

**RCA Reston 2020 Statement Regarding  
Draft Reston Master Plan Language on  
Reston's Village Centers  
January 29, 2015**

Good evening. I am Terry Maynard, spokesperson for the RCA Reston 2020 Committee.

Our committee and many residents are concerned that the revised, second draft of the Phase 2 Reston Master Plan provides no meaningful constraints on redevelopment in and around our Village Centers. The failure to provide meaningful guidance and restraint risks over-development of these centers and threatens surrounding neighborhoods.

The first draft provided that all Phase 2 areas essentially would be maintained "as built." The second draft generally retains this "as built" approach, even with respect to rental apartment sites which would be reduced from "high" to "medium" density. But there is one glaring and inappropriate change.

The second draft totally abandons this "as built" approach with respect to the four village centers, placing no objective limits on future density in the event of redevelopment. The draft language states at one point only that redevelopment within the village center footprints should be "neighborhood scale", a terminology that is literally meaningless, and yet at another points sets as the first goal in its vision for redevelopment of Village Centers as "community"—which means "Reston-wide" in county plan-speak—gathering places. Village Centers have never been meant to serve the community, only their nearby neighborhoods.

Normally County plans call for a maximum floor-area ratio or FAR for an area. These defining terms do not appear at all in the section on Village Center redevelopment. As a result, redevelopment densities are left to developers to conjure up at their whim, and their definition of "neighborhood scale" and "community gathering place" will almost certainly far exceed what the neighborhood thinks it should be.

The draft plan language also is very soft and vague in defining the boundaries of redevelopment both within and adjacent to the Village Centers.

The draft plan also does not limit redevelopment only to the established retail areas, merely suggesting it should be focused there. The door is opened to expanding commercial or mixed-uses into the residential areas within the existing Village Center footprints. We know of no good reason why the residents of Village Center areas should be treated differently than other Restonians whose property is generally protected by keeping them "as built."

The draft plan language does state that the Village Center outside boundaries themselves should be maintained, but our conversations with DPZ staff indicates that there are those who question that language and would support enlarging the village center footprints into nearby condo, townhouse and even single-family detached neighborhoods.

The argument for expanding the Village Centers' boundaries apparently hinges on the economic viability of redevelopment we were told. Our committee would ask, "What about the neighborhoods in and near Village Centers? Shouldn't their existing viability—their quality of life and their property values—be as protected at least as much as the hypothetical viability of some future redevelopment? Why should profit-driven commercial redevelopment be given some higher standing?"

As Reston has recently experienced, our questions and concerns are not hypothetical. Right now, the community faces a massive attack on the preservation of 166 acres of open space at Reston National Golf Course in part because of loose language in a County plan written 45 years ago. The approved redevelopment of the Town Center Office Building, an opportunity spawned by sloppy planning and zoning language decades ago, promises a massive high-rise office building twice as tall as adjoining buildings and more than ½-mile from the future Silver Line rail station. It will stand above Town Center like a developer's massive middle finger directed at the County's transit station area policy objective and the community's transit-oriented design goal of tapering density away from the Metro stations.

As these and other insults to Reston Master Plan suggest, developers will exploit not only every opening, but even any weak seams, in Reston's Master Plan to increase their development and profit potential at others' expense. We are seeking to prevent this from occurring again at the expense of Reston's vision as a well-planned community by ensuring that the draft plan language for Reston's Village Centers is as tight and precise as it can possibly be.

We believe that in the absence of concrete redevelopment constraints on density, borders, and mix of uses for redeveloped village centers, the plan should go no further than specify the existing baseline plan which allows a FAR of 0.25 and clearly defines the mixed-use and residential areas. All language proposing what might be offered in Village Center redevelopment should be dropped in the absence of reasonable and measurable constraints.

We do not want to see any language incorporated in the plan that provides a pretext, however remote, for massive redevelopment densities and expansion of the Village Centers at the expense of nearby neighborhoods. To do so could undermine the fabric of our residential neighborhoods.