



The Hellman Company, inc.

Comments to improve the Charles County Comprehensive Plan

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You can't depend on your eyes if your imagination is out of focus.

Mark Twain

In 1987 Charles County commenced a very ambitious Comp Plan process with incredibly good intentions. They hired excellent consultants to help them -- Redman/Johnston Associates, Ltd. They engaged citizens in extensive and intensive homework assignments over many months.

The term "Smart Growth" had not been invented, but everyone knew that sprawl was not good. This Comp Plan invented the term "Development Districts" to designate where growth should be concentrated. But we seem to continue to flip flop.

The problem, just like what Gov. Parris Glendening experienced following his smart growth initiative, was failing to understand the entire system, to keep things in perspective, in balance, and to take specific positive actions to actually facilitate the desired activity. (Please see tabs 20, 45 and 34a-d on the Woodmont Triangle page of www.VirtualAdjacency.com)

I am the "over-educated" real estate developer who has been working in Charles County since 1986 on a mission to re-invent the small town in the age of the computer. The goal is to transform a "bedroom community" to a place where people can work as well as live — a Telecommunity. My "Petri dish" is La Plata. We are finally, after 26+ years of work, on the brink of implementation -- bringing the College of Southern Maryland and the Town together in a mixed-use, pedestrian and bike-friendly fashion resulting in a "Richard Florida Creative Place." (Please see www.VirtualAdjacency-VisionPlanning-Telecommunity.com)

To help you get your imaginations in focus, I share the advice below.

Nature is a dynamic system. Too much of a good thing will kill you.

Keeping things the way they are at any cost is NOT natural. The earth is alive geologically every bit as much as biologically. Some mountains are growing while others are shrinking. If humans could have outlawed erosion, there would be no Grand Canyon ...

Life began with single cell organisms. Imagine they had a meeting and concluded they didn't need multi-celled organisms?

Human beings are the top of the food chain, we should act intelligently. Failing to complete the Cross County Connector, wasting years of time, wasting millions of dollars we do not have, causing citizens to waste gas, waste time, pollute the air, suffer crashes that kill and injure, destroy property and waste much public money in police, fire, EMT is bad government.

Leonardo da Vinci did not paint the Mona Lisa with a roller.

In designated concentrated smart growth areas, like the two incorporated towns and the Waldorf area served by Mattawoman Sewer, the Comprehensive Plan should state clearly that mixed-use

connectedness enabling pedestrian, bicycle and public transit convenience and functionality is the primary priority. Environmentally sensitive areas within those locations cannot preclude, delay or complicate Priority Place functioning beyond requiring high quality engineering (i.e. best practices economically practicable.)

The way we govern today is penny-wise and pound-foolish. That is not sustainable. Fix it, please. We certainly should do no unnecessary harm, but it cannot be judged out of context.

The way the State dealt with the Town of La Plata in its on-line interactive PlanMaryland map is profoundly in conflict with every principle of Smart Growth.

It would have been much more appropriate for the state's PlanMaryland map to simply draw a "fuzzy" circle around "Greater La Plata" with an annotation that the details within need to be addressed following the principles of Smart Growth using Best Practices to minimize any potential negative environmental consequences.

The “city” is the “project.” Vision Planning *spirit and intent* will guide the details.

Individual buildings are pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. It is government’s job to design and build the public realm, which is the context within which buildings are constructed. Think of the public realm as a skeleton and the buildings as muscles. If the skeleton is wrong, the muscles cannot compensate. For the economic engine, read paragraph about TDR’s.

TDR’s are governmental malpractice.

The only thing right about TDR’s are the introductory WHEREAS clauses. There are some places we should not build and there are other places that can accommodate more density than is currently allowed. But to think there is any direct economic relationship between those two fails economics and fails real estate. In economics, price is the three most important things. In real estate, location is the three most important things. You cannot relocate location. Why do you think oceanfront property costs twice as much as one lot back?

A tragic proof of the danger of TDR’s is what happened to me in downtown DC near Union Station, the US Capitol and Georgetown University Law School. Because the defective TDR law “sold density” to an office building developer at a fraction of what it was actually worth on that site, for the specific building he was developing, it was a de facto subsidy that killed the mixed-use development I had spent 10 years working on. There is a single 270,000 square foot office building standing at 601 New Jersey Avenue, NW instead of a 140,000 square foot apartment building plus a 200,000 square foot office building with a 5,000 square foot plaza between them. Please look at tab 48a-3) TDR's are Gov't MALPRACTICE 601NJ example.pdf

Large lot zoning is sprawl on steroids.

If we wish to reduce dependence on the automobile we must cluster buildings within walking distance of each other. Large lot zoning is the antithesis of smart growth. An example to study is [ecologically conscious EcoVillage in Loudoun County, VA](#).