

OVERVIEW OF DRAFT WIEHLE STATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Principal Themes and Objectives

Comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment is encouraged within one-half mile of the Wiehle Station exits (“Station Area”). Allowable density/intensity is expected to be substantial, particularly in areas closest to the station. Beyond one half mile from the station, mixed uses should be permitted upon application, but density increases should be limited to special circumstances, such as being part of a comprehensive redevelopment of an area that is primarily within the half-mile radius, or where uniquely valuable proffers are made to desired public amenities and there is a commitment to support non-automobile access to the transit station.

Within the Station Area, proposed floor area ratios (FARs) should be considered above current Comprehensive Plan guidance in the context of efforts to maximize use of the transit station within a more urban, pedestrian-dominated local environment. Thus, the density potential of any proposed project should be considered in connection with a variety of factors, including how a proposal would accomplish TOD objectives and minimize harmful traffic increases.

In general, this means that the greatest densities should be closest to the transit station; that development should include a significant residential component; and that density increases need to be accompanied by attractive pedestrian/bicycle access throughout the Station Area and by a mix of retail and non-retail amenities designed to meet, at a comfortable walking distance, most of the daily and evening needs of the new workers and residents.

While the pattern of permissible building heights should *generally* follow density distributions (i.e., taller closer to the station), heights should be reviewed case-by-case. There are benefits from a diverse skyline, and, at a given FAR, taller buildings can free up space for ground-level amenities, such as parks and plazas.

Overall, development should include residences, offices, hotels, retail spaces (including restaurants), and other spaces (educational, civic, cultural, athletic), and a substantial component of open space. The precise distribution of uses should not be rigidly fixed, but consideration should be given to whether occupants of given spaces are likely to walk to the transit station or to jobs and retail in the area and whether proposed projects contribute to the long-term TOD health of the area. (This suggests that office space may be denser in areas closer to the station than at greater distances.) In the long term, the overall balance of non-residential and residential space in the Station Area should be [__-__][measured either on a SF basis or __dwelling units/1000SF of non-residential] though higher levels of residential should be permitted and even encouraged. Given the well-established amount of commercial and office development, the majority of “additive” floor area ratio should be in the form of residential and retail/amenity options. Replacements can reflect something closer to the ultimate balance to be achieved.

Sunrise Valley Drive should serve as a firm and well-defined “edge” for the Wiehle Study Area being considered for redevelopment, and there should be no transitional or

encroaching commercial or higher intensity development in residential areas to the south. (Note that the small area of commercial development along the south side of Sunrise Valley west of Soapstone may be redeveloped but should not be made significantly more dense.)

Educational institutions and cultural attractions should be encouraged here. Such uses are non-rush hour, and will help to keep the area active and alive outside office hours.

Amenities, such as shops, restaurants, plazas, parks, paths, visual attractions, etc., are critical to attracting businesses and residents and to keeping people out of cars. Commercial attractions, including restaurants and other retail, are an important part of securing a viable pedestrian oriented environment in which residents and workers can live, work, shop and play without routinely resorting to automobiles to meet their needs. This has the benefit of reducing traffic and enhancing the livability of the area. Retail and other amenities should be concentrated along an internal road or in a central area, such as a plaza, within the various landbays. Developers in the area should endeavor to develop a distinct Wiehle identity, not merely replicate other transit areas.

Open spaces, including parks, pedestrian/bicycle trails, plazas, athletic courts/fields, green buffers must be well distributed throughout the area. Every resident and office worker should be close to some open space. Trees to shade sidewalks, plazas and parks are also vital. To the extent possible open spaces should be designed to be regularly used, not just to decorate. Developers and the County should enhance access to and use of existing local outdoor amenities, especially including the W&OD and Lake Fairfax Park which abuts the Wiehle Study Area east of Wiehle. Grade separation of road crossings and the W&OD are very important, particularly at Wiehle Avenue and roads exiting G-1. Widening the W&OD in the Study Area to allow pedestrians and bicycles more space (and less conflict) could enhance use of the trail for residents going to work or the transit station. (A draft map with possible open spaces is attached.)

Planning and action to mitigate traffic problems are needed from the outset. The RMAG study identifies a number of critical measures, including its recommended Soapstone extension and bridge. Other crossings of the Toll Road—for cars, pedestrians and bicycles are essential over time. (In the near term, this includes widening the sidewalk to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle crossings of the existing Wiehle Avenue bridge.) The Toll Road barrier is a major threat to the unity of Reston, particularly if traffic is allowed to deteriorate materially. Traffic demand management and steps to decrease the ratio of parking to occupied space (including reprogramming Metro station parking) are critical in the long run since building parking acts as a magnet for more traffic. Large at-grade parking lots, which currently dominate the area, should be replaced by screened structured parking, buildings, networks of complete streets and open spaces. A map with a possible grid of streets is attached.

