

TOURING RESTON IN CYBERSPACE

By William Nicoson

Touring Reston websites won't exercise neglected muscles like strolling around Reston lakes, but the discovery of virtual Reston on the web can be a stimulating experience that may lead to realtime strolling in delightful and unfrequented landscapes. On the other hand – you guessed it - some Reston websites are simply a waste of time. As your tour guide, I offer a virtual itinerary.

Begin at Reston Association's site -- <http://www.reston.org> -- which is by far the most comprehensive, well organized and helpful. From the home page, click "About Reston" to find a cohesive, literate summary of Reston's history. Next, in the heading of "About Reston," click "Hidden Treasures" for brief descriptions of 12 sites of natural or historic interest, many of which were new to me and may be to you. A click on each site number brings up a context map to help guide you.

Back at RA's home page, click "Photo Gallery" to access a collection of current photographs in constant renewal. When I last checked the subjects were: the Roland Garros Tournament on Reston's clay courts, the MultiCultural Festival, stream erosion and RA's "Happy Campers." A click on any photo brings up an enlargement. My favorite is the young camper in socks scaling a climbing wall.

The RA site puts RestonWeb – <http://restonweb.com> – in the shade. RestonWeb is one of a series of community sites offering local news, but when I visited it on July 17 almost all the news involved Herndon. Maybe I should have checked HerndonWeb for Reston news.

Not the least of the benefits of RA's website is its comprehensive list of "Community Links" to others sites involving Reston. I clicked on the link to Reston Town Center whose website – <http://www.restontowncenter.com> -- boasts an electronic map permitting location of any merchant in the Center by a click on the name, turning the merchant's space yellow on the map. However, other information useful to residents of Town Center, concerning recreational amenities, for example, is missing.

I next visited the website of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.restonchamber.org>). This is a well-designed site offering information about the Chamber's incubator program, publications, 2001 legislative policy positions, mission statement, a job bank and postings on requests for proposals.

The Chamber's site offered nothing about a policy statement made by Mike Guthrie, one of its directors, at a Reston Community Center hearing on June 18, urging the RCC governors to request reduction of the piggy-back 6-cents-per-hundred real property tax collected annually by the county to fund RCC. But I thought maybe RCC's website -- <http://www.co.fairfax.us/comm/rcc> -- might provide information on this conflicted issue.

No such luck. A prompt indicated that the RCC site “is being redeveloped.” Many months of redevelopment have passed since I last read that prompt. I wonder how many more tickets for RCC events would have been purchased had information been available online. But maybe this baleful prompt was in fact saying something about RCC funding. Could it be that RCC needs more money, not less, to perform its mission?

The thought of impoverished Reston organizations brought to mind Reston Citizens Association which, without assessment or tax district, has done such a good job in recent years organizing the annual Reston Festival, mainly by marshaling assistance from other organizations. There is a website – <http://www.reston-citizens.org> – which purports to represent RCA but is in fact controlled by the webmeister who originated it. The site offered no information about the Reston Festival held July 14 and 15, and RCA’s Planning & Zoning Committee no longer supplies the site with meeting information or minutes. The site’s up-to-date character is revealed by a link to the RCA board in 1997 and thanks extended to camera crews “at Jones Communications,” which was replaced by Comcast 20 months ago.

Frustrated, I clicked on RA’s link to the Reston Historic Trust and Museum – <http://www.restonmuseum.org> – a group which deserves high marks for sponsoring creative events celebrating Reston’s unique history. Alas, I found that the museum’s URL had been hijacked by a site called BetaNews offering breathless stories about software. Since that visit, the museum site has been recovered, but the hijacking reminds us that it’s a rough-tough-and-tumble world out there in cyberspace.

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