

## Chapter 48 - *Bacon's Rebellion Blogs*

### *Bacon's Rebellion Blog Listing*

23Jun09

Chapter	Date	Column
21	<b>2009</b>	
	27-Feb	More Vocabulary
	24-Feb	Even More on Interstate Crime
	23-Feb	More on Interstate Crime
	15-Feb	Back to Beltway Burden
	10-Feb	Thank You Larry
	8-Feb	Note for NMM on Economic Reality
	8-Feb	Anatomy of a Bad Commute
	14-Jan	Tragedy of Trickle Down
	<b>2008</b>	
	8-Dec	Stimulating Disaster Part Two
	7-Dec	Stimulating Disaster
	30-Nov	Thanksgiving Perspective
	14-Nov	Breakthrough
	5-Nov	Antipartisan an Addition to the Vocabulary of Sustainability
	30-Oct	Spreading Around Disaster
	3-Oct	Worth Noting Again
	5-Aug	Gas Prices and Related
	21-Apr	Learning from Flight
	18-Mar	On the Economy
	14-Mar	C'ville/Albe Shared Vehicle Systems
6-Mar	Why Supercapitalism Will Not Be a Popular Book	
12-Feb	Right on Cue	
<b>2007</b>		
5-Apr	<i>WaPo</i> Speaking	
19-Mar	Lets Hear it for the Sweet Spot	
18-Mar	Autonomobility	
<b>2006</b>		
4-Apr	Geographic Illiteracy Rampant	
<b>2005</b>		
11-Aug	Los Angeles According to <i>WaPo</i>	
22	<b>2009</b>	
	27-Feb	More Vocabulary
	26-Feb	Green Technology Bubble and Bust
	13-Feb	Times List of 25 to Blame
	10-Feb	Thank You Larry
	8-Feb	Anatomy of a Bad Commute
	8-Feb	Note for NMM on Economic Reality
	1-Feb	Perpetuating the Tragedy of Trickle Down
	27-Jan	Shelter Fools Gold
	17-Jan	Back to Housing
	14-Jan	The Tragedy of Tricle Down
	4-Jan	More on Montana McLodges

**2008**

- 31-Dec More on MainStream Medias Default
- 8-Dec Stimulating Disaster Part Two
- 7-Dec Stimulating Disaster
- 30-Nov Thanksgiving Perspective
- 17-Nov Further Note on Housing
- 14-Nov Breakthrough
- 9-Nov Wrong Size House, Wrong Location
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- 29-Oct *WaPo* and IHT Housing Mortgage Coverage
- 13-Oct Groveton's Balloon Tale
- 12-Oct Swift Boating the Mortgage Crisis
- 11-Oct Role of MainStream Media
- 3-Oct Worth Noting Again
- 29-Sep Toward a Sustainable Trajectory
- 21-Sep Fundamental Transformation
- 8-Sep High Noon for Enterprise Socialism
- 22-Aug Fannie and Freddie
- 17-Jun Headlines, Headlines
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**2007**

- 20-Jun Those Living in Old Glass Houses
- 15-Jun Weekend Reading

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- 13-Oct Groveton's Balloon Tale

11-Oct Its Elementary  
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 24-Jun Insights and Silliness  
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- 26
- 4-May Villains on Hallowed Ground  
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 27-Feb More Vocabulary  
 18-Feb Disappointment Cubed  
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 19-Mar Lets Hear it for the Sweet Spot  
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- 2009**  
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	14-May	A Great Day for Balanced Communities
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		<b>2006</b>
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29		<b>2009</b>
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	23-Oct	Market Gambling
	14-Oct	Rescue
	13-Oct	The Bottom Line

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	11-Oct	The Role of MainStream Media
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	5-Aug	Gas Prices and Related
	17-Jun	Headlines, Headlines
	18-Mar	On the Economy
	7-Mar	Note on Groveton's Observation
	27-Feb	<i>WaPo</i> Ads
	<b>2007</b>	
	10-Nov	The Pendulum Swings
	21-Jun	Graphic Proof
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	23-Jun	Social Isolation
	18-Jun	Subregional Job Location
	25-May	Population and Sustainability
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	10-Oct	More on Transfer of Property Rights
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	4-Apr	Geographic Illiteracy Rampant
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33	11-Aug	Los Angeles According to <i>WaPo</i>
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	29-Mar	Howling Ignorance
	28-Mar	METRO West - 22 Years Too Late
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## LOS ANGELES ACCORDING TO WaPo

What a day! WaPo has six stories on the front page and five of them relate to human settlement patterns and/or to the topic of our current column on Jared Diamonds new book *Collapse*.

There was some interest noted in one of them ("The Los Angeles Story" about "density") in the string following Jim Bacons post on the need for a Carbon Tax from yesterday. As we document in "The Shape of the Future," almost every discussion of economic, social or physical consequence eventually gets to the issue of human settlement pattern.

The Los Angeles story demonstrates the wisdom of the adage "It is not how dense you make it, it is how you make it dense."

Proximity is a fundamental parameter in the creation of functional urban form. Close proximity of a wide range of elements is a necessary, but not sufficient, parameter for sustainable human settlement patterns. In addition, there must be, among other things, functional dooryards, clusters and neighborhoods that are organized in relatively balanced villages and those villages configured in Balanced Communities that are arranged in such a way to create sustainable New Urban Regions and Urban Support Regions. There is a lot to learn from a careful reading of the story with the right contextual framework into which to fit the information.

Mobility is an example. Attempts to provide a "modern" alternative to the extensive system of "interurban" streetcars in The Los Angeles region just before, during and after WWII was founded on the tragically flawed idea that it is possible to build enough "freeways" so everyone could go wherever they wanted to go when ever they wanted to go there in private automobiles. (Some will recognize this as a variant of the Private Vehicle

Mobility Myth. See "The Myths That Blind Us" 20 Oct 2003 and "Myth to Law" 29 Nov 2004 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

A unique combination of significant topographic constraints, early reliance on an extensive shared vehicle system, small municipalities with strong zoning powers, a region-wide lack of water and large manufacturing, fabricating and entertainment venues, among others, resulted in a relatively high density at the village and community scale and a large number of expensive houses in dangerous locations. See "Fire and Flood." 3 Nov 2003 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

Over the past 20 years the region has slowly and painfully started to reintroduce shared vehicle alternatives for mobility. That accounts for the improvements in some measures of mobility and access that Jim noted. It is also true that, in line with the perspective of Tony Downs, congestion has forced changes in location decisions.

Actually the Los Angeles New Urban Region would work fairly well if citizens understood the importance of Balanced Communities and made more of their decisions based on an intelligent consideration of the real alternatives unvarnished by pandering politicians and philosophical nut cases. They would come to realize this in a hurry if the government subsidies were phased out and citizens and enterprises all paid the full cost of their location decisions. Many of the best "mixed use" and "new urbanist" projects in the United States can be found there along with some of the most successful Planned New Communities.

The WaPo version of "The LA Story" has special meaning to me because my grandfather, a builder and developer in California at the turn of the last century, gave up an option on most of Signal Hill just before oil was discovered in order to buy property in Richmond and Gridley. Readers will recognize these two places as California real estate hot spots.

Post Script: The contention that there is no evidence to tie mobility and access directly to human settlement pattern is so silly that it does not merit a response. This relationship is not clearly evident only to those who have a specific economic, social or physical objective that is rendered uneconomic, anti-social or physically impossible but admitting the existence of the relationship.

EMR

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

## NEW AND USED MOBILITY IDEAS IN CONTEXT

Here at SYNERGY/Planning we are a little weary of "new" as well as used ideas to solve the mobility and access crisis. We suggest all must be wary of those proposing "solutions" that do not include Fundamental Change in human settlement patterns and Fundamental Change in governance structure.

First let us outline some of the background for our position on access and mobility innovation:

We have advocated village and community scale applications of telework to eliminate vehicular trip demand since 1969. All we have seen so far are pork barrel "telework centers" and individual / small scale, scattered-site applications which do little to address core mobility and access dysfunction. The number of "telecommuters" seem impressive to those who do not take into account the impact of the scattered location of the users.

In the early 70s we supervised and coordinated the development of a sketch plan for a 150,000 population energy self-sufficient Planned New Community for our client Weyerhaeuser Corp which owned the 26,000 acre site. Food, fiber and employment would be based on the resources of the site and adjacent land owned by Weyerhaeuser. Energy was to come from a combination of solar applications and waste recycling. Mobility and access was to be provided by a hybrid private / shared vehicle system designed by project-partner Ford Motor Co. Ironically, Ford's reaction to the October 1973 Arab Oil Embargo killed that project.

One of our efforts to articulate region-wide settlement pattern and

Katrina," 5 September 2005" at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com) .

Since the 80s we have advocated weight-distance fees to pay for the maintenance of roadways. In 1984 we outlined, with others, a proposal to use the reversible lanes on Shirley Highway / I-395 as variable-fee HOV lanes (aka, Hot Lanes). That was over 20 years ago and these are now among the "new" ideas on the table.

We have advanced these "new" ideas not just as a consultant, a professor and an author but also as a board member, committee chair and committee member of some of the largest business organizations in the Commonwealth and as a representative of one of the most influential enterprises in the northern part of Virginia.

Now there is a fresh generation of advocates of "new" ideas like public-private partnerships and private sector funding of transport facilities. These acolytes seem to be driven as much by ideology as by the desire to improve mobility and access. But are they "new" ideas and will they improve mobility and access?

The advocates of "new" ideas were well represented at the recent conference on public-private partnerships. As we note in the End Note Two of "The Devil's Dance," (3 January 2006 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com) ), this conference addressed a number of topics that need to be considered if we are to solve mobility and access dysfunction. The ideas put on the table were summarized in three columns in the 3 January issue of Bacons Rebellion.

Here are some thoughts on the "new" ideas that were raised at the conference:

First it is not the 19th century where we find the most widespread application of private sector construction of roadways in the

Commonwealth. Between 1965 and 2005 far more lane miles of roadway in Virginia were designed, paid-for and built by the private sector than by public funds.

Prof. Gary Johnson provides data on the extent of some of these roadways in his guest column "A Modest Plan" in the 16 June issue of Bacons Rebellion.