Opportunities for air rights development should be protected for the long term.

Distribution of Densities in the Wiehle Study Area

For purposes of this stage of discussion, FARs will be denominated from high to low simply as FAR A; FAR B; FAR C; FAR D; FAR E; and FAR N/C (no change) on the south side of the Toll Road and FAR A'; FAR B'; FAR C'; FAR D'; FAR E'; and FAR N/C (no change) on the north side. [Numbers can be substituted for letters at the next stage of discussion. Whether the maximums are identical on both sides of the Toll Road is also open for discussion.] The FARs are a presumptive limit, which can be achieved only with an application meeting the overall standards, but may be exceeded with bonus densities awarded on a case-by-case basis. Where a property or group of properties to be developed extends over two density levels, the distribution can be flexible but the limit should reflect the average on a land-area basis.

South of the Toll Road (H-1, H-2, I-1, I-2, I-3).

Consistent with the draft Herndon-Monroe Committee report, Sunrise Valley Drive should be established as a grand green boulevard with appropriate accommodations and amenities for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. To accomplish these ends, reasonable building setbacks should be provided along Sunrise Valley. Development along Sunrise Valley Drive should be designed and oriented such that loading areas and “back of the house operations” are not visible from this roadway.

Density South of the Toll Road should be oriented within the individual land bays so that the tallest buildings and most intense development are closest to the Dulles Toll Road. Height and density should taper as development moves closer to Sunrise Valley. Substantial setbacks and buffers should be maintained along Sunrise Valley. Mixed-use and a network of interconnected streets and pedestrian/bicycle paths are important. However, the narrow space between the Toll Road and Sunrise Valley limit the potential development.

Landbay 1. With this in mind, the greatest density (FAR A) should be located in H-2 within approximately 1/8 mile of the station exit—provided that station access is made possible for buses and a kiss-and-ride drop off within that circle. Densities should step down *along the Toll Road* to FAR B out to a 1/4 mile radius and FAR C to 1/2 mile. (Note that, although it is not within the Wiehle Study Area, Sub-unit F-3 is within the half mile circle and, logically, should get similar treatment.) A hotel may be appropriate close to the transit station.

Toward Sunrise Valley, densities and heights should be reduced to FAR E and _feet. Residential units are appropriate along Sunrise Valley, but are not restricted to that area.

Landbay 2. This area is south of the Toll Road and across Wiehle from the transit station. Without a grade-separated crossing of Wiehle, the effective walking distance from the station is more than 1/4 mile and parts of I-2 would be more than 1/2 mile away. The maximum potential density should consider this. Assuming a grade-separated crossing is developed, densities along the Toll Road could reach FAR B and FAR C. Along Sunrise Valley, densities and heights should be reduced to FAR E and _feet. Residential units are appropriate along Sunrise Valley, but are not restricted to that area.

I-3 is entirely beyond the 1/2 mile radius and should be assigned FAR N/C. Developing greater densities in that area would compound traffic and have little to do with the transit station.

(This can be revisited in a future re-examination of the Comprehensive Plan after development closer to the station has proceeded.)

North of the Toll Road (G-1 – G-7). Between Sunset Hills and the Toll Road lies the greatest potential for high density, transit oriented development. The area is wider than the area south of the Toll Road, and offers greater potential for contiguous, interconnected mixed-use development. The major barriers are Sunset Hills and Wiehle Ave.

Landbay 3 (G-3-G-4) The highest densities (FAR A') should be located within 1/8 mile of the station exit, with somewhat less potential for density (FAR B') to 1/4 mile and somewhat less beyond that to 1/2 mile (FAR C'). Since there are no established residential neighborhoods along Sunset Hills and the potential residential developments in G-1 and G-2 are buffered by the W&OD trail and other features, there is no reason to limit the taller, denser development to the vicinity of the Toll Road itself. Still, in keeping with Reston's traditional look and feel, it remains important to retain a green buffer between the new buildings and Sunset Hills Road. One hotel has already been approved for the Comstock property. One or more other hotels may be viable in this area.

