

Community Character
May 2009

This afternoon I wish to address three areas within the technical report and GSAs for the Community Character section of the Comprehensive Plan. These have been addressed in the J4C comments to the Steering Committee, but in several instances have not been incorporated in the final versions of either document. These comments are directed to the “Explanation of Amendments: Community Character and earlier versions of the GSAs, as well as the Technical Report.

First, let me congratulate the staff for a well written and somewhat comprehensive chapter. The fact that we can address only three areas must make them feel very comfortable. In addition, I congratulate them for adding the word “sustainable” in at least two sections of the text. A sustainable future must be defined for all the sections of the revised Comprehensive Plan. We are also pleased that an earlier 1.3.6 has been incorporated in revised action 1.1.3.

1. The technical report establishes the buffer width on Community Character Corridors as 50 feet for commercial development. This is a major improvement over the “average 50 feet”, since defining the “average 50 feet” only led to proposals for buffer width that did not reflect the needs of the proposed development. The J4C requests that these buffer requirements be strictly enforced, as well as the other design standards outlined in the Plan.
2. The J4C has become more concerned over the lack of preservation of trees during construction, especially since our “Call to Action” and Mr. Icenhour’s Bulldozer tour. Both reflect the devastation that trees and plantings go through as site preparation takes place. No doubt we are provided with these scenes during bad economic times, but it highlights a major need. Therefore the J4C supports Mr. Fraley’s statement on the need for further discussion of tree preservation in the technical report and the Goals, strategies, and actions for Community Character. Our earlier submission requested the mandatory preservation of trees in community corridor buffers with tree canopies created where they do not already exist. We wholeheartedly approve of the Revised Action 1.5.1 (former action 1.6.1) and Revised Action 1.5.3 (former action 1.5.2) in the Amended version. The need for “tree save” areas should be a part of the conceptual plan process; and a specimen Tree policy and a tree ordinance must be written and used in making decisions relative to development throughout the County. Waivers addressed in para. 6f of the technical report should be limited.
3. We have addressed problems relative to the installation of cell towers in residential districts. We believe that Revised Action 1.72 should read “Developo a wireless communications master plan...” rather than “explore the feasibility of developing...”. The fact that numerous Counties within the State have developed master plans would indicate that these plans are feasible.

Paragraph 1.8.1 should read: “Revise the....” instead of “consider revising...” We believe that the ordinance should require an SUP when the application impacts a residential area; and that adjoining and nearby residents must be consulted before the application is permitted.

In the Technical Report, paragraph 9 on page T-3-6, second sentence should read: “Newer technologies often use smaller antennas that lessens the need for large towers that can be intrusive to the landscape. Listed below are some of the benefits of newer technologies: (list)

These systems may have some disadvantages:

- Systems may not be compatible....
- There may be typically....
- A large number of antennas may be