Most of those miles of new roadways were turned over to VDOT to maintain. Others were turned over to quasi governments created to own and maintain common roadways, parking lots and openspace for which existing municipalities and the state were unwilling to assume responsibility. Some of the roadways are still owned and maintained by private enterprises.

In summary, far more lane-miles of roadway and acres of asphalt to support automobility were designed and paid for by the private sector than the public sector. We believe that a good argument can be made that, had the public been required to pay for these roadways (much less understood the settlement pattern impact of these facilities), there may well have been far more public scrutiny and a greater understanding that this "private" contribution was building the wrong system in wrong place.

This is why understanding the big picture is important: Over the past 85 years the governance structure has failed to evolve. Elected and appointed governance practitioners have ducked their responsibility to create new governance structures at regional level and at neighborhood, village and community scales. They have left it to the private sector to do what the private sector does best: Lobbying for and establishing land use and transport processes that make the most money possible in the shortest period of time for those in control.

Citizens have been hoodwinked because governance practitioners have left it to private sector to create quasi governments (aka, Homes

Associations) to be responsible for many small scale governance responsibilities. These same governance practitioners have completely failed to evolve village, community, subregional and regional governance structure. One major aspect of this failure is that the majority of a transport system that does not work. See "From Myth to Law," 29 November 2004 and "Regional Rigor Mortis," 6 June 2005.

In his column on the public-private partnership conference ("Roads and Reason," 3 January 2006), Jim Bacon articulated the core principle with which most participants agree:

"From the standpoint of economic efficiency, transportation should be a 'user pay' system."

Who could disagree with that?

Well, before we figure out how to pay, we need to figure out what to pay for. Any transport system in which there is public or private investment should provide mobility and access for a desired human settlement pattern.

Let us get first things first. Lets answer first order questions before we answer fourth, fifth and sixth order questions. Before we come up with slick ways to raise money, there must be a plan for what will be done with the money. The National Capital Subregion is marching toward the implementation of a system of Hot Lanes build by public-private partnerships before anyone has considered how these new facilities will impact the existing human settlement patterns much less whether HOT lanes will contribute to the evolution of functional and sustainable patterns and densities of land use.

As noted in our last post ( "The Short Term Fix For Kaine" ) we must understand the impact and functionality of all VDOT programs before we spend public or private funds on them.

So much for the "new" ideas. Now what about the "used" ideas? The 16 January issue of Bacons Rebellion offers three columns on mobility and access that are a dictionary of "used" ideas:

Guest Columnist William Vincent offers three: Improved "buses", "transit" as part of HOT lanes and telecommuting. Setting aside the problems with language, the three ideas are an absolute sink-hole for public money without Fundamental Change in human settlement patterns.

Stalwart Columnist Patrick McSweeney is still mired in vocabulary issues. See "Babble Postscript," 3 January 2006 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com). For this reason it is not as clear as it could be that, as noted above, the next step is not to "tap the creativity of the private sector" but to understand what settlement pattern is desired on a regional scale and then what system of transport will provide mobility and access to that configuration of human activity. Finally society must allocated the costs of that system fairly and equitably.

Guest Columnist Prof. Gary Johnson offers a "Modest Proposal." His ten points are not as radical as those of Jonathan Swift, in fact they are downright reasonable. Most of his points are well taken and his historical perspective is sound.

It is not until one gets to Johnson's last point about the transportation problems in "rural" Virginia that it is clear that "new" or "used" ideas have no chance of solving the problems of mobility and access unless there is an understanding of the need for Fundamental Change in human settlement patterns and Fundamental Change in governance structure. So long as persons of good will believe that "rural" still exists in 2006, society will never solve the mobility and access crisis or the equally critical shelter crisis. That is the challenge of PROPERTY DYNAMICS.

In the meantime, more money or ways to raise money will make both mobility / access and shelter worse until there is a rational basis for spending the money. As the "private" investment in "suburban" / subdivision roadways shows, money paves the road to nowhere.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ [12:58 PM](#) [9 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

## 9 Comments:

 At [3:21 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Well said.

We still have a lot of places to disagree, but your characterization of some (most) transit ideas, especially the current ones, as a sinkhole for public money are correct.

The best, most functional pattern of development is still going to have a heavy dependence on individual vehicles. It is still going to have glaring example of waste and inefficiency, which we accept as trade-offs for other goods and benefits we desire more.

We ought to accept that, and plan accordingly.

If we spend a few hundred years building a perfectly functional pattern and discover it is not what we want, it will make transit look like a bargain.

 At [3:54 PM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Ed, I'm interested in your characterization of Bus Rapid Transit along the Dulles corridor as a sinkhole for public money. Two questions. First, would you agree that BRT would be less of a sinkhole than an extension of Metro would be? Second, could BRT be a viable transportation mode

if embedded in a less dysfunctional settlement pattern?

 At 4:07 PM,  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Ed, regarding the matter of HOT lanes on the major corridors of the Washington New Urban Region. understand your concern with expanding capacity without regard to the impact on settlement patterns. What is your thinking about the congestion pricing mechanism to pay for that capacity? Does congestion pricing mitigate *any* of the negative impact by increasing the cost to the motorist of commuting greater distances?

 At 8:04 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

It depends on whether your passenger forecasts and your construction forecasts are correct. Either way you lose money hand over fist.

It is dubious whether you can get enough passengers, Winston and Shirley say that transit should be restricted to the top one percent in travel density routes, otherwise you are better off driving.

Rail could cost from 10 to forty times as much as BRT, but the investment is somewhat more durable. We are now seeing rail cracks etc after 30 years of Metro, but there has been maintenance all along.

BRT is cheaper to construct but you need to repave it every ten years, and the buses have to be replaced. Operating costs are higher and it is not as clean. The ride is not as nice as on rail, and buses have a negative image for middle class whites.

The optimum congestion pricing is to set the price as high as you can AND STILL HAVE CONGESTION ON THE OTHER LANE. Without congestion there is no reason to pay. If the price is too high people won't pay and you lose money.

Despite what EMR and others say, the evidence is that pattern makes little or no difference on travel.

 At 9:41 PM,  E. M. Risse said...

Jim:

I will try to answer you questions in the order presented.

As we note in "Rail-to-Dulles Realities" from 5 Jan 2004, the issue of a shared-vehicle system to Dulles via Tysons Corner and Reston is a station-area land use question, not a hardware choice question. Choose the settlement pattern you want and then select the shared-vehicle system that best serves that pattern.

At the dooryard, cluster and neighborhood and village scale those patterns have remained relatively constant over the last 300 years based on value per square foot of built space.

The key is matching the capacity of the shared-vehicle system with the travel demand of the land use in the station area and -- this is very important -- the ease with which one can step from the shared vehicle's door directly to the places the passenger wants to go.

Any BRT system that is just a bus in the median (the way you save money) would be of little value. It would cost nearly as much to get a BRT station into the core of a real station area as it would METRO -- as long as METRO is not in control of the contract process.

BRT technology has a finite capacity and relatively low "native" station-area land use intensity. It is somewhere between a "light" rail and a "heavy" rail. In Curitiba BRT has been so "successful" on some routes that it is now being replaced by "heavy" rail. In other words the station-area land uses are too intensive to be served by the BRT.

I recall reading recently, in the National Capital Region of Canada, the extensions of the Ottawa-Carlton regional system originally conceived

of as routes for extensions of the decades old BRT are now being built out with new light rail lines for what reasons, I do not recall.

BRT has its applications (a "yes" to one of your questions) but BRT is not a fundamentally different way of moving people. PRT is a fundamentally different approach to shared vehicles and if you want to pay the premium, you do not have to share -- more congestion pricing. The Miller Line to serve Dulles, Reston, Tysons, Bethesda and Capitol Hill would work best if it were a PRT system.

Is BRT less of a sinkhole? Is it better to waste 1 \$Billion than 3 or 4 \$Billion? Maybe not if the real alternative is to create functional settlement patterns in the station areas and waste none.

The core stumbling block if that to build the sort of intensity over the DAAR (air rights) and on the adjacent land to create a balance of jobs / housing / services / recreation / amenity that matches the capacity of BRT or METRO in six or seven station-areas would use up all the development potential for the entire National Capital Subregion for the next 30 years. That is why the Tysons developers were happy with an extension just to Tysons Corner -- only three stations to adsorb the development. See "Time to Fundamentally Rethink METRO," the Backgrounder from 18 October 2004.

Regarding HOT lanes and your 4:07 questions: HOT lanes have a role and we thought that when we proposed them 22 years ago.

Congestion pricing is a great idea but first lets get everyone to understand the need for Balanced Communities if we are to have sustainable New Urban Regions.

Society must give citizens the opportunity to make rational choices about where they live, where they work, how many in a household work, etc. based on a realistic understanding of the potential and limits

of the choices.

Right now citizens do not understand the real choices and so they view every proposed transport improvement as a potential "solution" that will allow them to live wherever they want, work wherever they want and then "the government" will provide them with mobility and access.

"Does congestion pricing mitigate any of the negative impact by increasing the cost to the motorist of commuting greater distances?" It only helps those at the top of the economic food chain who can afford to pay the tab unless it is part of a system to evolve Balanced Communities so only those who have a choice and choose to drive long distances pay the price.

Right now those below the 90th percentile have no choice. That is why we have to also solve the Shelter Crisis, not just the Mobility and Access Crisis.

As we point out in "Wild Abandonment" citizens have gotten themselves into this mess by consistently making the wrong location decisions. They think they are doing what is best for themselves and their families and organizations but they are not.

Back to PROPERTY DYNAMICS.

Hope that helps, Jim.

 At 9:00 AM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Creating a community in a certain way, just so you can have the economics that make mass transit work is just another subsidy to mass transit and the employers it serves.

EMR is right when he says that the "government" does not pay for transportation - we all do.

As such we all make our choices, including the cost of transportation. The pattern we live in is a result of those choices. That those choices are rationally made by the market is not in doubt: it has been studied many times. It might be true that the marginal pricing needs to be improved, but it is unlike to change the overall pattern much. I seriously doubt anyone will choose to live in the air space over the tracks.

The other 90% are not about to change the entire city for the benefit of the bottom 90%. In fact, after studying the dispersion of jobs, the economics of transit, accessibility, etc. several economists have come to the conclusion that the best way to help those people is to subsidize their cars - it is a lot cheaper and more effective than transit.

