

Subject:

FW: FOR THURSDAY RELEASE: CHAMBER SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT AREA
RESTORATION IN ALBEMARLE



*A New Century "... dedicated to representing private enterprise, promoting business
and enhancing the quality of life in our Greater Charlottesville communities."*

cvillechamber.com • 209 Fifth Street, NE • Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

July 29, 2015

TO : The Honorable Jane Dittmar, Chair, Albemarle County Board of
Supervisors
& Honorable Albemarle County Supervisors
The Honorable Calvin Morris, Chair, Albemarle County Planning
Commission
& Honorable Albemarle County Planning Commissioners

cc: The Chamber Board of Directors
The Honorable Thomas Foley, Albemarle County Executive
Ms. Faith McClintic, Albemarle County Economic
Development Director
Ms. Helen Cauthen, President, Central Virginia Partnership

FROM : Timothy Hulbert, IOM, Chamber President 

RE : **ALBEMARLE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AREA
RESTORATION**

* * * *

As you know, in 1996 Albemarle County designated its total land area as either “rural” or “development” areas. As you also know, Albemarle County land mass is approximately 726 square miles (464,640 acres). The 1996 Albemarle County governmental designation is 95% (689 square miles / 440,960 acres) of the land mass as “rural” and about 5% (36 square miles / 23,232 acres) for “development.” (*Fauquier County, often cited in comparison, is designated 70% rural area / 30% development area.*) Accordingly, 20-year County policy is to direct development into designated development areas and restrict such in rural designated areas. We understand that there have been no significant adjustments to the “rural” / “development” designations since 1996.

In December 2009, the approved mixed-use 1,200 acre Biscuit Run Development in Albemarle, south of the City of Charlottesville, changed course and approximately 782 acres were converted into a Virginia state park, thus lost to development. At the time there were brief discussions with no action about restoring this amount of lost development area acreage.

In a related matter at about the same time, Albemarle County professional staff reported to the Board of Supervisors and Albemarle County Planning Commission, the relative dearth of land available for advanced manufacturing, manufacturing, production, assembly, warehouse, distribution and other industrial, light industrial and industrial service enterprises – for firms either already located and wishing to expand here or firms seeking to relocate into our community.

In June, the Albemarle County Economic Development staff updated that earlier report indicating that at present there are 20 parcels / 105 total acres that are developable, master plan designated and zoned for such use. Another 39 parcels / 269 acres, are developable and master plan designated, but not currently zoned for these uses.

Also in June, the Albemarle County Economic Development staff reported to the Board of Supervisors that over the past four or five years, Albemarle County had “missed opportunities” for business expansion within, or relocation to, the County for 23 businesses (19 existing / 4 relocations). Those firms estimated that they would create and/or retain 1,160 employees. The lack of available acreage was a significant contributing factor in a number of these cases.

The clear lack of skilled and semi-skilled job opportunities in our community has been repeatedly identified. In 2011 our Chamber affiliate Greater Charlottesville Area Development Corporation pinpointed this problem in the watershed *Orange Dot Report*. We are keenly focused upon this shortcoming; addressing it with our *Charlottesville Works Initiative* and other activities.

Currently, Albemarle County is under very favorable consideration for the location of a national business for a production/distribution facility. The business would employ

near the outset of operations, 100 or more of our neighbors. Our community is “competing” with other localities for this opportunity. As is the case with most businesses, time is of the essence.

In line with this opportunity, 226 acres of land, south of, and proximate to, Interstate 64 has been identified by Albemarle County Economic Development staff for restoration of the lost 782 development area acreage. (The interested business would look to avail itself of perhaps +/-30% of those 226 acres. The remaining +/-70% of the 226 acres would be available to other firms.) Any restored development area acreage would remain subject to the range of federal, state and county land use and environmental regulations (i.e. critical slopes, watershed, traffic, etc.). A development area restoration does not eliminate those requirements.

Regarding economic growth, our guiding *Code of Chamber Public Policies* states:

“Existing and new businesses provide the jobs and economic base from which our fellow citizens in our community can and do improve their lives... Growth is inevitable in any vital and attractive community. Our Chamber embraces economic growth to enhance the human, economic, cultural and natural characteristics of our Greater Charlottesville communities... While Virginia and Greater Charlottesville present a favorable platform for business success, our area can and must be more agile as a location for enhanced entrepreneurial attainment.”

The Albemarle County Planning Commission and Albemarle County Board of Supervisors currently have under consideration a proposal to effect this partial restoration.

With this telling information and opportunity now before your respective bodies, our Chamber and our community, you must act. Earlier this week our Chamber Board of Directors, as our region’s leading regional business & economic development advocate, determined that our Chamber firmly supports this reasonable partial restoration of the lost development area acreage and other such future reasonable adjustments that do not present manifest shifts to the important development/rural area balance.

Our Chamber of Commerce strongly urges the Albemarle County Planning Commission and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors to take prompt action to approve this important measure.

Thank you.

Timothy Hulbert, IOM

Chamber President

"Lord, help me to become an instrument of your peace..." -- St. Francis of Assisi

