



Virginia
Beach
Vision, Inc.

"Looking Toward Tomorrow's City"

June 17, 2011

Honorable Mayor
Members of the City Council

We, the members of Virginia Beach Vision, continue to support your efforts to plan SGAs along the future public transit link between Norfolk and the oceanfront. We acknowledge, as you have, that land is a precious resource, and as the era of suburbanization gives way to the need for urban revitalization, new policies are needed to enhance land value and the commercial tax base. We continue to support the concept of involving all public stakeholders in these planning efforts, especially as those plans regard individual parcel development or re-development. We know we will only succeed when lands are aggregated and buy-in is secured from key stakeholders.

Two recent examples have proven the value of intensifying land use to increase property value. Both the Town Center and the 31st Street project have shown how the provisions of landownership, partnership and the use of public parking can stimulate urban product, land intensification, and the creation of a pedestrian friendly environment. Additional projects are on the horizon for these areas. In each case, the essential common denominator that facilitated this revitalization and consequential increase in property value was a mechanism to leverage parking in working with land owners interested in and capable of development or re-development. Remember the RASAP called for mechanisms to facilitate land assemblage and to create a parking authority (strategy).

The recent attempt to formulate a Form Based Code (FBC) at the oceanfront, intended to be a model for such zoning in other SGAs, has faltered because it does not engage the key stakeholders in the purpose of the change from the current zoning to FBC and the obvious lack of a parking strategy. In order to get buy-in the FBC must represent in fact, an improvement in opportunity from the current zoning and allow for flexibility to encourage the large amount of investment required for such development or re-development. As public transit lessens the need for some parking, clearly, common parking in structures is the key to unlocking value that is wasted by requiring each project to meet parking requirements on site. Our SGA task force applauds the City for the excellent work on the Form Based Code, and believe it may have merit, but only if the key stakeholders are engaged and a parking strategy is added as an integral element so property owners can leverage their land to create higher value, hence higher tax revenue for the City.

The first step in consideration of the Form Based Code must be the implementation of a parking strategy for the SGAs. We acknowledge this may not be a "one size fits all" plan, because the needs and options could be different across the City. But one thing is clear; private sector transit oriented development can significantly increase new development that enhances property value and tax revenue, but only if a mechanism is provided to deal with parking in some comprehensive way.

This gradual movement toward an urban policy for the SGAs is a significant evolution in our city's continual transformation from an agricultural community, to a suburban mecca, and now to a city with both of the former, as well as with a new trend toward urban revitalization in the SGAs. Public transit makes this both possible and financially feasible, but a parking plan will continue to be an essential ingredient to ensure we create pedestrian friendly environments in each SGA.

We urge you to focus on this need before returning focus to developing a Form Based Code.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Barrett
President



Robert S. Miller, III
SGA Task Force Chairman

cc: J. Barry Frankenfield, SGA Manager
Virginia Beach Planning Commission
James K. Spore, City Manager
R. Steven Herbert, Deputy City Manager
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