The BRT in Curitiba was not built for mass transit. It was built to provide any transit in what was otherwise a vast sprawling pedestrian neighborhood. It is enormously slow, but it beats walking.

Congestion pricing will make transportation somewhat easier for those who don't choose to use pay the toll, just as HOV does today. How much somewhat easier amounts to may not be all that much. Same goes for Metro.

EMR is correct when he says that Metro will benefit the Tysons Developers. However we will all pay for it whether we use it or not. Of course the same argument is used vehemently against new roads: it benefits the adjacent landowners. However, just about everyone uses the roads, and there is a far greater likelihood that the next new opportunity you find will be accessible by road than by metro.

Some people choose to play the Mega Millions lotto and some choose to pay the dollar scratch off. The Tysons developers just won the mega millions lotto, in a game the rest of us can't afford to play.

EMR makes a big deal out of choice. Given the choice, most people will not pay the highest cost per square foot. You don't want to be in the highest price home on the block, and you don't want to be in the highest price neighborhood in the region. You want to be where there is the greatest likelihood of the most appreciation.

At 11:52 PM,  Bill Vincent said...

Mr. Risse:

I agree with your premise that we must change basic human settlement patterns to have the maximum impact on mobility. But this is a lofty and elusive goal that will take generations to achieve, if indeed it is achievable at all on a large scale in this country.

My guest column was intended to offer some ideas for cost-effective solutions that we can implement in the short term. Are these ideas perfect? Of course not. But I have seen little evidence that there are better alternatives available.

I also am troubled by apparent factual inaccuracies in your critique. First, you state that my ideas would be an absolute sink hole of public money, yet you offer no support for this assertion. The Los Angeles rapid bus service shows that mobility options can be provided for large numbers of people at relatively low cost. Telecommuting requires little or no dedication of public resources. The current proposal for BRT in the I-95 corridor includes \$65 million in private sector financing for capital costs and the promise of significant excess toll revenues to cover operating expenses. Compared to extending Metrorail into the Dulles Corridor, these proposals require very modest amounts of public resources and can hardly be characterized as sink holes.

Second, you seem to have little understanding of BRT. For example, you

state that "Any BRT system that is just a bus in the median (the way you

save money) would be of little value." The fact is that many of the best BRT systems in the world use a median station design. This substantially increases travel times and adds great utility to the overall system.

Next, you state that: "BRT technology has a finite capacity and relatively low "native" station-area land use intensity." In fact, ALL transportation systems have finite capacity -- this is not unique to BRT.

Moreover, there are substantial examples of significant land use intensities around BRT stations. Brisbane's Southeast busway, Ottawa, Boston's Silver line, and Curitiba are some examples.

Next, you state that "In Curitiba BRT has been so "sucessful" on some routes that it is now being replaced by "heavy" rail." To the best of my knowledge, this is categorically false. I recently spent ten days in Curitiba, where I met with the mayor, URBS (their rough equivalent to WMATA), and the former mayor and governor of Parana. All of them told me that they have REJECTED building rail because they realize that they can accomplish more with BRT, for less money. In fact, when I was there, they were in the process of planning a 6th BRT corridor and had ruled out rail for that corridor.

Finally, I would like to address a couple of statements by Mr. Hyde.

First, he says that BRT in Curitiba is "enormously slow." I disagree. I rode the system daily in both peak and non-peak hours. It is actually quite fast with good average bus speeds on the median lanes. It also enabled me to get almost anywhere in the metro region (3 million people) for a single fare (65 cents) with few transfers. That kind of service is not possible with our current transit system.

Second, Mr. Hyde states that: BRT is cheaper to construct but you need to repave it every ten years, and the buses have to be replaced.

Operating costs are higher and it is not as clean." This statement is not

supported by recent studies issued by various organizations, including the Transportation Research Board and the General Accounting Office.

Operating costs are actually comparable with rail systems and, in some cases, significantly lower. Sure, buses need to be replaced, but so do rail cars. Sure, the guideway needs to be repaved, but it is a lot less expensive than replacing track and electrical components. You also don't need a team of inspectors checking the rails and third rail every night.

Finally, the statement that BRT is "not as clean" as rail is unsupported. In the US, over 50 percent of our electricity is generated by coal. We did a study in 2003 that compared the emissions associated with electricity generation for rail with the tail pipe emissions from buses in BRT mode. BRT actually performed quite a bit better on PM and CO2 and was comparable on NOx. The notion that rail is much cleaner simply ignores that the electricity is coming from dirty coal power plants, many of which blow their pollution into our region. In fact, the Council of Governments blames much of our air quality problem on these power plants -- the very same power plants that supply Metrorail.

Thank you.

Bill Vincent

 At [9:38 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

This is an area where there is a lot of asymmetrical information. LightRailNow.org, Wendell Cox, The Heritage Institute, SP/I and many others disseminate information and "studies" that, while suspect, at least elucidate the extremes of opposing views. The truth is probably somewhere between.

My comments were intended to show that the cost differences are not

clear. Rail has higher capital costs, and, as you point out, more oversight and inspections, in order to get the most out of the investment. BRT is easier and faster to get up and running, but has more maintenance. You can reallocate the investment more easily if conditions change. I think the trade off between capital costs and operating costs makes the argument unclear. Buses need more drivers, but as you point out, rail has a lot of hidden personnel and expenses. The safety issue is also unclear.

Considering the mess we are in getting into operation sooner is a big benefit.

Your point about overall cleanliness is well taken. It has been made before, and I neglected to make the point. Hybrid technology could make buses much more efficient.

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The following study attempts to cover all the costs of transportation:  
User costs, Government costs, and Societal costs.

Source: Full-Cost Analysis of Urban Passenger Transportation, University of Texas at Austin, 1996.

The study identifies the following total cost ranges, per passenger mile of travel (PMT), for each mode studied. The costs represent national averages.

Auto: \$0.38 to \$0.52 per PMT

Bus: \$0.35 to \$0.40 per PMT

Rail: \$0.48 to \$0.52 per PMT

Even here the answer is not clear. As much as 40% of the cost of new

roads is absorbed in environmental impact statements, environmental mitigation, studies and lawsuits. If some of these are unnecessary, or are a deliberate strategy to cause a strategic stalemate, then those costs are unfairly attributed to road transport.

The Bus and Rail PMT figures are artificially high because these modes are required to be used, and subsidized to be used, in areas where the passenger volume does not justify them. In turn, this low usage leads to calls for more transit oriented development in order that transit can be more cost effective. This may be a de-facto subsidy to transit, especially if that housing is not where people would freely choose to live.

Based on the facts as they are actually used, the differences in cost are not as large as some would have us believe, and these costs do not consider the quality of service.

I'm unable to locate my reference on the average speed of buses in Curitiba: I defer to Mr. Vincent's personal experience.

Thank you for your comments.

 At 11:42 AM,  [E M Risse](#) said...

Bill Vincent raises important points that deserve more than just a quick response.

More in a future post.

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

## METRO WEST -- 22 YEARS TOO LATE

The second most important thing to understand about the great victory at the Vienna / Fairfax / GMU METRO station is that it is just 22 years late.

The most important thing is that there is still time to make amends, but it will just cost a lot more.

In the early 1970s, the 1960s decision to end the Orange Line at what became known as Vienna / Fairfax GMU was reconfirmed. This decision and the reconfirmation was based on the fact that there were nearly 800 acres of vacant and underutilized land here and the alternative in Tysons Corner was "all built out."

Since then Tysons Corner has intensified by a factor of 4 and adding METRO or some other shared-vehicle system to make it functional will cost billions.

In the 70s and early 80s the Fairfax "comprehensive plan" provided incentives for land assembly to create transit oriented development (long before the term TOD was coined) so that the capacity on the Orange line could be used in both directions in peak periods.

Public action reduced the available vacant land to 100 +/- acres by the time the Orange Line got under construction beyond Ballston. Subdivision Recycling projects for the METRO West site and others surfaced as the opening of the station neared. To thwart the Virginia Center plan on still vacant land, the county's "comprehensive plan" was amended to strip out the incentives for parcel consolidation. Project after project with METRO supporting patterns and densities of land-use were turned down by the County.

The main players on the public side for this activity were former county supervisor and now Virginia Delegate Jim Scott and former county supervisor, county board chairperson and recently appointed Secretary of the Commonwealth Kate Hanley.

But for their efforts there would already be the sort of development that the market documents is in the most demand. The Orange line would be carrying more people in the off peak direction, it would be taking in more revenue and would come closer to being part of a functional shared-vehicle system.

Hundreds of acres now must be recycled at great cost and disruption to evolve a real METRO oriented urban enclave.

There is a silver lining: 45 +/- acres of land in public ownership lies at the heart of this area and is being wasted in road rights-of-way, surface parking and deck parking with no urban uses on the top. To make matters worse there is no provision to add them without tearing down the garages.

This 45 acres could be decked over and at modest density, replace the employment uses at AOI and World Com and Wal\*Mart-in-the-Weeds in Loudoun County and with the adjacent 400 +/- acres within one half mile of the METRO platform, create a village-scale station-area urban agglomeration with a relative balanced of jobs / housing / services / recreation / amenity.

It would have cost so much less to do it right the first time. We would have saved thousands of acres of Countryside and provided the sort of places the market demonstrates that people want to live, work and play.

Will METRO West perform as advertised? We will all have to wait and see.

The current project has one hand tied behind its back by the pattern of land use on the rest of the 800 acres that were part of the original reason to put the METRO station in this location.

Any analysis of the project will be hamstrung by the failure to create a comprehensive plan for the station area and to develop an intelligent vocabulary to describe the organic components of the station-area settlement pattern. See "Words Matter" and our Dec 2005 / Jan 2006 three part series on Vocabulary at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

There are three overarching lessons from this experience to date:

The loss from the scrapping of an intelligent plan to capitalize on the METRO potential at Vienna / Fairfax / GMU that evolved from the late 60s to the early 80s can never be fully recovered.

The lost of opportunity due to the refusal of the public agencies (especially between 25 and 20 years ago) to allow the market to reflect the potential of METRO access effects not just Fairfax County but the entire Virginia portion of the National Capital Subregion.

