

11. North Nature Center Implementation

In order to insure implementation of the North Nature Center plan the committee recommends, that Reston Land Corporation not convey the North Nature Center to RHOA until the improvements outlined in this plan are completed and the programs for the facility's use are budgeted and committed to. A three year phased implementation is recommended. Further, Reston Land Corporation may wish to set a time limit past which it will open negotiations with others for conveyance of the parcel, to carry out the objectives outlined here for the North Nature Center.

12. Summary

The committee's recommendations provide a reasonable basis for RHOA use and avoids the alternative of extensive/intensive development or leaving the site as it is at the present time, without benefit of interpretative or support facilities.

IVB. SITE OF THE FORMER STABLE ON RESTON AVENUE

1. Background

In order to recommend appropriate uses for the site of the former stable on Reston Avenue, the committee gathered information concerning equestrian facilities in the Northern Virginia and the Washington Metropolitan area as well as indications of the types of additional facilities which might be desirable. Early in its work, the committee was also asked to consider the feasibility of RHOA's acceptance of the existing co-op horse barn near the Vepco right-of-way on Stuart Road as a RHOA facility. Recognizing that an extensive study of equestrian facilities and needs was necessary before these issues could be addressed, a subcommittee on equestrian activities was appointed at the November 3 meeting. The subcommittee involved a number of community residents who contributed to the subcommittee efforts.

As a result of the subcommittee's research, it was determined that an integrated system of equestrian facilities in Reston was desirable, and that a central teaching facility at the former stable site should be the core of this system. (Sec. IIID of this report discusses this system in greater detail.)

After considering alternative locations for the core teaching facility including trading the former stable site for a larger one and after reviewing fully the remaining improvements at the former stable site, the subcommittee, at the April 6 meeting, recommended that a small warm weather teaching barn be constructed on that site. The majority of the committee agreed that if the economic feasibility of such a facility could be demonstrated, a teaching barn would be an appropriate and companionable use for the site.

2. The Site

The site of the former stable on Reston Avenue is just south of Glade Drive and is approximately six acres in size. From 1964 until 1981 this was the location of a large riding stable owned by RHOA and leased to a succession of managers under different arrangements. The former stable was never a success from the point of view of economic self sufficiency nor were users who talked to the committee impressed with the amenity of the facility. The stable provided riding lessons, trail rides, horse shows and other activities until the structure collapsed in 1981. Currently, the site includes a small paved parking area, a 150' X 300' bluestone riding ring, three 75' X 100' paddocks surrounded by deteriorating fences. The site also includes a small wooded area with jumps and paths.

3. Stable

Citing poor design and large size of the former stable (164' X 136') as reasons for its structural as well as its financial problems, the subcommittee proposed the construction of a small, open-sided pole barn, 72' X 36' which could house ten to twenty horses depending on stall size. Two 12' X 12' rooms would serve as office space and a tackroom, and an open aisle, 12' X 72' room would accommodate indoor theory classes. A post and rail fence located ten feet away from both sides of the building would provide an area for hitching horses. (See sketch, Appendix, B.3).

4. Parking

The existing parking area should be extended to accommodate perpendicular car parking plus 2 spaces and two "dumpster" containers, one for storing sawdust and one for manure.

5. Provision of Services

Horses and lessons and possibly trail rides for the public would be provided by a concessioner/vendor who would contract with RHOA to operate the program for a specified period of time. While expenses related to operation of the stable could be expected to be borne by the vendor, the committee decided at the May 17 meeting, that it would be appropriate for RHOA to contribute to the cost of construction and maintenance of the facility. The extent of this contribution would be subject to the RHOA budget process.

6. A Measure of Interest

In March of 1983, the Chair of the subcommittee conducted an informal survey of 500 elementary and intermediate school students at three Reston schools and concluded that a high degree of interest in riding lessons was evident. It was noted by the subcommittee that the former stable served approximately 1100 lesson participants annually. When the stable collapsed, participants relocated to other teaching facilities in the area.

7. Financial feasibility

The cost of constructing the barn is estimated at approximately \$25,000. Income from lessons was estimated at \$34,500 annually based on 576 student hours (12 horses used 12 hours per week for 24 weeks) at \$10 per hour. (Other riding schools in the area use horses much more intensively and in some cases, up to 24 hours per week per horse.) Based on the subcommittee review forecast and facility cost estimate the operation could be self sustaining and with optimum operation repay the capital costs. The proof of the feasibility, however, is whether or not a qualified private concession vendor would be willing to take on the management

and operations. In order to test the interest a letter of inquiry (request for proposals) was sent to every operator of horse facilities that might have an interest - or might be qualified (see Appendix, B.3). Of the 17 inquiries (see list, Appendix, B.3) all were negative except one which responded said that they needed more time to review the question.

