open space but it does eliminate needless misunderstanding and distraction down the line. [Note: if a descriptive word simply has to be added then the word “appropriate” is I think much better than “abundant.”]

I know we will all publicly thank John and Kohann for their incredible leadership in making this happen, but I’ll do it here as well. This is really an excellent document. I look forward to talking about these minor suggested edits at Tuesday’s TF meeting.

Regards,

Robert Goudie