

January 2, 2019

Hon. Catherine M. Hudgins  
Hunter Mill Supervisor  
North County Governmental Center  
1801 Cameron Glen Drive  
Reston, VA 20190-3307

**Re: Supporting County Staff's pending Reston PRC  
District Residential Density Zoning Ordinance Amendment to  
ensure implementation of the Comprehensive Plan vision for Reston**

Dear Supervisor Hudgins,

We support County Staff's pending Reston PRC District Residential Density Zoning Ordinance Amendment to allow implementation of the vision for Reston in the Comprehensive Plan.

The intent of this letter is not to prejudge or determine what if any changes may be appropriate to address specific issues discussed in the extensive community meetings the County pursued in recent months. But we think it important that there be greater understanding and appreciation for what is actually contained in the Comprehensive Plan and the rationales that underlie those decisions. We all appreciate that growth is not universally accepted and is not without challenge; but the decision to embrace very significant growth, with an accompanying process and plan for necessary infrastructure development, was incorporated into the Reston Comprehensive Plan as the result of an extensive and participatory community process that had the widespread support of community representatives intimately engaged in that process.

With that in mind, we would like to underscore essential points that are sometimes missing from the ongoing dialogue about Staff's proposals.

**Reston's Comprehensive Plan was the product of a five-year planning process involving the full community:** A Task Force of 50 people (including alternates), representing both residential (RA, RTCA, RCA, P&Z Committee, private individuals, etc.) and commercial interests (GRCC, major landowners, developers, architects, and engineers), spent four-plus years working with County Staff and others to re-plan the transit station areas (TSAs – Wiehle-Reston East, Reston Town Center, and Herndon-Reston West) and Reston Town Center North.

County Staff spent another year or so soliciting community input on recommendations for the Reston Village Centers.

A number of us were members of that Task Force and/or have been active participants or supporters in the process leading up to adoption of the Reston Master Plan in the County's Comprehensive Plan. The goal of this extended and inclusive process was to capture the value of the Silver Line in the Dulles Corridor and maximize the massive public-private investments in rail (approximately \$6 billion) by: (1) creating walkable, transit-oriented development (TOD) lifestyle options for Reston residents; and (2) ensuring that oncoming commercial development (entitled in many cases) would be balanced by healthy residential growth (see below). This point is often neglected or minimized: once the community went down the path of funding Metrorail's extension to this region, and Reston in particular, the paradigm changed. Growing Reston into an even more vibrant, TOD-focused community was an inevitable and desirable result of making the massive public-private investment in rail.

**Robert E. Simon was a part of, actively participated on, and voted for the recommendations of the Task Force:** He also supported the last (but ultimately failed) proposal to try to redevelop Lake Anne, which would have added more residential and commercial density at Reston's first village center. Lake Anne's village center as redeveloped and Reston Town Center were the only two that fulfilled Bob Simon's original concept for how village centers would be built and integrated in the larger community surrounding them. The Comprehensive Plan supports the achievement of Bob Simon's vision.

**Stable residential neighborhoods, as one moves away from the TSAs, are protected:** The Task Force recommended, and the Comprehensive Plan requires, that the highest densities of new development specifically target the TSAs. Development steps down as it moves to Reston Town Center North, and much less but needed new development is allowed to create more vibrant, healthier village centers. Planning Principle #4 in the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and Planning Principles specifically states: "The [TSAs] will also be the areas of highest commercial and residential intensity in the community. The Village Centers are important community gathering spaces that include a mix of neighborhood-serving retail and service uses, integrated with accessory office, institutional and residential uses. Redevelopment to augment and enhance the village centers will be pedestrian-oriented, should include a plaza as a central element and provide adequate transition to surrounding neighborhoods. . . . *Appropriate transitions will be provided between new development and all residential neighborhoods.*" (Emphasis added.)

**Ensuring a diversity of housing stock – from urban, to suburban, to even more rural – is expressly protected under the Plan:** One of Reston's strengths is its diversity of housing choices. By specifically targeting the new development in the TSAs and village centers, urban, suburban, and even more rural housing options will be protected in Reston.

Also, worth emphasizing: just as densities will taper down as one moves farther away from the TSAs, residential presence will increase. The Comprehensive Plan envisions that new development be at least 50% residential adjacent the TSAs and increase to 75% or higher as one moves farther away from the TSAs. Further, *all new residential development* must comply with County affordable housing requirements.

**Adding significant new residential development is central to the Task Force recommendations and essential to ensure balanced growth:** For the first 45 years of Reston's existence, residential development was precluded along most of the Dulles Toll Road. That area, originally designated as the Reston Center for Industry and Government, was set aside as an employment corridor. Reston succeeded in attracting major employers who brought tens of thousands of jobs to the community, but the inability to locate housing near those same jobs created transportation headaches as commuters had few options but to drive. As we move forward, it must be underscored that much of the commercial development that will add to what already exists in the corridor *was already entitled under existing zoning*. Enabling and encouraging robust residential growth to help balance that oncoming commercial development was an essential element of the plan the Task Force approved. Why?

