



James City County Planning Commission Forum

August 24, 2010

There has been considerable discussion about the potential use of economic opportunity zones by planners and the business community and my remarks will draw upon these ideas.

The Chamber & Tourism Alliance believes that growth in the county's economic base must be accommodated in the plan. Without some growth in that base, we will have increasing tax burdens caused by growing imbalance with planned residential expansion. Our members recognize the importance of maintaining the uniqueness of our area. James City County's quality of life is our key competitive advantage to attract businesses, residents, and visitors. We need a balanced economic portfolio that preserves the uniqueness of our historic area and attracts and maintains complementary businesses. One important part of achieving balance will be clear guidance in the plan concerning large tracts of land that are appropriate for development and those that are not. Economic opportunity zones are one means of ensuring that the scope of growth is measured and the location is established in a proper area.

James City County's 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update included a new Economic Opportunity Zone designation to encourage developments that have a positive fiscal contribution, provide quality jobs, enhance community values, are environmentally friendly, and support local economic stability. Master planning is at the core of this designation. The Comprehensive Plan anticipates that no

development should occur unless it is incorporated into area/corridor master planning efforts, which should be shielded from jurisdictional boundaries.

The Comprehensive Plan specifically notes the regional planning and cooperation opportunity for the Lightfoot/Hill Pleasant Farm and Quarterpath areas, but it notes that collaboration opportunities in other areas must be considered, as well. Areas that have already been developed along borders among the city, counties, and William & Mary, can provide insight on how to collaborate on future inter-jurisdictional developments.

Both James City and York Counties recognize the Lightfoot/Hill Pleasant Farm section as an area for significant development, much of which could be enhanced by extending Mooretown Road. This area includes approximately 1,100 acres – 600 in York and 500 in James City. The York comprehensive plan includes extension of Mooretown Road into this area and anticipates mixed use development. Both counties desire that the area develop through a master plan to include commercial and possibly some residential areas. James City County's suggested uses of the area include industrial, light industrial and office uses; primary uses would follow the recommendations for the general Economic Opportunity. York County has designated the Lightfoot area for Economic Opportunity with a Mixed Use overlay designation.

In addition to the Lightfoot/Hill Pleasant Farm area, other areas that would benefit from inter-jurisdictional collaboration include the Eastern State property, Camp Peary intersection, and the Rt. 199/Rt. 60/I-64 intersections. Further research among James City, Williamsburg, York and William & Mary is necessary to completely identify large and small scale opportunities for collaboration.

The issue of collaboration involves staff other than just economic development. Planning issues will surely arise as the three jurisdictions have their own separate zoning ordinances. A thorough review of each locality's development procedures will be necessary to determine conflicting ordinance permissions and uses. While all three localities are subject to the same Virginia Building Code and Chesapeake Bay regulations, each jurisdiction has its own standards and interpretations for these and other policies. A regional development policy for site and building

plans review within collaboration areas could also be beneficial. Having only one review and enforcement agency would ease confusion for developers and land owners. Finally, involvement of public utility staff is necessary to coordinate the effects on our regional water and sewer systems. Planning, Environmental and Building Code staffs would have to adopt consistent standards for projects within collaborative areas. Ideally, the master plan would include consideration of types and sizes of units, inclusion of workforce housing, and apartments. The plan would consider the infrastructure impacts, particularly on school enrollments, and would consider how those impacts would be apportioned across jurisdictions.

Preliminary engineering work and a master plan for collaborative development would address the site and building plans approval issues. When developing a master plan, it will be important to consider the businesses and end-users for the area. Coordination with both VEDP and HREDA would be useful to develop target industries for the region, and incorporate features that attract those general industries into the sites.

We urge the Planning Department and Commission to craft ordinances that enable the planned growth of economic opportunity zones to succeed in collaboration with other jurisdictions.