The case for Relocating the Fairfax County Government Headquarters to Reston
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This paper was prepared by Gulf Reston, Inc. with the consultation of Gladstone Associates, Economic Consultants, Washington, D.C. As such, the paper represents an independent professional assessment of Reston as a location for the Fairfax County Government Center. The portions of the paper dealing with economic development potentials were entirely prepared by Gladstone Associates under the authorship of Gordon Kennedy, Jr., President.
Point 1: Reston meets all of the County's Stated Requirements: It will Best Serve the Needs of Government of the Citizens.

Point 2: A Reston Location Offers Free Land and Minimal Infrastructure Cost -- a Probably Saving of $10 to $20 Million.

Point 3: A Reston location helps Implement the County's Comprehensive Plan and Offers and Exciting Urban Potential for a Preplanned County Seat.

Point 4: A Move to Reston will Stimulate County Economic Development, Helping to Shift the Tax Burden from the Residential Sector.

Making the Best Investment Decision
THE CASE FOR RELOCATING THE
FAIRFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS
TO RESTON

INTRODUCTION

A November 21, 1977 memorandum from the Fairfax County Executive to the Board of Supervisors requested approval for the establishment of a special committee to study the relocation of the County Government from its present location in Fairfax City.

The impetus for this request was clearly stated in that Memorandum:

1. Normal County growth, requiring additional staff each year, has pushed County office needs far beyond the Massey Building capacity (approximately 150,000 sq.ft.) into an additional 123,000 sq.ft. of leased space all within the boundaries of Fairfax City.

2. In addition the high cost of rental space (benefits going not to the County, but to Fairfax City), there is appreciable revenue loss to Fairfax County tax rolls due to the natural magnet of commercial space development around the Government Complex (benefits once again going to Fairfax City instead of to County taxpayers).
3. The County Government badly needs a new courthouse to take the pressure off the existing facility which dates back two centuries. A new courthouse building would use up the remaining open space within the 50 acre Government Complex (other buildings in this space - in addition to the Massey Building - include the old courthouse, the new jail, the police administration facilities, and, the school administration offices).

4. In keeping with the County goal for total long-range planning, it is time to plan for future Government Center needs.

5. Revenue losses to Fairfax City, the escalating costs of renting Fairfax City office space, plus the present site inadequacies to meet present and future County Government needs clearly call for the development of a cost benefit analysis of present site vs. the conceptual development of an entirely new County Government Center, or County Seat.

Shortly after Thanksgiving, the Board of Supervisors gave the County Executive the go-ahead.

The GRI Offer

It was this decision that set in motion the Gulf Reston, Inc. (GRI) offer to donate up to 150 acres of free land.
And it is the intent of this presentation to demonstrate why such a move to Reston would:

1. be highly cost effective
2. be a sound investment decision
3. be precisely suited to present and future needs
4. be immediately actionable
5. totally satisfy Board-stipulated requirements
6. have a beneficial return to taxpayers
7. stimulate county-wide economic development
8. provide favorable location and access to all taxpayers
9. protect existing residential neighborhoods from the impacts of a county government center and resulting industrial-commercial development
10. fulfill the County's long-term commitment to:
   a. sensitive ecological, comprehensive master planning
   b. excellence in land development
   c. Planned Development Centers
11. set in motion a noteworthy National precedent (see Appendix 1.)

The Board-endorsed site criteria calls for a location large enough to accommodate the year 2020 space needs (150 acres). Projections target an extra 157,000 sq.ft. (roughly equivalent to a new Massey Building) by 1985; another 150,000 sq.ft. by 1995, 2005 and 2020 (approximately 600,000 sq.ft. of additional space - or double the 568,000 sq.ft. occupied in the 1977 Center).
The challenge lies in the fact that the initial expansion needs must come into being by 1985 (or sooner), but the location must be so planned to be serviceable well into the next Century - and beyond.

The immediate focus, however, must be the 1985 initial phase.

The initial phase could be planned in a campus-like setting, with the County office buildings isolated from the surrounding community. Or, the 150 acre park could be planned as a true Government Center (County Seat) totally integrating the surrounding urban fabric with the Government Center buildings.

A Reston location could fulfill either option.

CONCLUSIONS

It is the thesis of this presentation, therefore, that Reston offers the Committee, the Board, and ultimately, the residents of Fairfax County, unique solutions to the questions posed above.
There is a very strong case for relocating the County Government Center to Reston, Virginia. This case is supported by four important facts:

POINT 1: RESTON MEETS ALL OF THE COUNTY'S STATED REQUIREMENTS: IT WILL BEST SERVE THE NEEDS OF GOVERNMENT AND OF THE CITIZENS.