The loss of potential public revenue due to the failure to create public-private partnerships to assure public benefit from the public expenditure on the METRO would pay for much of the needed public infrastructure and services needed to support an urban enclave.

The record shows there were many of us who spoke out on these public agency failures at the time.

EMR

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

## HOWLING IGNORANCE

There are some who believe it is worth the effort to educate citizens about the importance of evolving more functional human settlement patterns. These patterns and densities of land use could spur the evolution of Balanced Communities in sustainable New Urban Regions.

One of the major problems these educators face is the ease with which some who have nothing to contribute but their personal opinions can present unfounded material. These "views," "comments" and "observations" unfortunately impact rational thinking. The Internet makes this problem much more critical.

A perfect example is the second comment following the post "METRO WEST - 22 YEARS TOO LATE" below.

Let us start with Geographic Illiteracy and Spacial Ignorance:

The most important land from the perspective of recovering the cost of building a shared-vehicle system is the land within ½ mile of the station platform. The use of this land is also critical in balancing the ridership of any shared-vehicle system to help offset the operating cost.

There are 500 acres in each R= ½ mile station area. 45 acres is less than 10 % of that area.

There are 125 acres within 1/4 miles of the platform and 45 acres is less than 36 % of that area.

The 45 acres in public rights-of-way at Vienna / Fairfax / GMU are the most important because they are closest to the platform and thus the place to focus transit oriented development. See our backgrounder "It is

Time to Fundamentally Rethink METRO" at <http://www.baconsrebellion.com/> for details.

How about economics?

The cost of site per square foot of building on a platform vs a non-platform site balances out around FAR 4. This is the case if:

The developer can eliminate much of the need for parking due to distance to METRO platform and take advantage of the reverse ridership potential.

It also helps to not to have to pay for getting rid of the prior site uses. The cost of recycling underutilized development on the site can be significant.

Also important is the fact that there are few site holding costs because the public already owns the land. Interest costs for land holding is a huge factor on big / complex / multi-phased projects.

Last, the rents on the resulting development are much higher because the market documents that this is where tenants want to be.

Data on air rights over the Dulles Toll Road confirm the intelligence of platform development. They also support S/PI's suggestion for putting the Purple Line under the Beltway to take advantage of urban density economics in Maryland. Running down I-66 with METRO might not be such a bad idea if the potential of METRO capacity was utilized.

"Who in their right mind would want to live on a concrete slab?"

One might ask who in their right mind would want to look at an expressway and parking lots?

In fact, most of the residential area of a balanced station-area enclave would end up on the "other" 455 acres. See above re the percentage of the site on a platform over the rights of way. teh

By the way there was a great stand of mature oaks and poplars with a

splendid understory of American Holly that would have been saved by Virginia Center. It was cut down to make room for uninspiring garden apartments. There is almost nothing but asphalt and buildings on the site now.

But that is not the end of the "in their right mind" story.

There are a many of "out of their right mind" folks who pay premium dollar for employment, service and residential uses in and near the Prudential Center / Copely Place in Boston (over I-90 / Mass Pike and railroad lines). You may have heard of Back Bay? There are others who have paid premium dollar per square foot for a lot of years on Park Avenue in New York City (over the New York Central lines into Grand Central Station).

In the National Capital Subregion, how about the Air Rights buildings in Bethesda?

Development on a platform could look a lot better than the best of the Rosslyn / Ballston Corridor or Reston Town Center.

When we were planning Virginia Center the Fairfax County planning director suggested we check out Nordvest Stadt in Frankfort. It was not the staff of 25 years ago that lacked vision, it was pandering politicians who were concerned about the next election. They are the same ones who cite "input" from the likes of the "who in his right mind" poster who were and are the problem. They will not change until citizens demand intelligent decisions.

A lot of the "public opposition" to the Airport Authority taking over METRO to Dulles is created by the contributions from adjacent land owners who know that there is enough land over 500-foot wide right-of-way of the Dulles Toll Road to adsorb all the employment land uses for the northern part of Virginia for decades. If the Authority is as smart as we think they are, they will build platforms at the three Reston stations because they

already own the land.

There are engineering problems with platforms but they are solvable.

The engineering problems are a lot easier to solve than keeping those who know absolutely nothing about the topic and / or have an economic dog in the fight from distracting rational evolution of human settlement patterns by broadcasting their opinions.

As careful readers of our work know, we have no problem with those who want their urban dwelling to be on one, five, ten or 50 acres -- so long as they pay the full cost of location variable goods and services.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 2:04 PM [7 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

## 7 Comments:

 At 6:08 PM,  [Will Vehrs](#) said...

I'm not a BR contributor anymore, so maybe I don't have any standing, EMR, but post #2 you criticize is not from some anonymous, flame-throwing nobody. This comment is from a regular contributor to the comments section of this blog and others. To purposefully not even mention his name seems very petty.

The comment was from Ray Hyde.

You may not like what Mr. Hyde has to say, but I suspect that you can count on one hand the number of people besides Mr. Hyde who engage you intellectually.

Although I cannot prove it, I suspect that one reason people read your posts is for the back and forth between you and Mr. Hyde. It's a tiny

gem in the blogosphere and you ought to nurture it, instead of showing

contempt.

 At 6:46 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Thank you, Will.

EMR and I believe many of the same things: the difference is one of degree. I don't think there is a thing wrong with wanting to get the most efficient use of our resources, within reason. Unlike him, I believe there are many complementary ways to do that, and none of them are ever 100% optimal and none of them will solve either all of anybody's problems or any of everybody's problems.

The reason I take the time to do this is that I believe he is doing more damage than good by virtue of the way his message is delivered. It reminds me of Razzo Rizzo in that line from *Midnight Cowboy*: he is ribbing John Voight for his failed attempts at street prostitution, "They are laughing at you out there, boy."

I've never seen a 45 acre elevated slab with a city on it overlooking a subway and freeway. I wonder if it is possible and cost effective. Seems like a reasonable question.

The proposed reason for doing this is to save open space. Given the cost of constructing the slab and the purpose and value of the open space, might there be a better way? We could buy an awful lot of park land for what that slab is going to cost.

It's OK, it doesn't bother me that I am spacially [sic] ignorant.

 At 6:55 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

*"The most important land from the perspective of recovering the cost of building a shared-vehicle system is the land within ½ mile of the station platform. The use of this land is also critical in balancing the*

*ridership of any shared-vehicle system to help offset the operating cost."*

It seems to me that a basic premise around here is that those that use, pay. Here we have a case where we are going to build a shared vehicle system, at public expense. Then to recover the cost we are going to build a city to support it on this highly valuable land that we have just created at public expense. Then to make sure people want to live in the city in order to support the shared ride system, we are going to effectively prohibit or disincentivize people from living anywhere near the open space we have just sqaved at collosal expense. We are purportedly doing all of this for the public good.

What is wrong with this picture?

 At [10:28 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

How many of the sites you mentioned are 45 acres?

It seems to me that first you would have to go find some open space and mine it for the aggregate. You'd have to mine some more open space for the lime, the the ore and the coal to smelt the steel, not a low energy prospect. Then you would have to cook the lime for cement, one of the most energy intensive ndustrial process there are. You would need an oil well to produce the energy to run the kilns and thousands of trucks to haul all the material. You would have to find some place to put all the infrastructure that is usually buried.

All of that to allegedly save some energy on a shared vehicle system and save some otherwise unused land. How can creating, moving and building 45 acres of artificial land compete with the cost of 45 acres of natural god-given land?

Ahh, yes. That's the kind of environmental economics that warms the

~~heart. After all, I don't have any problem with someone who wants to~~

live on a 45 acre concrete platform - as long as he pays the full location variable cost, including the cost of the subway.

As for the Prudential Center, I remember the huge hole in the ground that was dug for the foundation because they couldn't find any solid ground. It was built on a filled in swamp, so its construction today would be prohibited by wetland rules of the type promoted by PEC. And I remember when hundreds of blocks were closed because of the danger of glass coming loose from the building and sailing like enormous fragile frisbees across the city. I remember when it was fitted with huge shock absorbers and steel bracing to lessen the nauseating sway and keep it from tipping over. I remember when (I. M. Pei?) got an architectural award for that disaster, which suffered tremendous cost overruns.

I had relatives that lived in Back Bay, and it is a high rent slum, in my opinion. Four story walk up flats are not very appealing at those prices.

Frankly, I don't think any site in Taxachusetts is a good example of economical city living, unless of course you are looking for a good example of having to pay your own location related costs. Except that the Governor is finally taking the counties to task because of their long standing antigrowth ordinances. After Glaeser's Harvard study came out people began to realize what the true cost of anti-growth ordinances is.

If those poplars and oaks were mature, they probably needed to be harvested, poplars in particular don't do well when they are old. I recently took one down that was 4 feet in diameter and 120 feet high, because it was a rotten hazard. I didn't get a single stick of useful wood out of it. I hope someone put them to good use building something worthwhile and beautiful.

Finally, I don't know why you consistently accuse me of having an

economic dog in the fight: I'm not the one that gets paid for writing this stuff.

 At 2:08 PM,  [E M Risse](#) said...

Mr. Vehrs:

You reinforce our points.

It is far easier to solve the engineering issues and address intelligently the economic, social and physical ramifications of creating functional human settlement patterns than it is to stem the flow of misinformation and intentional distortions from those who do not like the processes or outcomes we suggest.

Almost no one with knowledge and experience in actually building and managing functional human settlement patterns comments on our posts on this Blog. We do hear from them in private communications. Most, but not all, are supportive. We try to clarify our positions in subsequent columns to reflect their input.

I know you like the Blog media but I have not found a way to efficiently or effectively use it to discuss human settlement pattern issues.

Surely you do not believe the above three posts are an attempt to "intellectually engage" anyone or anything in the context of the years of filibuster.

You seem not to like the processes and outcomes we discuss and support any who will toss bricks.

For the record again, we advocate free markets and democracy to create functional human settlement patterns. That is not possible without informed citizens.

If you read with care the above comments about the 45 acre issue in

the context provided by the original post, you will understand what we mean about intentional distortions.

We cannot shape the future based on the personal likes or dislikes of a vocal individual concerning Back Bay or the Commonwealth in which it is located.

If the market indicated many others believed as the poster does, the prices would drop.