In summary, after much creative effort the subcommittee developed a proposal which was attractive and suited to the site. However, it does not meet the test of fiscal feasibility. This is in line with what committee members determined from other sources. While there is "interest" there is no viable market for the service.

The committee recommends that the financial feasibility of a suitably designed facility be tested from time to time and that a location for a stable be reserved until some other use is found to be more desirable for this site.

Whether a teaching facility is built at the former stable site or not the committee recommends that the following for the remainder of the site be implemented:

1. Maintain the riding ring and connections to the horse trail system for use by those using the existing Pony Barn and others who have access to the horse trail system.
2. A neighborhood soccer field (205 X 130) be initiated as shown on the sketch plan in Appendix B.2.
3. That the wooded area and the open area be developed as a picnic area with appropriate shelter similar to Temporary Road Park to serve south Reston.

IVC. BARON CAMERON PARK SITE

1. Land description

This tract is listed as 20 acres north of (606) Baron Cameron Avenue opposite the entrance to lake Anne Village. A large area on the northeast part of the acreage contains Browns Chapel near the highway and four baseball/softball fields behind the chapel. The chapel is used for public meeting rooms and tables outside are used for day camp activities. The property narrows in the middle where it consists of a forested area between Baron Cameron and an asphalt trail along the top of an earth-fill dam. The undeveloped lake shore and new visitors center at the west end of the dam are not part of the park except as a visual reforested buffer between the bike trail and Baron Cameron, a large parking lot to the north and a proposed 6-court tennis facility at the extreme west end of the property.

2. Resources

The baseball complex has well constructed back stops and a level area for the playing fields but no other facilities except two port-a-johns and a drinking fountain. There are a few large trees and some underbrush between the fields and the chapel and some shade trees near the outdoor picnic tables on the east side of the chapel which is quite old, a modest sized white frame structure. There are parking areas near the fields and near the chapel. A wide driveway comes into the property from the Lake Anne stoplight. The front of the chapel and the parking area have newly planted trees and grass landscaping. The view from the ballfields and bike trail of the lake surrounded by tall trees and the Visitors Center on the far shore is a very pleasant scene.

The forest area below the dam and bike trail contains unusually fine large specimens of white and other oaks and a diverse understory of holly, dogwood, wild rhododendrom and many other native Virginia plants and shrubs make this area a special nature area. Most of the forest floor is blanketed with ferns. There is a cleared area in the middle of the dam with a rock channel that has active water drains creating a marshy hillside. Small cleared or open areas are found in the forest near the ballfields and chapel and along the access road.

This forested area is separated from the sports park tennis area and a thin buffer strip of trees by a drive leading to the visitors center. The parking and visitors center are beautifully landscaped with new trees and shrubs with the uncleared forest areas creating a scenic background. Lighted courts would improve use and improve safety at night.

3. Discussion

As any little league parent knows who has tried to support the family athlete(s) while attending younger siblings, there are several essentials for a rich recreational experience and survival. They are water, johns, picnic tables and shade. Hikers, bikers and strollers also find the existence of an oasis with these facilities most welcome and when combined with a place to pause and enjoy an exceptional natural setting they are doubly rewarded.

4. Recommendations

1. Install durable modern toilet facilities and a drinking fountain next to the ballfield parking lot.
2. Clear most of the brush around the large trees between the ballfield and chapel, install crushed rock, a few benches in the shade and a few trash cans where teams and spectators congregate.
- 3a. Extend a secondary trail through the middle of the forested area with a foot bridge across the wet area. Make short side paths to interesting plant assemblages.
- b. Install crushed rock adjacent to the trail in the cleared areas on the east end and add a few picnic tables and trash cans.
- c. Introduce native water-loving plants and make a stepping stone path and create a tiny pond by the bridge.
- d. Identify the various tree, shrub and plant species with markers and rustic signs.
4. Construct a covered 40-50 foot diameter picnic pavilion near the lake and the baseball parking lot with appropriate tables, benches and trash receivers.
5. Show off the Visitors Center and this excellent example of northern Virginia flora to visitors by making the area more accessible.