Landbay 5 (G-5, G-6 and the portion of G-7 near the Toll Road). G-5 and G-6 are well within the 1/2 mile radius and much of G-5 is within 1/4 mile. The western edge of G-7 is also within 1/2 mile. Densities of FAR B' and C' are appropriate in these areas. Attention is needed to establishing a safe, signaled pedestrian crossing can be established across to Reston Station Blvd. Joint development with a plaza tying the areas together for retail/restaurant activity would be highly beneficial. A hotel may be viable in this area.

Farther east in G-7 should be afforded a FAR N/C, though that could be reconsidered if part of a large joint development project with G-6 or with uniquely beneficial proffers and a plan to support transit station usage.

Landbay 5 (G-1) G-1 lies between the 1/4 and 1/2 mile circles from the station. It is bounded by the W&OD to the south and large open spaces (principally a golf course) to the north. It offers great potential for a residential emphasis given its distance from the transit station and the attractive open spaces which it faces. G-1 is dominated by Isaac Newton Square, a large, level area with mostly older buildings and a large parking area. Isaac Newton Square would be an excellent location for a residential community with a large central park and/or an athletic field. It is large enough for its own internal streets/paths connecting to Sunset Hills and Wiehle, and with some mixed-use. (Denser retail should be concentrated in Landbays 3 and 4, which are a convenient walk for residents of this Landbay 5 and have more room for such development.) Attention is needed to establishing a safe and convenient way for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Sunset Hills near the current Comstock building. Attention is needed to establishing a safe and convenient way for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Sunset Hills near the current Comstock building. A density of FAR C' is appropriate for G-1;

Landbay 6 (G-2 and the portion of G-7 north of Sunset Hills). G-2 and the western edge of G-7 lie between the 1/4 and 1/2 mile circles from the station. They are bounded by the

W&OD to the south and wooded areas to the west and north. They offer potential for a residential emphasis given their distance from the transit station and the attractive open spaces they front.

G-2 should be developed with additional residential, as should the western portion of G-7 near Michael Farraday Dr. A density of FAR D' is appropriate here. Attention is needed to establishing a safe and convenient way for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Sunset Hills and Wiehle.

A grade-separated crossing of Wiehle for pedestrians and the W&OD is strongly needed.

Farther east in G-7 should be afforded a FAR N/C, though that could be reconsidered on a case-by-case basis with uniquely beneficial proffers (e.g., an athletic field or substantial educational institution) and a plan to support transit station usage.

Additional Principles for Development

It is critical to develop interconnectivity within and between each of the Landbays in the Wiehle Study Area. A map with a potential grid of streets and with desirable bicycle trails is attached.

Streets within the landbays should be “complete streets” so that they are friendly to pedestrians and bicycles as well as cars and buses.

Sidewalks and plazas should be designed for attractive pedestrian passage and for outdoor eating. Resting places should be distributed so people can rest and talk. Trees should provide shade and beauty for pedestrians and diners along the way.

Open spaces, including publicly accessible parks, plazas, bicycle paths, trails and athletic fields and courts (even as small as bocce ball courts) and park benches and tables should be distributed throughout the area. This is important both for preserving Reston’s look and feel and for providing relief from the strictly urban atmosphere.

Receiving rezoning approval for mixed use at higher than currently authorized densities is not “by right.” Rather, property owners need to apply for a rezoning with an application that meets a number of basic requirements described in the Comprehensive Plan generally and for Mixed Use in the Reston Area, in particular. Among the basic requirements for any application, the applicant should have to demonstrate (either in its own project or in conjunction with other coordinate projects):

