

## Talking points\_regarding Enhanced Commercial Design Standards/HCODs 11/6/08

Contact: Cristine Lynch at [vacristine@aol.com](mailto:vacristine@aol.com) or 540-898-8698

1. At a time when Spotsylvania is struggling to balance its budget, design standards offer solid economic benefits. Tourism is big business in Spotsylvania and aesthetically pleasing design, especially on our gateway corridors, can enhance the tourist experience. Tourists spent nearly \$199 million to the county in 2007, a 9.4% increase over 2006, generating over \$4 million in tax revenues. The tourism/ travel industry in the County represents a total payroll of \$43,884,967 in 2007, an increase of 4.6% from 2006. Another economic benefit is that attracting new high-quality companies to the county will increase our tax base, and studies have shown that new businesses consider aesthetics when deciding whether to move in to an area.
2. The Committee of 500 supports Smart Growth. A key component of Smart Growth is maintaining a "sense of place" in which preservation of the aesthetic continuity of the built environment helps communities maintain their spirit and appeal.
3. "Evidence also shows that by undertaking initiatives to improve the appearance of their communities, local officials can not only improve their citizens' quality of life but also their communities' potential for economic development." This is from *The Impact of Aesthetics on the Economy and Quality of Life in Virginia and Its Localities*, a study by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, authorized by the Virginia General Assembly, 2000. Summary: <http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/4d54200d7e28716385256ec1004f3130/eb135b9eed217fe7852568c40062f767?OpenDocument>
4. County residents want to have a greater sense of place and pride in their county. They do not want to be "Anywhere USA"; instead they want the county's historic and natural qualities respected and maintained.
5. Spotsylvania is no longer just a rural/farming county in the shadow of DC, Richmond or Fredericksburg, that people pass by on their way to someplace else. We are a maturing and sophisticated county with much to offer, a destination in our own right, and we should look the part.
6. Many of the proposed HCODs are major gateways into our community. It is important that we present our best face to the rest of the world.
7. The standards are very flexible. For example, the only prohibited exterior materials are unadorned cinder block, sheet metal and corrugated metal.
8. Many surrounding localities have already adopted design standards.
9. Several local developers are already building to the quality required in the proposal. For example, Uno Chicago Grill on Southpoint Parkway exceeds the proposed design standards.
10. Visitors and residents alike enjoy shopping at businesses with attractive signage and pleasant landscaping. Harrison's Crossing, Southpoint II and Cosner's Corner are good examples of appealing design.
11. "Haphazard development...can easily alter the unique character of a community. Preserving the aesthetic continuity of the built environment helps communities maintain their spirit and appeal." This is from *Strategies for Promoting Good Community Design* on the Scenic America website at [http://www.scenic.org/planning/strategies\\_cd](http://www.scenic.org/planning/strategies_cd)
12. "Economic benefits accrue; high-quality communities with architectural and natural elements that reflect the interests of all residents are more likely to retain their economic vitality and value over time." This is from *Getting to Smart Growth* on pages 33-34 and 40-41 at <http://www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/gettosg.pdf>
13. Citizen working groups for the current Comprehensive Plan Update said that the county needs better design of development along road corridors.
14. Opponents argue that this is not the right time to enact standards given the state of the national economy. In fact, now is the time to act when the economy is slow, to be ready for the eventual upturn.
15. Some opponents argue that this proposal will make development more expensive. In fact, the proposed standards are so minimal that most existing newer development would exceed them.
16. Some opponents argue that this proposal will hurt landowners and developers. In fact, most major Spotsylvania developers support the proposal. The supervisors must balance their concern for individual landowners with the overall impact to the community. These design standards will apply to the most visible, highly traveled and growing areas in the county.

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17. Some opponents argue that design standards trample on property rights. Property rights are important to all of us but when we live in a community we all forfeit some of these rights for the good of the whole. A homeowner living in a quiet neighborhood zoned for residential use is not legally entitled to sell his/her property for use as a convenience store, even though selling out to a convenience store chain might bring a much higher financial return.
18. Some opponents argue that there is no need for design standards because developers are already building attractive development. The newer, large developments (Harrison's Crossing, Cosner's Corner, Southpoint II) are attractive. However, these projects were rezonings that required county approval, resulting in some county control over design. "By-right" development (i.e., not subject to the rezoning process) is not subject to design control.