

## **A CITY CENTER IN RESTON FOR DULLES CORRIDOR**

It seems reasonable to assume that the air-rights proposal for joint metro station and related commercial and residential development on platforms over the intersection of the Dulles Access Road and Reston Parkway, taken together with Reston's adjacent Town Center, Plaza America, and the Sheraton Hotel redevelopment, will inevitably become a city center for the Dulles Corridor.

Hopefully the development and redevelopment will be planned to permit such a city center to bring excitement and vitality to Reston and provide easy access from other communities in the corridor. Handsomely designed open space will be an essential component. Cultural offerings – in both performing and visual arts -- must be assured, not only to contribute to the vitality of animation around the clock but to draw new customers to Reston restaurants and shops.

The metro station will permit theatergoers from the District of Columbia, Loudoun County and all stops in between to seek out performances in Reston without risking traffic congestion.

Reston Community Center appears to be well positioned to manage, if not underwrite, a cultural center as a significant feature of the joint development. RCC has had years of experience booking the use of its small theater. Expanding its staff to manage a cultural center would be much less costly than building a new staff from scratch.

But the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce seems intent on limiting RCC's responsibilities to those now assumed at its two existing facilities. A board resolution passed early in October put GRCC on record as opposing the use of any surplus funds generated by RCC's tax district "for additional expansions by RCC."

It is ironic that RCC's management of a cultural center drawing customers to Reston for the benefit of Reston merchants and restaurateurs would be opposed by resolution of a Reston chamber of commerce.

It is also ironic that RCC has shown no interest whatever in assuming responsibility for managing a cultural center in the proposed air-rights project. The response of the RCC Board of Governors when the possibility was suggested earlier this year was that RCC had its hands full with a theater project at South Lakes and would be concerned about competing with Wolf Trap. Consistent with a myopic vision of RCC's potential, the board this year adopted guidelines limiting project proposals for joint activities to \$30,000 or less.

In a city the size of the Dulles Corridor, two professional theaters will be too few, not too many, and proposals with enormous promise for Reston's future should not be hobbled by arbitrary cost limitations unrelated to value. Perhaps new RCC board members chosen last month in the preference poll will push for a more expansive view of RCC's potential.

I would also like to believe that further consideration by the GRCC board would lead to the realization that RCC is well placed to serve the business community as manager, and perhaps sponsor, of a cultural center in the air-rights project. On the face of it, this seems unlikely since one of the initiators of the stand-still resolution will be directing development of that project. Still, it's often surprising how minds change with changing circumstances, and I've heard it said that the finer the mind, the more susceptible it is to change.

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