

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 23, 2009
TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Ellen Cook, Acting Principal Planner, and Jason Purse, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Floor Area Ratio calculations

Based on discussions at the last Steering Committee meeting, staff has assembled a number of examples of floor area ratio (FAR) for parcels in the County to demonstrate their development intensities visually. You will notice they are separated into three categories: Neighborhood Commercial, Community Commercial, and Industrial.

The Neighborhood Commercial examples show a range of intensities from .11 to .20. This range of intensities is generally consistent with the types of development that have been approved in the past, as well as the types of developments that staff believes appropriate for future Neighborhood Commercial areas. These are parcels that are situated close to residential areas and the recommended FARs keep development in a scale more compatible with those areas.

The Community Commercial examples include Prime Outlets, Colony Square Shopping Center, and the Norge Crossing Shopping Center (Farm Fresh). Community Commercial developments are generally designed to be situated along arterial roadways and have a more concentrated commercial feel than the Neighborhood Commercial areas. Staff believes recommending a higher FAR range is appropriate for these locations as it will distinguish them from the Neighborhood Commercial areas and allow for a greater commercial yield for the property. The upper range of the FAR scale (.4) is directly linked to the UDA description in the State Legislation. A FAR of that intensity is unlikely to be developed in James City County at this time, because generally a structured parking area must be constructed to meet ordinance parking requirements in order to achieve a building area of that size.

The Industrial areas have a wider ranging scale of FARs. Many industrial developments are situated on larger sites that allow for expansion or for greater buffers to adjoining residential areas. Therefore, even though the building area covers a larger portion of the immediate site, open space may lower the overall FAR of the entire site. Staff continues to encourage industrial uses to implement these strategies, but also would like to see them maximize their economic development potential by encouraging higher FARs. Staff has included language in the development standards that allows for lower FARs when larger parcels are used for buffers or future expansion.

In addition to the FAR examples, staff has addressed the 200,000 sq. ft. issue that was discussed at the last meeting, in the Commercial Districts development standards chart. Staff has recommended new language that does not cap the overall development potential of these areas, but recommends building massing be kept below 200,000 sq. ft.