

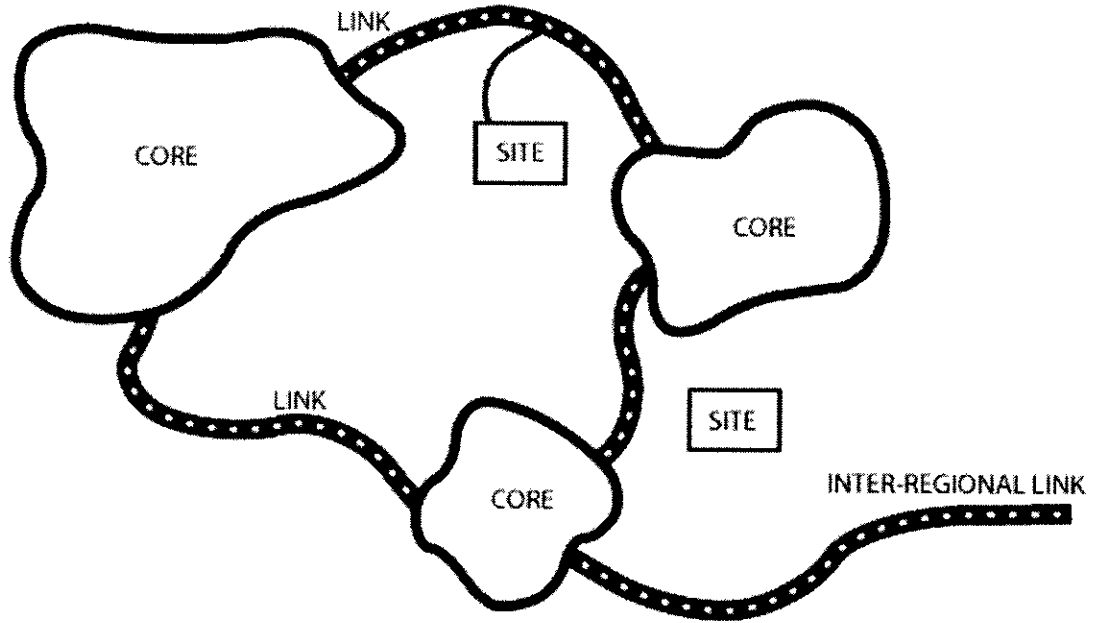
Land Use Comments
James City County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting
James City County Citizens Coalition
December 8, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Steering Committee:

The James City County Citizens Coalition (J4Cs) appreciates the opportunity to present these comments to you today. We have already presented comments about land use issues in meetings held in July 2008 along with one of our sister organizations Friends of Forge Road and Toano. I will not reiterate these comments because you have copies of these. Please note that we continue to consider: no extension of the PSA, sustainable economic development, agri-tourism, and green building incentives as important.

My purpose today is to discuss green infrastructure. Green infrastructure includes the forests, streams, groundwater recharge areas, wildlife habitats, recreational trails and cultural assets that communities depend upon for clear air, clean water and healthful and vibrant communities. This approach integrates land use concerns with economic, transportation, and environmental issues and provides a strategy to integrate these elements in the Comprehensive Plan. Please note that I obtained most of my information from the Green Infrastructure Center (<http://www.gicinc.org/index.htm>) located in Charlottesville, VA. The Center provides tools to help communities identify the services provided by natural systems, such as enhanced quality of life and economic benefits, and develop strategies to protect and sustain these resources.

A simple way to think about what constitutes a green infrastructure approach is that instead of considering a park, forest or wetland as individual sites, we consider how these resources are or could be tied together. Taking a green infrastructure approach requires identifying and understanding natural systems and protecting those systems *first*, before development begins, as well as seeking to restore connections and habitats in already-developed landscapes. James City County has made commendable efforts in the establishing green space, purchase of development rights (PDR), agricultural and forestal districts (AFD) and has been joined in these initiatives by Williamsburg Land Conservancy and the Virginia Outdoors Association. The efforts, however, have not necessarily been integrated to provide contiguous corridors. A possible exception to this is the efforts made by PDR and Green Space along Forge Road to use conservation easements to preserve the Branch family properties. The diagram below, courtesy of GIC illustrates the concept of green infrastructure. NOTE: Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) has used the concept of green infrastructure in establishing its Southern Watershed Area Management Program, POC: Eric Walberg, Principal Planner, HRPDC.



J4CS agrees that it is commendable that the Steering committee has directed staff to use modeling to perform a build out analysis. We suggest that green infrastructure be considered as a variable in such an analysis. I have listed below (courtesy of GIC) steps which could be incorporated in our land use considerations.

Step 1: Set Goals – What does the community value?

- Forests for wildlife and timber?
- Recharge areas to protecting drinking water supplies?
- Conserving historic landscapes and battlefields?
- Protecting and promoting working farms?

Step 2: Data Review – What do we know and what do we need to know?

- Research existing studies – what are the findings and are they relevant? (E.g. watershed plans, wildlife plans, open space plans, ecological inventories, groundwater studies, air studies etc.)
- What data are needed? (Geographic Information Systems may need digital layers – data arranged spatially that can be overlain and compared for PDR, AFD, green space and other conservation easements held by outside organizations.
- Examples of data types include streams and watersheds, key agricultural soils, recreation routes, forested areas, wetlands, etc.

Step 3: Asset Mapping – Map the community’s ecological, cultural and economic assets. What is mapped is based on goals established in Step 1. Following are examples.

- Large intact forests or native meadows
- Large farms and farm communities
- Streams, rivers, wetlands and groundwater recharge areas
- Recreational areas (fishing, boating, hiking, biking, birding)
- Historic and cultural features (battlefields, historic landscapes)
- In urban areas, street trees, tree canopy and local parks, streams.

Step 4: Risk Assessment – Find out what’s at risk and what could be lost.

- Which areas are zoned for development and do they overlap key assets?
- Are there forests which have been fragmented by roads or subdivisions?
- Which streams are impaired (or might be in the future)?
- Where are new roads planned – do they fragment key assets?

Step 5: Opportunities – Based on assets and risks, assess what can or should be saved? What could be restored? What will be developed? Engage the community in ranking key areas of importance. Map these opportunities and draft strategies to conserve them.

- Where will future parks or recreational areas be located?
- Which forests can be conserved for forestry, recreation or wildlife habitats?
- Identify locations and routes for agri-tourism (local fruit, wines, honey, meat, vegetables, crafts).
- Identify areas where scenic views or routes for historic or cultural assets should be protected.
- Explore the extent to which current zoning adequately addresses the county’s or region’s land assets.
- Where should towns or developments be located in the future?

Step 6: Include strategies in comprehensive planning, tourism development or recreational strategies.

Green infrastructure plans can be fitted into existing county planning efforts and can complement already-identified conservation goals. Following are several examples of how green infrastructure assessments may be utilized:

- Strategies for determining where to zone land for conservation or growth
- Transportation planning for roads and multi-modal planning
- Lands for purchase of development rights or transfer of development rights
- Heritage tourism strategies and viewshed protection
- Urban tree canopy surveys and management
- Targeting land for conservation easement programs
- New ordinance development (stream buffers, water protection, historic landscape overlays)
- Park, open space and recreational planning or strategic land acquisition

Finally, these steps should be considered before any change in land use designation(s) are established for sensitive properties such as Jamestown Campground, Eastern State, Gospel Spreading Farm, I-64 Croaker Interchange/Hill Pleasant Farm, Taylor Farm – near Anderson’s corner, and I-64/Barhamsville interchange.

Respectfully,

James City County Citizens Coalition