The experts the Task Force consulted – academics, planners, and consultants – all confirmed that the single best tool to mitigate traffic/congestion impacts are balanced jobs-to-household ratios. Growing residential populations within walking distance of the major job centers that exist today (and will continue growing in the years to come) will maximize the potential for reducing vehicular trips in and through our community. Neighboring Arlington County is a

leading example of the effectiveness of mixed use as a transportation demand management tool dramatically reducing the use of vehicles for travel.

In contrast to certain of the ongoing community dialogue, the concern of the Task Force was not that we would have *too much residential* but that we might *not get enough* to achieve optimal jobs-to-household ratios (experts also advised that getting new residential built in developed areas is especially challenging).

Unduly limiting residential development disrupts the balances sought in the Comprehensive Plan, undermines the goals for the individual TSAs and village centers, and is not in the community's best interests.

**The Plan requires that infrastructure be "phased" with development:** Planning Principle #3 specifically provides that "adequate transportation infrastructure and programs, and other infrastructure components such as schools, parks, and other public facilities *should occur with development.*" (Emphasis added.) Protecting and increasing open space and public amenities are important parts of the Plan; see Comprehensive Plan at p. 10 (Vision Statement) and at pp. 143-145 (including table of Core Needs for Reston Park System. The Task Force discussed and rejected as unrealistic the idea that infrastructure must precede development, especially in an age when tax dollars increasingly are not used for this purpose and so much of the requisite infrastructure will be built through developer proffers.

**Approximately \$2.4B of transportation-related infrastructure is planned and a dedicated revenue stream is already in place:** In addition to the essential emphasis on balanced jobs-to-household ratios, the Comprehensive Plan also calls for major transportation improvements to improve mobility in and around the TSAs, including new north-south crossings of the Dulles Toll and Access Roads and grids of streets. Following the County's approval of the Plan updates, the Reston Network Access Group (RNAG) met for two years and approved a comprehensive strategy to fund over \$2 billion worth of key infrastructure projects. The Board of Supervisors now collects both taxes on existing development within the TSAs and proffers from every square foot of new development to pay for the needed transportation infrastructure; funding of the first projects is already underway. Not only were the needed improvements identified as part of the Plan updates, the County now has a dedicated revenue stream to pay for them.

**It will take decades for build-out to occur under the Plan, and the community's ability to participate throughout that process is protected:** It took Reston over 50 years to reach its current population of approximately 62,000 people. It will likewise take decades to achieve anything close to full build-out under the Plan (which may never be achieved). Planning Principle #10 expressly states: "Local participation should remain a hallmark of the planning and zoning processes as Reston continues to evolve as a complete community for the 21st century over several decades. The cumulative impacts of development and redevelopment should be routinely assessed and evaluated." There will be numerous opportunities for community input as this process evolves over the next several decades, and individual projects will be subject to multiple approvals and community input before they can proceed (the active community engagement and resulting effects on current development applications make that point very clearly). Each project will be required to submit transportation and other impact statements, and the advisory board for the transportation infrastructure tax district is tasked with working with Staff to annually assess and prioritize transportation infrastructure needs. Retreating from the Comprehensive Plan vision adopted just a few short years ago after an inclusive community

process is not the answer to promoting the community's interests; protecting community engagement throughout this decades-long development process is.

\* \* \*

Reducing or disincentivizing residential growth is at odds with the comprehensive vision the Task Force so powerfully (and almost unanimously) endorsed. These issues were exhaustively discussed throughout an arduous, inclusive, five-year Task Force and Village Center process; revisiting and endlessly debating these issues will create uncertainty about the Plan's stability and risks halting needed development or creating uneven or disjointed results, which we don't think is in Reston's interests. There will be numerous opportunities for community input as this process evolves over the next several decades, and individual projects will be subject to multiple approvals and community input before they can proceed. For all these reasons, we support County Staff's pending administrative recommendations, which we think are broadly consistent with implementation of the vision adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Nicoson  
Chair, Reston Master Plan Study Task Force (Task Force)



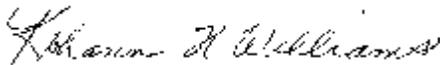
Rob Walker  
Reston P&Z Representative to the Task Force  
Co-Chair, Task Force Herndon Reston West Committee



Robert Goudie  
Town Center Residential Representative to the Task Force  
Co-Chair, Task Force Town Center Committee



Peter Otteni  
Boston Property Representative to the Task Force  
Co-Chair, Task Force Town Center Committee



Kohann Williams  
At-Large Representative to the Task Force  
Co-Chair, Task Force Vision Committee



Richard Kennedy  
At-Large Representative to the Task Force



Van Foster  
Reston resident  
Reston Community Reinvestment Corporation Representative to the Task Force



Nick Bauer  
Co-Chair of the H-M/Reston West Committee



Phil Tobey  
Western Alliance for Rail to Dulles Representative to the Task Force



Mark Looney  
Greater Reston Chamber Representative to the Task Force



Mike Jennings  
Reston Resident, Business Owner and Reston Chamber Executive Committee Member



Maggie Parker  
Reston Resident & Comstock



Shane Murphy  
Reed Smith



Andrew Painter  
Walsh Collucci



Charles Kapur  
Access National Bank



Charlene Wheelless  
Bechtel and Chair of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce



Mark S. Ingrao, CCP, CAE  
Reston Home Owner and President & CEO, Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce

Attachment