The problems with the Pei tower (we watched as windows popped out on a visit to Boston years ago) make our point, not the commentators. They did not tear the Prudential building down and move it to Fitchburg. The Pei tower is only a small part of Prudential Center / Copely Square and the whole project knitted back together and provided a context for a very functional piece of urban fabric and determined by the market.

That same thing could be done with a 45 acre platform over I-66 and the METRO station. With the 300 to 500 acres that have already and will in the future transition to METRO supporting densities, this could evolve into a great place to live, work and play. Not for everyone but for many.

EMR

 At 6:09 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

You have avoided the question, has such a 45 acre site ever been built? In fact, nothing in your response engages.

I'll concede I exaggerated the difficulties to make a point, but building 45 acres of poor soil suspended in mid air still strikes me as totally nutso. But, as you say there are many different kinds of tastes. I'm willing to let them do as they please, if they let me.

I'll agree population trends are an important indicator of urban dynamism. In the decades since 1950 Boston's population growth is -13%, -8%, -12%, +2%, and -2.8%.

And Boston has done well, compared to St. Louis, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit. Just because people still live there, doesn't mean they like it.

The market, ah yes, the market. Look at it any way you like, far more people live outside of Back Bay than in.

Since the outlying communities have erected strong antigrowth barriers the choice of places to live is artificially low and the prices artificially high. High as they are, prices in real dollars have been dropping because of population decline. (People like me moved elsewhere because the prices were too high.) The state of Massachusetts is now working to break those anti growth barriers because they recognize it distorts the market. People aren't paying their true locational costs as you would say.

 At [4:42 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

IM PEI designed the John Hancock Tower, not the Prudential Center. It was the Hancock that had the problems to which the previous poster stated, not the PRU.

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

## GEOGRAPHIC ILLITERACY RAMPANT

The following comment was deposited at the end of the "THERE IS STILL A CHANCE" post below. That post sketches out a potential shared-vehicle system to serve the National Capital Subregion. The comment was made by the well-known scholar and transportation expert "anonymous."

"For a long time the assumption has been that offering more public transit service options would reduce traffic congestion. But despite the more than \$300 billion in taxpayer money spent to expand the quantity and quality of public transit over the last four decades, its share of travel has declined. While the number of transit passenger-miles has risen slightly over this period, its share of urban travel has decreased."

Sage sounding comments such as this are made by those who mistakenly believe that mobility and access can be provided to 21st century human settlement patterns by expanding roadways for private-vehicles. Almost all these statements are paid for directly or indirectly by those who profit from Business-As-Usual.

The sponsors of lobby groups and some "think tanks" and university "research centers" believe they would lose economic advantage from the evolution of functional human settlement patterns and efficient mobility and access systems that could effectively serve these patterns of urban land use.

What statements like this really demonstrate is the profound Geographic Illiteracy of the poster, anonymous or not. See "Geographic Illiteracy" and "The Myths That Blind Us" at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

Here are some Antidotes for the misconceptions in this comment:

The root cause of "traffic congestion" is dysfunctional human settlement patterns. No transport system can effectively or efficiently serve scattered urban land uses in large New Urban Regions, period. See "Spinning Data, Spinning Wheels" and "Regional Rigor Mortis" at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

The high cost of contemporary shared-vehicle systems is in large part cause by imbalanced system loading. (E.g. for METRO, most of the trains leave most of the stations, most of the time, essentially empty.) Some of this is due to inept management but most of it is due to dysfunctional human settlement patterns in the shared-vehicle station areas. See the "METRO WEST - 22 YEARS TOO LATE" post on this Blog (28 March 2006 now archived) and "It Is Time to Fundamentally Rethink METRO" at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

The reason that ridership of shared-vehicle systems has not increased faster is that the grossly subsidized scatteration of urban development cannot be served even by heavily subsidized shared-vehicle systems.

Dysfunctional settlement patterns mean that most citizens who need to travel have no choice but to resort to a private-vehicle. See Jim Bacon's current column on Pod People at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

Urban citizens of Virginia (many of them Pod People) do not love their cars any more than urban Bavarians, they just do not have the choices which citizens of most First World New Urban Regions enjoy. Again this is due to settlement patterns that prevent citizens from meeting life's needs without resorting to any vehicle or conveniently using shared vehicles.

Those who choose to drive can do so until gasoline and its substitutes become too expensive.

Jim Bacon has recently noted government actions that thwart competition in the provision of shared vehicles. Eliminating these barriers will help.

In the long run there must be New Urban Region-wide (and Urban Support Region-wide) settlement patterns that can be served by functional transport systems. The backbone of those system will be a public, shared vehicle system supported by many integrated sub-systems including ones that support private-vehicles.

Recent applications of 21st Century Shared-Vehicle Systems (CSVS21s) demonstrate that New Urban Regions with functional human settlement patterns can be served effectively and efficiently.\*

How are functional human settlement patterns achieved? Fairly allocate location-variable costs of all goods and services and let the market do the rest.

How do citizens achieve the Fundamental Change in settlement patterns and the Fundamental Change in governance structure necessary to fairly allocate location-variable costs of goods and services and replace the current system of subsidies and pork barrel transport?

In a democracy with a market economy the only answer is better educated citizens who vote and buy based on their enlightened self-interest.

PROPERTY DYNAMICS coming to an Alpha Neighborhood near you soon.

\*Note: CSVS21 systems are some times called Advanced Rapid Transit (ART) or Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) and, in some cases (where the system capacity matches demand) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Nineteenth century and early 20th century systems like "heavy rail" (aka, METRO), "light rail," "commuter rail" and conventional "bus" have useful applications but are not as well suited to contemporary needs as contemporary systems.

posted by E M Risse @ 1:20 PM [17 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

## 17 Comments:

 At [2:28 PM](#),  [Chris Brancato](#) said...

I can't let this pass by.

*Urban citizens of Virginia do not love their cars any more than urban Bavarians, they just do not have the choices that citizens of most First World New Urban Regions. Again this is due to settlement patterns that prevent citizens from meeting life's needs without resorting to any vehicle or conveniently using shared vehicles.*

With trying to apply even a modicum of academic logic to this reply, I'll reply from the gut.

You're going to blame the transit problems on a "dysfunctional settlement pattern"? There is no dysfunction about our settlement patterns. Since the end of WWII, our patterns have been quite functional in terms of achieving our desired quality of life. The allure and dream of a white picket fence and a plot of land to putter around in is hardly a dysfunctional settlement pattern in my opinion. I believe most Americans have no problem trading urban blight with suburban sprawl in that regard. We're trading one dysfunctional transportation system (a subway, bus) for another (traffic choked highways)

Dear Sir, You have to be kidding me? My point of reference is this: I was born and raised just outside of NY city where mass transit abounded. Never once during my twice daily bus-rail-bus commute crossing the Hudson River did I ever enter into a moment of pause on how great my life would be if I never had to have a car again. Not a single synaptic firing lamenting the freedom from the highest car insurance rates in the nation.

Quite the contrary! My lament was always that I had to share my ride

with my fellow man and all of his eh hem...glory.

Here's where I think America wants to live and why. A car is a truly megalomaniacal and narcissistic experience. My car is my sanctuary. I have total and complete control over the environment I'm cocooned in. I can set the temperature to my liking. I can receive 100% digital, crystal clear, commercial free radio (and soon video) entertainment from a satellite 26 miles in space available to me virtually any where I go.

I set the car's direction, acceleration and all of the infinite minor operational adjustments to optimize my comfort and driving capability.

I can go where I want, when I want, taking as many people with me, I want-if at all.

And you want me to trade my car for a shared ride vehicle?

With all due respect...that's delusional thinking.

/back to the drawing board.

 At 4:31 PM,  [E M Risse](#) said...

Chris:

I have no problem with you doing just what you want to do, as long as you pay your fair share of the cost.

The market documents that most citizens do not share your views. In fact they pay a huge per square foot premium to avoid what you find enjoyable.

If everyone paid the full location-variable cost of goods and services, almost no one would agree with your choices, especially if the playing field were leveled and more of what citizens really want was available

at prices that they could afford.

EMR

 At [4:36 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

*This post has been removed by a blog administrator.*

 At [4:59 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Gee, Chris, I'm getting pounded around here, and my views are mild compared to yours. I do agree that much, but not all, of promotional activity for transit and shared vehicles is delusional - at present. Times could change, but if they do, we probably won't like it.

EMR leaves the impression that the idea transit is carrying fewer riders in spite of massive infusions of cash is false by referring to it as "sage sounding", yet he later concedes that shared vehicle systems are not working.

The car is out of the box and we can't put it back any more than we can nuclear weapons. It will always be a preferred mode of transit, but it may eventually become the province of the ultra wealthy. Until then, I'm not willing to blame our present condition on think tanks and lobbying groups, not even even PEC. They, after all, are funded by citizens and businesses, and as such they are unofficial representatives of the (balkanized) public interest.

Let's take EMR's argument that it is not possible to provide mobility and access through roadways and private vehicles as fact. Is that any reason to continue to throw more money down the hole for transit systems that exhibit increasingly lower ridership in spite of increasingly higher funding? Is that any reason to cut funding for the transit system of choice (autos), even if we can't provide all the funding that people have shown they would like?

EMR is right. I can't fix dysfunctional settlement patterns, but I can go buy a car to deal with the patterns there are. I have the choice of resorting to a private vehicle, or adapting myself to the (rare, expensive, and choice limiting) condition under which I can do without. But even if I relocated that way, I would still be better off and have many more choices with the car than without.

Where I really don't have a choice is in rearranging the entire world just to reach some (as yet unknown) functional settlement pattern. A "choice" that can't happen in my lifetime is not a choice.

I don't see any point, really, in undoing what EMR refers to as grossly subsidized scatteration in such a way that it now grossly subsidizes a shared transit system that is a proven failure otherwise. If the issue is to reduce subsidies, then reduce them all, don't trade one for another.

By the way, despite EMR's claims, both First World and Third World cities are facing the same "problems" as we have here: more wealth, larger homes and gardens, more cars and increasing suburbanization. That is in spite of their superior rail systems.

And Personal Rapid transit is just another way of operating cars: it is an admission that transit cannot work. Until this visionary system becomes commonplace, it is going to be a niche system for specially designed areas, and its costs will be in addition to our automotive system costs, not instead of them. It is a common problem associated with not being first to the marketplace, too bad, maybe, but there it is.

