

Debra G. Speyer
3908 Leafy Way
Coconut Grove, Florida 33133
215-519-6426
Debra@WallStreetFraud.com

July 9, 2017

Jeremy Bryant, Director
Planning and Zoning Department
Amherst County Administrative Offices
153 Washington Street
Amherst, VA 24251

Re: Lloyd-Speyer Property

Dear Mr. Bryant

Pursuant to the rules of the Amherst County Planning Commission, I am to submit my presentation ten days prior to the meeting of July 20, 2017. I have previously provided a presentation to the Commission which I will be referencing during the July 20, 2017 meeting. I along with several neighbors will be making presentations.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra G. Speyer

DGS/sl

Conserving Open Spaces in Growth Areas on the Lloyds Land

Too often it is said that communities cannot afford to “grow smart” by conserving open space. However, evidence indicates that open space conservation.

Too many community leaders feel they must choose between economic growth and open space protection. But no such choice is necessary. Open space protection is good for community health, stability, beauty, quality of life and community character. It is also good for the bottom line. Many communities now work to conserve economically important landscapes such as watersheds and farm land as a way to attract tourists and new business.

Preservation of beautiful open land will attract folks to live and work here. Businesses will consider moving here as the climate, access to the mountains, the open space, and other quality of life issues of Amherst County are attractive to bring the necessary workforce that business development requires. Corporate CEO's say quality of life for employees is the third most important factor in locating a business behind only access to domestic markets and availability of skilled labor.

Owners of small companies rate recreation and parks and open spaces as the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business. The major elements cited as crucial for a satisfactory quality of life were low crime, with safe streets and access to greenery and open space.

Some community leaders expect that the taxes generated by growth will pay for the increased cost of development but in many cases this is not the case. Growth does not come without a cost.

As an example, in Loudon County, Virginia, the fastest growing community in the Washington D.C. area cost to service a thousand home new development exceeded their tax contribution by as much as \$2.3 million.

Development requires tax supported infrastructure. Utilities, water and sewer need to be provided. Schools need to be expanded. Roads become clogged with traffic. An upward of five hundred house development on the Lloyds lands would clog Kenmore Road and Route 60. Route 60 has been recognized in the Amherst County Comprehensive Plan to be preserved as a scenic pathway to the

Blue Ridge. Kenmore Road is a small country road into the town of Amherst with very limited traffic potential. Neither of these existing access roads could handle such a development.

The goal of maintaining the Route 60 as a scenic byway in your very own Comprehensive Plan is to boost tourism. A congested roadway and a development sprawl near the very origin of Route 60 as one departs from the town of Amherst is not in keeping with this very principle. The county has recognized the importance of attracting tourists by protecting scenic views and vistas.

Land conservation is often less expensive for local governments than suburban style development writes planner Holly L. Thomas. The old adage that cows do not send their children to school expresses a documented fact. Farms and other types of open land far from being a drain on local taxes actually subsidize local government by generating property taxes, agricultural production and increased tax revenue generated by the very business itself. Beef remains one of the county's most important agricultural products.

This farm will generate more in tax revenue than it demands in services from Amherst County. We essentially require no services nor are we a cost to the county of Amherst.

The nation's farms and ranches are often referred to as "working landscapes" because of the food and fiber they produce. The best of the lands are literally irreplaceable. Their agricultural productivity, the result of geologic and climatic factors cannot be reproduced. Even though they also have value as developable land, their highest economic use derives from their long term productivity as farm and ranches. If agriculture is going to be a vital part of the community, then it is vitally important that a critical mass of farmland be permanently protected.

American agriculture is an industry of great value. Farms are often the most stable part of the local economy. They have been past down for generations and tend to stay put rather than move around as other jobs and businesses do. Agriculture lends economic stability to a community providing a net inflow of dollars year in and year out from the sale of agricultural products and the services they require. Unfortunately the land that supports this valuable industry faces increased pressure from some community growth planners.

Conclusion: Many communities to achieve such open spaces most often have to purchase the development rights. In this case, I am donating the development rights for the benefit of Amherst County whether that be to the County itself or the Virginia Outdoor Foundation.

Respectfully,

Debra G. Speyer

References

The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space. The Trust for Public Land. (1999 Report).

Smart Growth and Open Space Conservation. U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Values and the Property Tax Base. John L. Crompton.