

April 30, 2008

Dear Community Participation Committee Members:

Thank you for your service.

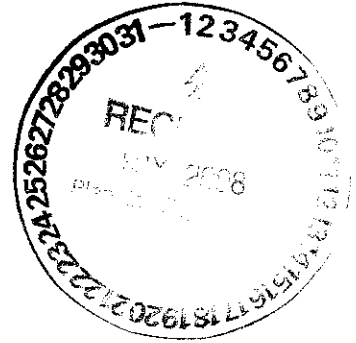
The Virginia Tech researchers who managed one of the surveys that preceded this revision process interpreted the data as "a call for action on growth management." I agree. County residents are very much aware of the deleterious effects of unrestrained population growth. In the 2003 Plan, residents pleaded to "preserve the quality of life", "control residential growth while preserving the County's natural beauty", and "preserve rural land." Also, in the survey conducted as part of this revision process:

- 83% of county residents believe that land development is occurring too quickly
- 83% believe there should be restrictions on land sold for commercial and residential development
- 79% believe that the county should do more to preserve farmland
- 69% believe that developers should always be required to pay a fee

Almost all of the contemporary problems affecting County residents – including flooding, air and water pollution, traffic congestion, school overcrowding, declining property values, and the cost of government and utilities – can be traced directly to overdevelopment, rapid population growth, and sprawl. We know now, if we did not before, that population growth does not produce sufficient growth in tax revenue to cover the expense of providing incremental services. No amount of additional tax revenue can compensate for the decrease in residents' quality of life. There are parts of the county and the state where we are too late, but there is still time to save critical areas. The most important goal of the Comprehensive Plan should therefore be to create a detailed plan ("a call for action") on how to limit population growth and how to manage the growth that cannot be limited due to by-right capacity.

The primary tool for reaching that goal is the preservation of open space in James City County. A secondary goal should be to direct county officials to lobby the state and federal governments to preserve open space in our region and across our dominion. The recent real estate recession provides us with a good opportunity to stretch dollars while protecting this precious resource for ourselves and for future generations. (Remember **Historic Past – Sustainable Future?**)

L.R.



The best ways to mitigate the effects of past mistakes and to honor the wishes of County residents are:

1. for the County to aggressively acquire open space and conservation easements and,
2. to keep undeveloped the open space it already holds and,
3. to use design standards and stream buffers to limit population growth, impervious cover, and incursion into sensitive lands

The successful 2005 referendum provided resources to accomplish this, but the County has only applied \$6.0 million of the \$20.0 million for its intended purpose. The County and the PDR Committee should redouble efforts to market the availability of these funds to landowners who may welcome a cash bid in this weak real estate market.

The County holds several wonderful tracts of open space, such as the newly acquired Yacht Basin and the Jamestown Campgrounds, and these must be retained and left undeveloped. Selling off or otherwise developing open space already owned by the County while using tax dollars to acquire additional open space makes no sense. If the County does sell off some of these lands, the proceeds should be added to the resources available for PDR. The 220 acres of developable land on the Eastern State Hospital grounds should be designated as a public park and recreation facility, in part to offset the traffic congestion and blight caused by neighboring NewTown, Settlers Market and High Street. This will undoubtedly entail exhaustive negotiations with the state, so that process should begin soon.

Any rezoning applications, especially for those outside the PSA, must fully assess the cumulative impact of the final development. The initial filing should demonstrate the environmental impact and adequacy of the water supply, and impacts on roads, schools, and taxes should be part of the evaluation.

Any development should be charged application and associated fees that fully cover the County's cost of processing the applications and enforcing regulations.

No change should be made to the land use map that would result in increased population, in the increase of impervious cover, or that would expand the PSA.