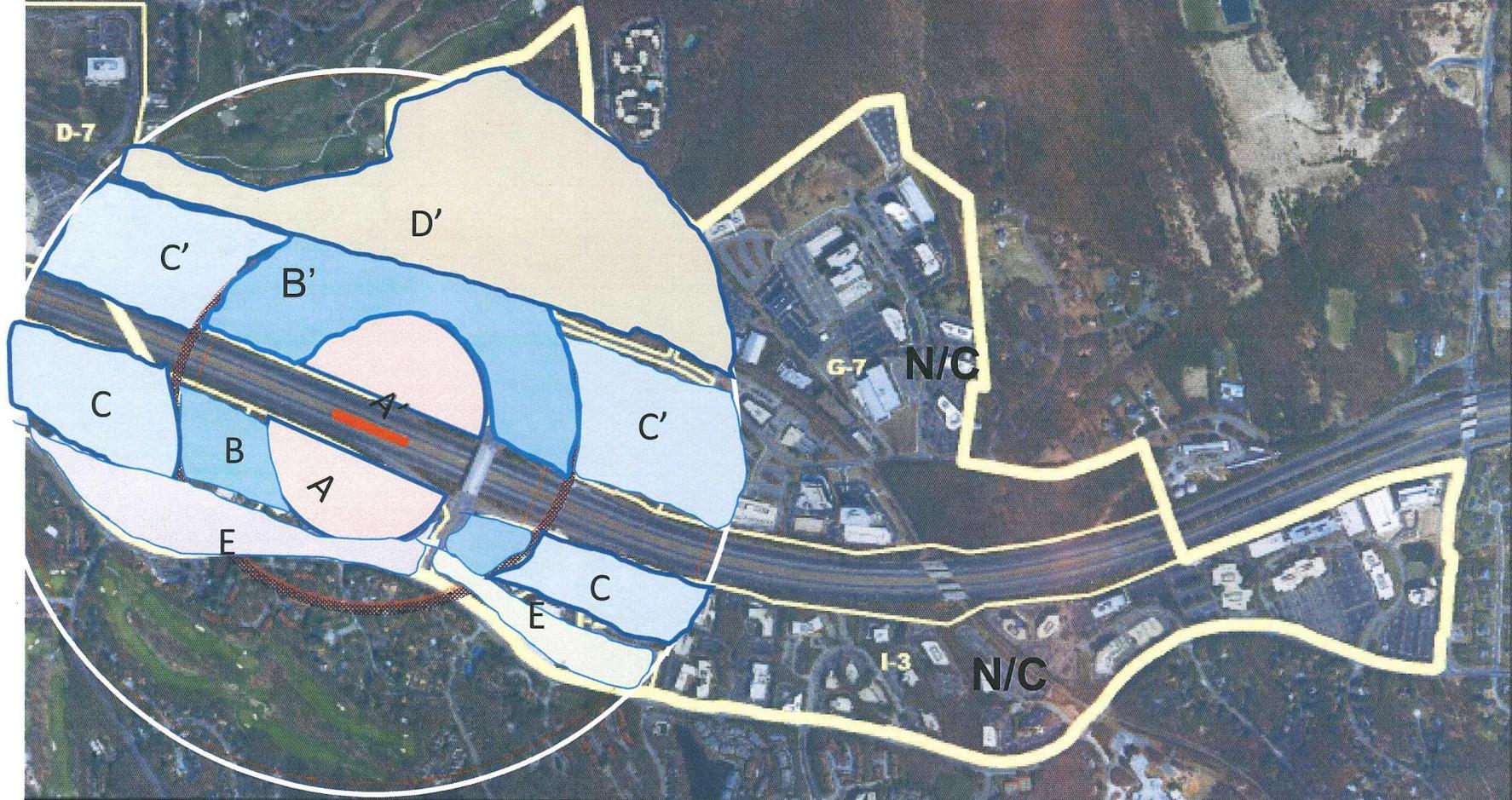
- Mixed-use development with more urban feel
- Street-accessible retail and restaurants
- Significant movement to achieving an overall [__/__] nonresidential/residential mix
- Contributions to attractive, inter-parcel connectivity (streets, sidewalks, bicycle paths-- “complete streets”--& circulator buses)

- High-quality architecture & public art
- Open space and recreation (publicly accessible parks, athletic options, bike/pedestrian trails, treed plazas, buffers)
- Non-degradation measures for traffic and pedestrian crossings (roads, TDM, circulator buses, etc.)
- Workforce Housing
- Structured parking that is screened by retail and other means
- Infrastructure improvements (storm water, etc.)

To be granted additional densities, the applicant should have to earn bonus densities. Bonus densities would potentially be available for:

- First Movers (those who build interconnectivity, transit access, etc. even before they apply to build their own mixed use, higher density project);
- Educational and cultural institutions (either by ownership or long-term (20+ year) lease);
- Unique infrastructure contributions (e.g., toll road crossings, elevated W&OD crossing of Wiehle, indoor recreation center);
- High-quality joint development with unique benefits for the community;
- Other?

RESTON MASTER PLAN SPECIAL STUDY: WIEHLE AVENUE AREA - CURRENT CONDITIONS



Reston Master Plan Special Study

Map prepared by
Dept. of Planning & Zoning
February 2010



Legend

- Reston-Herndon Suburban Center Sub-units
- General Location of Transit Station Platforms
- Circles denote 1/4 and 1/2 mile distances from center of station platform