We know how annoying it is to get a book from the library and find that the previous user has his notes and thoughts all over the margins.

Imagine how we will feel when that shared vehicle arrives at our door and we find evidence that some young couple has already been using the back seat.

I have said that we cannot solve our transportation system problems as long as everyone wants to go to the same place at the same time. In order to fix unbalanced system loading, it is apparent to me that we need to move jobs away from the center of the system. It is not scattered development that causes congestion, it is concentrated development. Any contention otherwise, flies in the face of everyday observation and congestion in cities all over the world.

But this idea of moving jobs is an anathema to EMR for reasons I don't understand. As I see it, it is one required half of having the balanced development patterns he calls for.

In fact, I would go so far as to say that it is not scattered development that is grossly subsidised, it is poor locational choices on the part of employers that is subsidised. At least if Metro goes to Tysons and the Airport it will tie three major employment centers together, and offer some likelihood of bidirectional travel.

However, I don't see much likelihood that people will choose to live close to the airport, or in Tyson's, anymore than they choose to live downtown. Nor do I see them living in apartments on a platform suspended over the intervening stations, just so they can share a ride in standing room only conditions.

We can already see that Metro has done nothing to reduce congestion, and it is admitted that the Metro extension will do nothing to relieve congestion. The reason is that people choose to use cars.

Even those that use Metro, still use cars for 80%+ of their travel needs. If 15% of people use Metro for 15% of travel, who is subsidising whom? If Metro is carrying 2% of our travel (not including freight) the obvious implication is that we need to expand Metro not by 25% at a cost of \$4

billion but by 5000% at a cost of \$80,000 billion. And even if we did that, we would still have to uproot and move 70% of the population to get them close to a station. Now that is delusional.

Then we would still need roads to carry freight, ambulances and fire equipment and everything else that won't fit or is prohibited on Metro.

Metro doesn't solve congestion. But, it gets credit for development which is counted against road construction.

Maybe. In Charlotte they planned to "capture" capture 53% of all new office growth in Mecklenburg County; and 54% of all new multifamily growth in Mecklenburg County in areas adjacent to the transit stations. We can only guess who that capture favors.

Here is what the Robert Charles Lesser & Co said to the Charlotte planning commission about development and the Charlotte light rail system. [In] other metropolitan areas transit has had a relatively limited impact on attracting significant commercial development, all other factors being equal, that presumably otherwise would not have chosen that location. Thus, transit will be viewed as a strong amenity for commercial, but will not supersede the importance of other locational factors, in particular auto-transit accessibility....higher-intensity commercial and residential growth in these corridors, specifically around LRT and BRT stations areas. This will be accomplished via more flexible zoning and approval policies in station areas..... Yet, for larger-scale development to be attracted to the transit station areas, the City and/or County will need to work with the development community and take a proactive stance on development beyond the zoning and infrastructure investments planned in the area. Policies that should be considered by the City/County include parcel assemblage, site preparation, brownfield investigations, provision of

municipally-owned parking structures, provision of gap financing, joint development opportunities (with the City/County contributing land) and other proactive steps to attract development and limit development and financing hurdles.

Now, what was that you said about subsidies?

How does this boil down? We are going to subsidize development in favored areas in order to make the transit system come somewhat closer to not being a total failure, and we are going to do this even though we know it won't help congestion.

The real purpose for this is to achieve compactness for its own sake, Or as Andy Clarkson put it

Your political leaders have decided that empty, pristine, untouched fields of green are a greater value than your freedoms and your wealth and your property. And they have decided that they have the right to enforce that value judgement by stealing land through eminent domain, looting your wallet through taxes and bonds, and zoning you into compactness so that you will ride their transportation system.

I don't see the point of inventing things that appear not to be true, just to make a point that is so obviously false. Assuming that everyone is geographically illiterate does not mean they are not smart enough to see through the smokescreen. EMR makes a show of being free market and having each pay their way, but only according to his plan. Most citizens live outside of town in order to avoid high home prices and they recognize the trades they make. Some pay a huge square foot premium, and put up with all the cities other dis-amenities, but that is a long way from saying that "the market" likes to pay high prices and dislikes driving, or even that most people come anywhere near agreeing with EMR.

So, I'm all in favor of eliminating subsidies, but not just to change them for some other subsidies.

Hallucination is seeing something that isn't there, delusion is believing that it is real, and fraud is selling it to someone else as if it was real.

 At [5:00 PM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

Chris:

I note several clarifications that needed to be made in the original post I added a sentence on the prospect of driving a cars as energy prices rise.

In fact I like to drive too. Over the years I had an Austin Healy, an MG and a Proche. By 1990 I could never find a road that looked like the ones in the car ads within 200 miles of where I wanted to live so I sold my Porche.

By the way I think there is merit in your comment on the Pod People post re "unplanned growth as passive resistance to eminent domain." We will address that in a future column.

EMR

 At [10:22 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Well, the car ads are unrealistic, too.

For myself, I drove a honda 90 for 5 years, a beatle for 20 years (rebuilt several times), then a rabbit diesel for 12, then a miniature pickup, which I still use. The only car I ever owned that had over a hundred horsepower was one I inherited. If we used cars for transportation instead of fantasy, we would have fewer problems.

 At [11:54 PM](#),  [James Atticus Bowden](#) said...

EMR: I don't understand at least half the jargon you use instead of English. My problem. I know you've really looked at the problems and focus on dysfunctional living patterns. I think that means we live and work and play in the wrong places.

Okay. I don't understand your practical solutions - like what zoning should change.

I'd just like to look at the analysis of where the problems are and then work on how to increase supply or decrease demand.

 At [3:58 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

The allure of the car will not go away. CB clearly articulated the reasons that really boil down to "freedom" of the individual to decide when, where, how, they go about their life.

But I believe that EMR is right also. People are free to make choices but there are consequences for their choices.

And choices that benefit the individual don't necessarily benefit society - and sometimes they are polar opposites.

What car drivers expect for roads is similar to an expectation to walk into a Walmart at the height of Saturday shopping, walk the aisles alone and go directly to an unoccupied check-out reserved just for them.

This would be the Walmart equivalent of the car AD showing your and your car in an empty valley surrounded by mountains.

But if Walmart attempted to operate their business that way to satisfy their customers - really bad stuff would happen. The store would have to be much bigger with huge aisles and instead of 20 check-outs, they'd have to have 100 or more.

The financial cost of building this peak-hr infrastructure would require

that they charge much higher prices that would render them incapable of being competitive.

That's essentially the pro-road response to congestion.

Build more roads no matter what the cost both in terms of the financial cost of the road but also destruction of existing built environment - both residential and commercial in urban and urbanizing areas such as NoVa or Tidewater, et al.

People love to draw lines on a map that depict where a new road can be built but when the cost estimate is determined - what happens?

Well, it goes on a "wish" list that is already 100 Billion deep.

This is not sustainable and more importantly, dogged adherence to this philosophy is NOT responsive to the realities - no matter how folks feel about Transit.

And I wonder if a key value of transit is not acknowledged and that is to move people at Peak Hour -precisely when the roads are near gridlock.

If you looked at the peak hour ridership and just pretend transit goes away. What would you do with these people on the roads at Peak Hour?

Is there any doubt in anyone's mind what would happen if transit went away in NYC or Chicago or Boston?

You do have a major clue - it's called "Transit Strike".

And a concluding thought.

"Disfunctional Settlement" patterns - that phrase - uttered with respect to NYC and transit.

My point is that NYC settlement patterns are past history - and presumedly done a long time before the planning community became

"enlightened" with respect to the dysfunctional nature of settlement patterns.

An excellent book to read to get some insight to this issue is the "Limitless City" which addresses the early settlement patterns of NYC and how roads and transit came to be in NYC.

I also find the phrase "shared ride" interesting as a mode option. Aren't highways "shared" also in a similar sense? The only part of the highway that you really "own" is the footprint of your car. Everything else is shared and the reality of that is no more apparent than when you're sitting still with a gazillion cars around you.

 At 4:13 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: MetroWest

An interesting POLL in the Washington Business Journal:

[http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/poll/index.html?poll\\_id=771](http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/poll/index.html?poll_id=771)

Was Fairfax County right to approve the MetroWest project in Vienna?

You bet it was. Vienna needs the pedestrian-fueled vibrancy a less car-centric development can provide.

38%

Fairfax County is on the right track, but it has to keep the developer true to its promise to encourage Metro use or it will lose all credibility the next time it pushes for smart growth.

36%

Who cares? Development will happen one way or another.

5%

No way. There's no way 6,000 people squished into 56 acres will not turn Vienna into a parking lot.

19%

 At [8:35 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

"And I wonder if a key value of transit is not acknowledged and that is to move people at Peak Hour -precisely when the roads are near gridlock."

The roads are only near gridlock in relatively few places, and Metro has not resolved that. But peak hour capacity for transit is far more expensive than peak hour capacity for roads. Metro cannot manage it, and so the result will be more standing room only. That can't be a workable solution either. We are going to have congestion whether on roads or metro or both if we all insist on going to the same place at the same time.

So we need to ask if the cost of building Metro is worth the value that it provides, exactly as you say. What is the marginal value of the people moved by Metro, over and above the capacity of the roads that we have and could have had with an equivalent amount of money, operating losses included?

I'll agree we could not carry as many people during peak hours all going to one central place. But considering what the real additional number is, what exactly is the value of having them all there anyway, and who does it accrue to? How much is really the loss and the cost if we put a few of them someplace else, or does it really work out to a net gain? Some analysts have calculated that the net economic benefit of a number of smaller and co-located cities is actually higher: Research Triangle comes to mind.

Isn't one of the reason that centrally located jobs pay more is that employers have to pay in order to get employees to put up with the

grief?

To the extent that Metro does produce real marginal value, how is that value distributed among those who use Metro, those who pay for Metro and those businesses that benefit by having Metro deliver the workers? How is that value affected if it means that Metro requires special assistance in the form of development benefits to adjacent landowners? I don't think we have any idea.

Put me in the 36% bracket. If this doesn't work TOD will lose all credibility. However, I don't see how you can hold the developers feet in the fire on this: the plain fact is that nobody knows how it will work out, or what the eventual result of tens of thousands of individual decisions will be.