POINT 2: A RESTON LOCATION OFFERS FREE LAND AND MINIMAL INFRASTRUCTURE COST -- A PROBABLE SAVING OF $10 TO $20 MILLION.

POINT 3: A RESTON LOCATION HELPS IMPLEMENT THE COUNTY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND OFFERS AN EXCITING URBAN POTENTIAL FOR A PREPLANNED COUNTY SEAT.

POINT 4: A MOVE TO RESTON WILL STIMULATE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HELPING TO SHIFT THE TAX BURDEN FROM THE RESIDENTIAL SECTOR.
POINT I: RESTON MEETS ALL OF THE COUNTY'S STATED REQUIREMENTS: IT WILL BEST SERVE THE NEEDS OF GOVERNMENT AND OF THE CITIZENS.

The Board of County Supervisors has endorsed specific site criteria for a new Government Center. Reston meets all of these criteria.

Location and Access

The Board-endorsed criteria express the view that travel time, not geographic location, is the relevant consideration:

"Location: site should be centrally located in terms of travel time to all areas of the County; served or planned to be served by public transit; have direct access to an existing or planned arterial highway..."1

While Reston is not centrally located in the county it can be a thoroughly functional location for the new Government Center -- a conclusion supported by three key facts:

1. By the mid-1980's (when the new Government Center would commence operations), more than seventy percent of the county's population will be within a twenty-five minute drive of Reston, and the percentage will rise rapidly thereafter.

2. The average citizen visits the county headquarters infrequently, and the need for such trips will further diminish as service centers are established throughout the county.

3. Least travel time for all county residents cannot be the exclusive locational criterion: other factors will have equal or greater weight (such as cost, adequate land area, impact on established neighborhoods, and the potential for creating a full-service county seat, and positive tax impact).
These three important points are reviewed in some detail below.

1. **Travel Time:** The planning time frame for the Government Center begins in the mid-1980's and extends well beyond the year 2000. Indeed a new county seat should be planned to be serviceable for countless future decades. **It is estimated that seventy five percent of county population in 1985 will be located within about twenty five minutes driving time of Reston** (even with the existing road system) -- hardly a burdensome time-distance and only marginally different from most other locational options.*

Looking beyond 1985, the bulk of future population growth will take place in the outer crescent of the county, much of it within the Reston area, and the road system in that area will be substantially improved. Thus, by the year 2020, it is projected that ninety percent of the county's population will be within twenty five minutes of Reston -- (See Appendix 2).

A study of travel times to a Reston site compared with travel times to the current Fairfax City location is included in Appendix 2. Under current conditions and existing county population, approximately 70% of county residents are within 15 minutes driving time of the Massey Building during non-rush hour traffic; 90% are within 20 minutes of the Massey Building. Only 3% are within a 5 minute driving time. A similar study of a Reston location using the county's total planned population and transportation system shows 10% within a 5 minute driving time. 71% of county residents are within 20 minutes driving time of Reston's Town Center; 90% are within 25 minutes of the town center. **For the population as a whole, the difference between Fairfax City (current) and Reston (planned) is only 5 minutes driving time on limited access roads.**

Reston has a good existing and planned transportation network. In contrast to the present Fairfax City location which is hampered by its access system, sites are available in Reston that have direct access to existing four lane divided arterial highways and limited access facilities.
In addition to excellent access from high-speed, high capacity roadways, Reston is served by Metro bus and the Reston Internal Bus System. Metro rail is shown on the county's Comprehensive Plan for expansion to Dulles airport with a transit stop in Reston near the site described above in the Town Center area.

2. Citizens' Need to Travel to County Headquarters. For the vast majority of citizens, a trip to county headquarters is an infrequent event, if not unnecessary altogether. Many county services are available by mail or at regional and even neighborhood locations (in 1977, county tags were available at 24 county locations, including 17 fire stations.)

Fairfax County has adopted a program of dispersing the most heavily utilized services into governmental sub-centers in McLean, Mason, Mt. Vernon, Reston, and West Springfield, in addition to the existing headquarters in Fairfax City. These sub-centers house assessments, violations bureau, inspections, voter registration and the office of the district supervisor. The Comprehensive Plan has even recommended that traffic courts be decentralized. 2

For the centralized agencies and functions that would remain in the Government Center, a lesser degree of public contact is experienced. Within these agencies, communication is largely inter-agency, with the Federal government and other governmental jurisdictions in the region, and with members of the business, legal and building communities.
A major exception is public hearings by the decision-making Boards and Commissions. A previous experiment with decentralizing these public hearings brought the comment by supervisors that attendance remained about the same even though they were held closer to homes of the people concerned. Distinct within the county is apparently not a major factor in a citizen's decision to attend public hearings.

