

Public Comments to the Planning Commission
2009 Draft Comprehensive Plan
September 30, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission:

I would like to thank you and members of the James City County Planning staff for all of your extraordinary efforts in preparing the draft Comprehensive Plan. It is a voluminous document and will take some time for the citizens to review all of its components. As a result, my comments will focus on the preservation of rural lands because I believe their use and development potential are most important in preserving our quality of life.

a. According to the draft Comp Plan, p. LU-3, the amount of acreage in James City county farms is 6% of the total land area. Further, the plan states on p. LU-4 that “only 5,831 acres may be reported to the Census of Agriculture as cropland ...much more remains as forest land.” If we are serious about preservation of rural lands, **it is important that the County elected officials with citizen input state a goal for how much acreage we want to preserve** either as agricultural lands and open or green space. This might require more conversation, but we need a focus for these preservation efforts. Then decisions about zoning changes and land use changes could be made in support of attaining this goal.

b. The Economic Opportunity (EO) zone has become the new model for business development in James City County, but it resembles a new way to package the old New Town model. Eco-tourism and/or agri-business are not presented as serious alternatives to our standard retail and commercial business activities. This is supported by the fact that on p. 182 of the GSAs, non-traditional agricultural uses etc (para 1.8.3) along with coordination with state and private entities (para 1.8.2) to market agri-business are placed on a time frame of 6-10 years for implementation. That time frame demonstrates that these alternatives are not given high priority and as a result will be insignificant. **I would like to see agri-business and/or eco-tourism enterprises included in an EO for the Hill Pleasant Tract. Historic preservation should also be included for at least some portion of the Hill Pleasant site since it is one of the original farms in James City County.**

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