Finally, Metro is always going to be in addition to the cost of roads. No one calls the police or fire department or the trash hauler and expects them to arrive by Metro. The wish list for roads is a hundred billion deep, but how deep is the wish list for Metro? the current expansion is only 25% of Metro, which serves less than 2% of transit and it is \$4billion, so far.

 At [4:11 PM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

There are a number of thoughtful insights in this string.

JAB:

It is not your "problem" that we use a vocabulary with which you are not familiar - it is, however, intentional.

Nearly 40 years ago I began teaching architects as well as graduate engineers and planners the very topics we explore here. It was not long before I realized that the vocabulary and the conceptual framework

~~that was in common use (and still is) was not up to the task of effective~~

communication about human settlement patterns.

After a decade of working as a planner, designer and teacher I spend two decades planning, supervising the construction of and managing Alpha Neighborhood-scale, Alpha Village-scale and Alpha Community-scale places for citizens to live, work and play.

It took me another decade to articulate a vocabulary and conceptual framework based on field experience and the natural sciences necessary to discuss issues critical to understanding the evolution of human settlement patterns.

As soon as I get my part done, Bacon's Rebellion will have a Glossary to use in better understanding what we are trying to communicate.

In the meantime. I think a Bull Islander's PROPERTY DYNAMICS program would be a hit with your fellow islanders.

It may also lead to better solutions for the City of Poquoson. In my experience if that many people are that upset, the process has not worked and the result will be dysfunction of one kind or another.

Larry G:

A lot of good observations. You have given constructive thought to these issues.

There are misunderstood and unintended consequences of the collective impact of actions that individuals take which they believe are in their own best interest.

You are "right on" concerning shared-vehicle systems removing peak hour demand. Back in the mid-90s we calculated that if all the workers then applying telework would drive to and from work in the peak hour it would require 37 miles of 10 lane road to accommodate them. The

numbers are far higher now and much higher for HOV lanes and shared-vehicle systems.

We have most of the roadway capacity we would need for the 2031 population if we evolved Balanced Communities.

On “shared-ride” ... we deal with “shared-vehicles” not “shared-ride”. You are right, the public roadways are shared, albeit with a lot of inequity in impact and danger due to the differences of size, weight and speed of the vehicles.

Chris:

Your comments had a familiar ring that I will explore in a future post.

In the meantime, your “I can go where I want, when I want, ...” is a good approximation of the Private-Vehicle Mobility Myth.

If you really could do this and most of the other citizens of the Commonwealth could too, there would be traffic congestion problem.

All:

Keep up the constructive thinking.

EMR

 At [12:38 PM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

Sorry All the last post is missing a word the sentence should read:

If you really could do this and most of the other citizens of the Commonwealth could too, there would be NO traffic congestion problem.

EMR

 At [11:58 AM](#),  [Chris Brancato](#) said...

EMR,

While agree that some point of focus is created by some group of people in terms of they not agreeing with my point of view but I've thought a lot about it and thanks for giving me the respect of being honest.

I've tried the Amtrack route and for the most part, it wasn't bad because at least I was somewhat productive on the commute. The only thing that was missing was a persistent Internet connection and I would have been satisfied with the experience.

What I should have included in my orginial comments was this thought:

At some level I believe that a number of people (pick the number) knowingly or unknowingly agree with what I first wrote. If we were to advance the idea of mass commuting and creating the "inscentives" to use it -carrot and stick- the measure of carrot has to be significantly larger than the stick. In my opinion - as demonstrated by the 70% increase in fuel costs - we citizens have to see a larger upside than down as we essentially lose our freedom to move around at will and time.

I believe at some point, we all measure things such as this in terms of risk-reward. If we ever hope to see this come to fruition, I believe the emphasis HAS to be on creating a mass commuting experience that is so compelling that people will embrace it. Clearly, expecting them to take the bullet for a perception of common good will not get us there.

Cheers,

Chris

 At 12:15 PM,  [Chris Brancato](#) said...

One last thought...

The problem with any mass commuting strategy is one that industries such as telecom and healthcare have problems addressing. It's access. No more.

The telcoms can't execute a combined telecom strategy (voice/data/video) to the home largely because of the cost and complexity of delivering broad band to the "last mile", the point between high speed backbone and the entry point of the house. Healthcare similarly has the same problem. The people who would most benefit from constant / preventative care often end up in the emergency department because they can't access the care available to them either because of physical access (they have to work, don't have a car, etc...) or by financial access (they are indigent, don't have insurance, choose not to have insurance.)

It's that last mile of infrastructure that will make wide-spread adoption difficult as others have written. What good is it if I still have to use my car 80% of the time to access mass transit?

This is very enlightening all. Thanks for the discussion!

CB

 At 8:49 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Thank you Chris.

You have said in a few words, what I have spent months trying to get across.

 At 5:28 PM,  [E M Risse](#) said...

Chris:

Thank you for your posts of 12:58 and 1:15. I am working on a further exploration of your original comments but, given my schedule that may

take weeks to finish. In the meantime your latest thoughts will help flesh out our response.

It is important to be honest about feelings and not to try to play games by painting an intellectual gloss on comments that are posted only to support a profit short-term profit motive or the poster or their client.

I agree that a number of citizens believe just what you state.

It is also true that it is silly to expect more than a handful to “take a bullet for a perception of common good.”

You are also right about the “last mile” problem with telework and the need for most services, not just healthcare, to be delivered in person. (“Wake me when they can deliver pizza on a wire.”)

This reality is critical to understand in the context of a larger issue: There is no solution for “mass commuting.”

The fact that there are settlement patterns that require, foster or depend on “mass commuting” is a core cause of mobility and access dysfunction.

The only “help” government should be providing “commuters” is to help them become part of Balanced Communities where there are few, if any commuters. We can always support some who work in one Alpha Community and live in a second Alpha Community but not places where that is the mode of work / home relationships. (Even our friends miss this point from time to time, see Jim Bacons post “Two Weeks Later, Some...” above. He suggests a goal of operating the Dulles Toll Road is to minimize tolls for commuters:>)

Again thank you for your input it will assist us in the PROPERTY DYNAMICS education efforts and in framing a further response to your original post.

EMR

 At [11:13 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

People live all over the place. As I see it the biggest source of imbalance and the biggest cause of our massive investment in commuting is bad choices on the part of employers, or the failure to recognize that old choices no longer hold.

The employment market has recognized that and is rapidly moving jobs out of the core area. We should assist that process.

Instead, by creating vast new transit oriented developments and vast new transit, to be followed by still more transit oriented development, we assist those who benefit most by our current dysfunctional system - employers.

The easiest and most cost efficient way to achieve balance will be to spread the jobs around more, a tact proposed by Jim Bacon through telecommuting. Yet, other than Jim's idea, the idea of spreading jobs around gets almost no play.

Monday, April 24, 2006

## 400,000 ACRE FOOLISHNESS

In a 21 April 2006 posting, Jim Bacon reports on Gov. Kaine's commitment to "conserve" 400,000 additional acres of land in the Commonwealth by 2010. He added a note on the topic today as well. Both were right on.

There is however a larger issue:

Let us be clear:

If citizens could be assured that:

The 400,000 acres of land will be used in the future only for agriculture & forestry / air & water recharge / hunting & gathering / passive recreation and other extensive land uses; and,

It was certain that those 400,000 acres will be not be developed for intensive urban land uses; then,

The conservation of 400,000 acres could be an economic, social and physical benefit to the land owners and to the public in general; but only if,

All 400,000 acres of conserved land are IN THE RIGHT LOCATIONS.

Just as clear that if the 400,000 acres are IN THE WRONG LOCATIONS they will have the opposite result: .

Preserved / conserved acres can raise the speculative value of adjacent land for urban use ("no one can build next to your five acre lot"), cause urban development to leapfrog to unprotected land in even more dysfunctional locations, waste the public investment that has already been made to serve urban land uses on the newly "conserved" land. The list goes on.

Underlying the "location" problem is the fact that there are no region-wide - much less a Commonwealth-wide - strategies or plans to provide a context for conservation actions of 40,000, 400,000 or 4,000,000 acres.

A survey of past actions document that many of the "conservation" efforts - especially high-profile "rescues" by municipal and state action - are IN THE WRONG LOCATIONS.

A compounding problem is that just the announcement of a 400,000 acre goal generates a false impression that something really meaningful is being done to rationalize human settlement patterns.

An even greater problem is that 400,000 acres is an inconsequential percentage (1.6% of 25,000,000 acres) of the land area of the Commonwealth. The maximum land area needed (minimum functional urban intensity at the Alpha Community scale) for the daily activities of 95% of the citizens (the urban residents) of the commonwealth is around 700,000 acres.

Between twice and three times that amount of land is already committed to urban activities.

Worse, vastly more land is speculatively held for future urban land uses by those that advocate scattering urban land uses outside Clear Edges. For a discussion of Clear Edges see: "Beyond the Clear Edge," 26 May 2003 at <http://www.baconsrebellion.com/> and the three part special report starting with "Wild Abandonment, 8 September 2003 at the same site. (Just enter the title in the search window on the home page.)

If someone has documented a different minimum density for functional settlement patterns at the Alpha Community scale, let us know. The formulas to determine minimum functional human settlement patterns are summarized in Chapter 4 Box 5 in The Shape of the Future. They are based

on the human settlement patterns generated by the market over the past 50 years. The desired patterns and densities of land use for private-vehicle and shared-vehicle access are the ones for which citizens are willing to pay a premium on the basis of both acreage and square foot of built space.

An optimistic estimate is that there may be 10,000,000 acres of land already "conserved" or completely unsuitable for urban land uses. (Total unsuitability for urban land uses is not slowing down the pace of land subdivision for second home / retirement home / the hobby farm / "off the grid" and other forms of urban development.

Even if 10,000,000 acres are now conserved, that means the Commonwealth needs to "conserve" 1,000,000 acres of land a year, every year, for the next 14 years for functional human settlement patterns to emerge over the next two decades. That is just 10 times the pace of the Governor's 400,000 acres in four years.