3. Balance Among Many Locational Criteria. Minimum driving time for most citizens is an important objective, but not to the exclusion of other important requirements. Balancing all objectives and criteria -- including site, size, availability, cost, suitable as a full serviced county seat, etc. -- will undoubtedly lead to some locational compromise in favor of the best overall solution.

Size, Features and Availability

GRI has offered to donate up to 150 acres in a location that is already served by arterial roads and necessary public utilities. Reston fully meets all of the Board-endorsed site criteria pertaining to size, physical features and acquisition:

"Size: a site large enough to accommodate the year 2020 space needs for all centralized agencies, plus a municipal civic/cultural center, a parcel in excess of 150 developable acres."

"Physical Features: site must now have or soon have in place all necessary public utilities; must have structural carrying capacity to support high-rise structures or campus type development; should be capable of development without excessive damage to existing environmental features."

"Other: site should be capable of being purchased and developed for the initial phase within a reasonable period of time."
GRI has offered four parcels which meet these criteria. All are master planned for the office-intensive type of development that a government center would be. These parcels are described in Appendix 2. Site 1 in the Town Center area best meets all the stated requirements for size, physical features and location. It has the best existing and potential access of the four sites. For that reason, it will be the subject of all further site discussion.

The Town Center site (see following page) is bounded by Reston Avenue (4 lanes-divided) on the east, Baron Cameron Avenue (4 lanes-divided) on the north, Dulles Airport Access Road (DAAR) (4 lanes-divided/8 lanes planned) on the south, and the planned Intra-county road right-of-way (4 lanes-divided) on the west. These highways would give superb direct access on all sides of a Government Center in Reston. The future Metro line and stop is on the southern boundary of the site at DAAR.

This available parcel is approximately 210 acres in size, from which a site of 150 acres can be created that best meets county needs. Adjacent to this site, is the existing 50 acre county owned North County Governmental Complex on Baron Cameron Avenue. The North County Complex is the site of the ACCESS emergency medical care facility.

The 150 acre offer by GRI, plus the county owned 50 acre site, would give Fairfax County 200 acres of land with which to develop a sound plan for future government facilities. Also, GRI can make additional land available within a time period necessary to meet Fairfax County requirements, if, in planning the site, the land requirement exceeds 200 acres.
POINT 2: A RESTON LOCATION OFFERS FREE LAND AND MINIMAL INFRASTRUCTURE COST — A PROBABLE SAVING OF $10 to $20 MILLION.

A Reston location for the County Government Center will be highly cost effective:

1. Land is offered at no cost to the county.
2. Approximately $6.5 million has already been invested in the Town Center location. Further investment will be modest.
3. The tax impact of taking 150 acres off the tax rolls is likely to be minimal in Reston, as compared with other locations which would develop more quickly.

Free Land

GRI has offered to donate up to 150 acres of land in a location that is already served by arterial roads and necessary public utilities. If such land were purchased in Reston or in a similar location, the cost would probably be in the $7 to $14 million range. If 150 acres were purchased in a high-density central area of the county, the cost could easily come to $20 million at minimum. In addition to initial land acquisition costs, the county would incur financing costs associated with the necessary bond issue. The savings to the county of the Reston site are dramatically indicated in the table below.
## Comparative Site Costs (Land Only)

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<th>Site Cost</th>
<th>Principal and Interest Over The Life of a Bond Issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reston, Donation</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If Purchased in Reston</strong></td>
<td>$7 - $14</td>
<td>$10 - $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If Purchased in High-density Central County Location</strong></td>
<td>At Least $20</td>
<td>$30 or more</td>
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### Existing Investment in the Reston Town Center Site

Approximately $6,438,000 has already been invested in this location by the county, state, utility companies and Gulf Reston, providing the needed infrastructure and existing county facilities:

- Reston Avenue construction: $1,947,000
- Baron Avenue construction: $1,516,000
- Sanitary sewer, water, other utilities: $620,000
- Land acquisition cost of 50-acre County-site: $1,200,000
- Cost of ACCESS construction: $1,200,000
- Total Investment: $6,483,000

As a result, the site has the necessary public utilities and road system necessary to serve a government center.

### Minimal Tax Loss

The Board criteria wisely suggest:

"Location: site should not be on a prime site currently planned and zoned for commercial and industrial"

Reston's town center site meets this criteria as it is not now zoned industrial and subject to higher taxes. This factor has dramatic financial implications in the site selection decision because currently prime sites have the opportunity of returning very large tax benefits to the county.

