

ASAP Update

Stuck in First

A recent *Virginia Business* article addressed the rampant growth occurring in the Charlottesville area.¹ Titled, “Stuck in first: Will growth destroy Charlottesville area’s top-ranked quality of life?” the article featured Frank Cox, a developer who wants to expand Albemarle County’s Growth Areas; Bob De Mauri, Executive Director of the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development; and ASAP Board members Jack Marshall and Rich Collins. Marshall said, “ASAP is starting to question the predominance of pro-growth forces by challenging some of the things they’re saying. When people say, ‘You can’t stop growth,’ we’re saying, ‘You *can* stop growth.’ ASAP doesn’t pretend to have all the answers. Our focus at this point is to get people to ask the questions.” Collins expressed concern about development already approved and in the pipeline: the Hollymead Town Center, where Target will open in late July; Cox’s Albemarle Place project, planned to open in 2007; and North Pointe, which is still being debated by Albemarle County government officials. He said, “Right now we’re stuck with so much development that we can’t undo. The whole process of filling the pipeline up with proffers and approvals that go for 10 or 15 years into the future is essentially a contract against democracy. What they’re doing is tying [up] the future so that we can’t act when we get there.” The full article is posted online at <http://www.virginiabusiness.com/magazine/yr2004/dec04/cville.shtml>. *Virginia Business* also featured ASAP in a July 2002 article.² It is available online at <http://www.virginiabusiness.com/magazine/yr2002/jul02/albemarle.shtml>.

ASAP Update Editor Resigns By Harry Levins

Because of other commitments, this is my last issue as editor of the *ASAP Update*. I have enjoyed editing the last 17 issues of the *Update* as well as researching and writing most of the articles not attributed to others. Most of all, I have enjoyed—and will continue to enjoy—being part of the only community organization that is attempting to directly and responsibly address the fundamental driver of local growth. ASAP’s members have taken the time to educate themselves and have exercised their right and obligation as citizens to speak out. I applaud your efforts and hope you will continue to fight for Central Virginia’s quality of life.

¹ Robert Burke, “Stuck in first: Will growth destroy Charlottesville area’s top-ranked quality of life?” *Virginia Business*, December 2004.

² Jack Milligan, “Albemarle County tries to keep it s charm: Planners apply Smart Growth ideas, but will the market accept them?” *Virginia Business*, July 2002.

DC Metro Area Sprawl

In August 2004, the *Washington Post* ran a three-part series about how several jurisdictions in the Washington, DC, area have pursued strategies of attracting more workplaces than homes. They have done this because commercial growth generates a revenue surplus, while residential growth costs more than it pays.³ For example, the Montgomery County, MD, master plan allows commercial development that will employ as many as 40,000 workers but provides for only 15,000 new homes. Fairfax County, which has the largest housing-jobs gap in the region, spends \$7 million a year to attract more jobs.⁴

During the 1990s, the number of jobs in the Washington region grew much faster than the supply of housing, leaving a shortfall of 43,000 homes.⁵ This decade, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments projects the number of jobs in the metro area will increase by 550,000, while the number of homes will rise by only 312,000. The *Post* estimates the shortfall at 82,000 homes.⁶

These financially driven decisions have caused urban sprawl on a massive scale. Fairfax’s home-building limits forced growth into Loudoun County. As a result, Loudoun County’s population doubled in the 1990s and made it the fastest growing county in the United States. In reaction, in 1999 Loudoun voters elected a slow-growth Board of Supervisors, which enacted growth controls. Controls like those imposed by Fairfax, Loudoun, and Montgomery Counties have forced Washington-based growth as far away as eastern West Virginia and southern Pennsylvania.

Government policies that promote job growth but not concomitant housing growth have generated opposition. Such policies exacerbate traffic congestion and drive up housing prices, leading to serious housing affordability problems. The obvious solution? Control growth, don’t deflect it.⁷

³ Peter Whoriskey, “Space for Employers, Not for Homes,” *Washington Post*, 8 August 2004, p. A01; “Washington’s Road to Outward Growth,” 9 August 2004, p. A01; and “Planners’ Brains vs. Public’s Brawn,” 10 August 2004, p. A01.

⁴ Whoriskey, “Space for Employers.”

⁵ George Mason University’s Center for Regional Analysis, as quoted in Whoriskey, “Space for Employers.”

⁶ Whoriskey, “Space for Employers.”

⁷ Gerritt Knaap, a planning professor and director of the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland, as quoted in Whoriskey, “Space for Employers.”

Upcoming ASAP Meetings

February 17 – Board of Directors meeting, 8:00 a.m., Room 235, Albemarle County Office Building – members welcome.

March 3 – Monthly membership meeting, 7:30 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church Library, 190 Rugby Road. **ASAP's Annual Meeting** will feature our President's report on the past year, a panel discussion of ASAP's challenges in the coming year, a vote on ASAP's new Board structure, and the election of new Board members. ASAP members are encouraged to attend, and all other members of the community are welcome.

The next issue of the *ASAP Update* will recap ASAP's January and February membership meetings that featured Chris Williamson and Al Weed, respectively. WVTF Public Radio quoted Al Weed at length the following day.

CAAR's Dave Phillips on Development

In a September 1, 2004, e-mail to ASAP's Andy Wright, Dave Phillips, CEO of the Charlottesville Area Association of Realtors, declared, "Growth in the rural areas is (and has been for the last 10 years) out of control. ... Growth is like water, it follows the path of least resistance." He charged that the community "has made it so difficult and expensive to develop the growth area, development has naturally been pushed to the rural areas where it is by-right and cheaper. Developers don't want this, citizens don't want this, but we have a shortage of homes in the market and the marketplace has found a way to satisfy the demand for houses." He concluded by urging the County "to make it easier to develop the parts of the county that we have said are appropriate for growth—the so-called 'growth area.'"

Phillips is right. While ASAP has disagreed with CAAR on a number of issues and approaches, we agree on this fundamental principle—it should be easier for developers to build in the Growth Areas than in the Rural Areas, and County policies should reinforce that principle.

ASAP is a non-profit corporation organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Its **mission** is to increase knowledge and awareness about the effects of net population growth on our natural environment and quality of life, and to advocate appropriate policies and mechanisms that will enable our region to reach a sustainable population size. To achieve this, ASAP will engage in research, community education, policy development, and advocacy. ASAP publishes this **newsletter** monthly except for combined January-February and June-July issues. Submit editorial comments to the newsletter's new editor, Virginia Writing Services, LLC, at info@VirginiaWritingServices.com. Articles may be reprinted or excerpted with attribution. To become a member of ASAP and/or to receive this newsletter and a notice of ASAP events, contact Andy Wright at andy@eco3.com or 434-244-0793.



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