When located in the County, the Government Center will remove 150 acres from the tax rolls. In Reston the effect on county tax yield would be minimal for many years. Elsewhere it could have a major near-term effect.
A 150 acre parcel in Reston currently yields $13,400 annually to the County in taxes. Removal of 150 acres from the tax rolls in Reston would deprive the County of a very modest tax yield for many years -- theoretically until the "last 150 acres" are ready for zoning to higher density for the purpose of accommodating private development. Since there are over 900 commercial/industrial acres yet to be developed in Reston and 1906 currently zoned in the Dulles corridor as a whole, the need for the "last 150 acres" will not occur until well into the next century.

By contrast, many closer-in sites are already rezoned and will be developed in high tax-yield office, industrial and commercial use within the next decade. If the County were to select one of these sites, it would incur the additional, very substantial cost of lost tax yield. The tax yields from a developed 150 acre parcel of industrial or commercial land could easily be $1 million or more per year.*

Thus, the County would be depriving itself of a future income stream of $1 million annually, which has a "present worth" to the county of roughly $16 million -- the "opportunity cost" to the County of selecting such a site.

*For example, one of the Mobil Oil Corporation proposals was to relocate its 4000 employee operation from New York City to Fairfax County on a 130 acre tract. That would have created a 1.5 million square foot complex that would generate $1,769,734 in county taxes annually (real estate, equipment, personal property taxes in today's tax rate and today's dollars). Source: Fairfax County Economic Development Authority.
POINT 3: A RESTON LOCATION HELPS IMPLEMENT THE COUNTY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND OFFERS AN EXCITING URBAN POTENTIAL FOR A PREPLANNED COUNTY SEAT.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies appropriate locations for Planned Development Centers and Economic Growth Centers.

"Planned Development Centers. The Planned Development Center, a concept that was successfully pioneered in Reston, is a means of clustering and concentrating growth in order to achieve a balance between new development and protection of the environment. It offers a mixture of housing types and densities, rather than the usual low-density sprawl, and encourages a coordinated mixtures of land uses including open space, public facilities, and commercial development. The concept encourages the expansion of job opportunities and less reliance on the automobile for long-distance commuting, thus reducing noise and air pollution, and contributing to the quality of living."

"Economic Growth Centers. Areas of employment growth are located throughout the County in areas with access to available labor and a good existing, or potential, transportation system. They are usually located near population centers like Reston and prime interchanges and transportation modes as at Tyson's Corner and Dulles. One of the key concepts in the location of these centers is to encourage work-trip movement away from the congested eastern parts of Fairfax and to reduce travel times and trip lengths for commuter work trips."

Both of these concepts come together in Reston: unique in the opportunity it affords to provide an attractive mixed use setting where people can live and work in the same community. A government headquarters in Reston's Town Center could be successfully united with commercial and office uses as well as housing and recreation facilities.
Here, the County Government could participate in organizing and integrating its own facilities into a compact, well balanced urban center, having the combined support of public and private market forces. An exciting urban environment could become reality -- demonstrating The County's commitment to the Planned Development Center complex.

Reston offers the choice of two types of environments for county government: (1) a relatively free-standing campus-type environment or (2) an urban environment.

A location in or near Reston's planned Town Center could provide the best of both environments: open land on which to develop an efficient, expandable county headquarters suitably integrated with private offices, retail establishments and services. A variety of urban opportunities could be available to the Government Center, such as shared use of parking, physical integration of some public and private buildings, expansion of county facilities into leased private space, a compact pedestrian circulation system, improved economics for public transportation, and much more. Referring again to the Board endorsed site criteria:

"Location: site should be adjacent to an area which could absorb commercial/industrial development (desirable to be currently planned for such use but absence of this planning should not eliminate a site from consideration.

"Other: site should be sensitive to the development of the surrounding area, impact on adjacent areas should be minimized."

Both of these objectives can be simultaneously achieved in Reston.
Whereas they can be realized only to a limited degree on other sites under consideration in the county. For example, a large undeveloped site near the Beltway may be surrounded by existing residential or industrial development. Relocation of a governmental center to such a site would produce yet another isolated, unconnected building complex with the inevitable impacts on established neighborhoods, including potential citizen opposition.

The long range, disruptive impact of a high density, traffic-intensive government complex on an existing, inexpectant residential neighborhood can not be adequately stressed.

In contrast, Reston's Master Plan identifies locations for varying types of land uses before these areas are built, thus encouraging well planned relationships. And, it is significant to note that GRI's offer to donate land for a government center has already brought favorable support from the Reston community. See Appendix 3 for a letter from the Reston Community Association and an editorial in the Reston Times.

In addition, the location of the Government Center outside the Beltway in the Dulles corridor would create reverse commuting which will draw work-trip movements away from the congested eastern parts of Fairfax County. This leads to more efficient use of the region's transportation system causing less frustration for county residents in their travel to work. These long range effects will have a bearing on the desirability of Fairfax County as a place to live and work in the future.