Spending the next 20 years to evolve functional settlement patterns may not be rapid enough given the rising cost of settlement pattern dysfunction. The impact of location-variable costs of goods and services is sapping individual, family, enterprise and agency resources. Settlement pattern dysfunction is best illustrated in the lack of access and mobility and the lack of affordable and accessible housing.

The 400,000 Acre Foolishness illustrates the systemic problem with land conservation efforts, as well intended as such efforts may be. They have not yet addressed:

- 1) The scale of the problem
- 2) The reality that there is already far more land committed to urban land use than will be needed in the foreseeable future

### 3) Fair and equitable ways to transition to functional human settlement

patterns

We will be examine these issues in a forthcoming report on the Use and Management of Land.

These issues will also be a focus of PROPERTY DYNAMICS, coming to an Alpha Neighborhood near you soon.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 5:41 PM [18](#) comments [links to this post](#) 

#### 18 Comments:

 At [5:01 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

One of the good things about this blog is the quality of the discussions - in a word - substantiveness enabled by authors who are quite knowledgeable about topics.

On the face of it - and Kaine knows this - most everyone supports preserving important historic, natural and cultural lands truly worthy of protection but unfortunately most folks assume (not illogically) that land conservation tax credits would be used only for legitmate (effective) purposes.

Setting aside permanently any size parcel at any location for any purpose including private uses and paid for by taxpayers is apparently what Virginia Law enables.

Is this what Bill Howell (and presumedly his GA staff-vetted legislation) truly intended?

Perhaps unfair as Monday Morning Quarterbacking - none-the-less, the law - as currently written - in a word is - dumb because it provides

enabling mechanics without guidance as to goals and purposes. It's the wild, wild west.

Folks of financial means quickly determined personal financial benefits and amazingly to me, environmental and public interest groups apparently believe that such a law was a good start (verses having no law) towards land conservation.

Some groups believe (wrongly as pointed out by EMR) that ANY land set aside is land that won't be developed and thus a "good" thing.

The TDR law passed this year will, in my opinion, put on the table, the real question of what land should be designated for protection and what land should be designated for development AND density.

.. and I predict that when it comes time for a locality to designate "receiving" and "sending" areas that it will bring to the fore - THE issue because it will have the practical effect of zoning designations in which there will be winning and losing landowners.

An obvious use of TDRs would be to protect steep slopes near watersheds to protect water quality but current (overlay vs TDR) efforts in Stafford County are already under fire.

<http://fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2006/042006/04182006/183067>

Here's the passage that says it all:

"Environmentalists and some county officials support the law as passionately as landowners oppose it. The first group hails it as a vital protection of water resources. The latter claims it is a deceptive and damaging way to slow growth."

EMR asserts that the real issue is designating not only where growth should occur - but also where density should be encouraged.

In other words - it's about more efficient use of land by determining where settlement patterns should be - and not be.

Landowners simply do not accept this vision.

They view their land as their 401(k). They chose land rather than mutual funds for the future.

Their view is that the land they own - regardless of it's location, infrastructure availability, steep slopes, wetlands, et al as buildable and developable per the basic tenet of "best and highest use" of the land.

Regulations and laws with respect to steep slopes, wetlands, DENSITY, et al are often viewed as "takings".

Landowners vote - at the local level. The only question is in localities where changing demographics have the effect of making landowners - voting minorities.

 At [5:01 AM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Ed, You said, "A survey of past actions document that many of the "conservation" efforts - especially high-profile "rescues" by municipal and state action - are IN THE WRONG LOCATIONS."

Can you cite specific examples of such high-profile rescues?

 At [6:14 AM](#),  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

Some very thought-provoking discussion. EMR certainly identified a key point with the following: "Fair and equitable ways to transition to functional human settlement patterns."

Two related questions, for which I have no answer, are: "What are the reasonable expectations (rights?) of people within an existing community against radical change in that community; and How are any such

expectations (rights) to be addressed?

First, I want to make it clear that I'm not arguing against any change. It must be expected that, over time, communities will change. Most will grow, but some will stagnate. But, at the same time, aren't there important interests in protecting the character of a community?

Changing a rural area into a suburb or a suburb into an urban area can have significant negative impacts on existing residents and small businesses. Who decides when and how these communities change? Is it fair for these changes to impose higher costs on existing residents in terms of increased taxes, overused infrastructure and a general deterioration in the quality of life?

If, as some argue, the urbanization of Fairfax County is necessary to protect the lifestyles of outer counties, shouldn't both the Fairfax County developers and the residents of outer counties provide some form of compensation (i.e., building infrastructure) to the existing residents of Fairfax County? (Personally, I strongly question whether urbanizing Fairfax County will stop sprawl. While there would certainly be a market for high-priced condos and townhouses in urban areas, there are many people in Virginia who simply want a suburban, single family home. If one wants urban, why not move to New York?)

As I indicated, I don't have answers to my questions, but I submit that they are important questions for public debate.

 At [6:18 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

EMR - what is your view of the concept of Highest and best use?

Does it have, in your view, any useful relevance in discussions about settlement patterns and density?

Wikipedia states that it is a concept in Real estate appraisal where the

value of a property is the fair market value of a property at the use that will yield the maximum possible value. This use, the Highest and Best Use, may or may not be the current use of the property.

The exact definition of Highest and Best Use varies, but generally the use must be:

- \* legally allowable
- \* physically possible
- \* have demand in the marketplace
- \* result in the maximum market value for the property

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highest\\_and\\_best\\_use](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highest_and_best_use)

 At 2:52 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

This whole conversation is nuts. We are not going to conserve 95% of the state, and if we do, how can we put very much of our current conservation in the wrong place?

I think the currently popular idea of using conservation easements to create greenbelts in order to try to enforce the clear edge concept is a lousy idea. You are conserving the very land that Ed claims is most likely to become the most highly desired and most valuable, some day.

We have strong evidence that there is a high correlation between household income and a choice to live in low density areas. Even EMR admits that open preserved open space raises the value of adjacent land. In fact, some evidence shows that it even raises the value of land on which an easement is placed. Then we have people like TMT and Fair Growth Fairfax agitating against further density in Fairfax, and despite Larry's characterization I think it is clear that environmental regulations are being used as a devious proxy to prevent growth, density and change. If you Google on Density / News you will find dozens of

~~references citing meetings and groups that are opposing development~~

because they know the density will cause more traffic congestion and other deleterious effects. And those that are opposing it are opposing everywhere from where it is in full bloom like New York all the way to where it is non-existent.

All in all, I don't see any justification for Ed and Jim's claims that "The Market" most highly values those areas that are most dense. There is nothing wrong with density, and if people want to pay the full locational costs to support it, fine. After all, to the extent that density is chosen as a lifestyle, it makes it a little easier to preserve open space.

That said, it is always true that a more densely built location is worth more than a less densely built location, even in the wilderness. I support preserving open space, and I consider myself to be an environmentalist, but I take issue with Larry's characterization of the situation with regard to environmental conservation. It is clear to me that environmentalists are being deceitful about their goals: they are using environmental exigencies to reduce density in what they consider to be the wrong areas.

While that is a gross generalization it is no worse than saying that "[landowners] view is that the land they own - regardless of it's location, infrastructure availability, steep slopes, wetlands, et al as buildable and developable per the basic tenet of "best and highest use" of the land."

If you took thirty percent of a hundred acres to keep aside for environmental purposes, I doubt very much that the owner/developer would complain if the density on the remaining acreage was increased to compensate. Instead, what we see is that land is deducted from the quota based on steep slopes or whatever with no credit given. Then, the builder is expected to set aside more open space in the buildable

area as part of his proffers. Even when developers voluntarily set aside land, they are criticized for setting aside the land that is unbuildable!

As an example, we now see the case of density credits, wherein a builder is allowed more density (where he otherwise would not be, due to "environmental" concerns) as payment for being coerced into building a certain number of below market price units as affordable or workplace housing. This is environmental hypocrisy, and as Jim points out, it wouldn't be necessary if we eliminated the perverse zoning regulations that create the need in the first place.

In 1980 Fauquier and Loudoun were zoned by-right at something like one home per three acres. Through environmental and density fighting regulations those have been reduce in much of the area to one house per 25 or 50 acres. Frequently those regulations have been supported by landowners in the area, so we can't say that landowners are uniformly opposed. Unless you are willing to cast this as a case of urban, land poor liberals, trying to take control over the property rights of rural, wealthy, land-rich, property rights conservatives, then this argument doesn't wash.

I think it is hypocritical to claim that density is the highest and best use and most desired by the market, then use environmental regulations to create open space "for the public good" at private cost and not recognize the result as a taking. Where, after all, did the "by-rights" of 1980 go? And TMT makes pretty much the same case against further urbanizing Fairfax without recompense. Everybody, it seems wants something for nothing and they are willing to forget about what is yours and mine in the process. I think it is called stealing, but I'm old fashioned.

Then there is the matter of right and wrong places. I have previously related the story about how I asked a VOLF representative when they

thought they would have enough land. You would have thought I had slapped her in the face. "Well, I don't know, but clearly we don't have enough." was her answer. Apparently the land hungry environmentalists are grabbing up land as fast and wherever they can get their hands on it - same as the developers, and doing just a bad a job at planning.

The difference is that developers are willing to pay for what they get. It is no problem for them, because they know they will pass the inflated price and cost of proffers and the additional profit margin they get along to the next environmentalist that needs a place to live.

In this respect, Ed is right, we are snapping up the land without real thought of how it should be used, how it will be enjoyed, and what the best use is.

Consider steep slopes. On steep slopes the water is going to run off anyway. Why not put the houses on the slopes where the land isn't going to allow the water to percolate in anyway? Building on a slope is a technical problem, but it certainly isn't any worse than Ed's idea of creating a city on a 45 acre concrete platform. Besides, if you build on the slopes, you have the valuable level land available for farming, ball fields, water absorption, etc. Obviously if the steep slopes really are adjacent to a stream, then this argument doesn't apply. Instead of thinking about it we make environmental knee jerk reactions. We frequently use roofs to collect water so it is hard for me to see that roofs contribute very much to bad water quality. Streets and dirty oily parking lots are another matter. But housing developments are going to have stormwater management anyway, why not do it on the slopes where gravity works to your advantage?

We need to rethink what we think we are saving, why, and who pays.

According to Ed, we only need 1.25 million acres (5%) on which to

concentrate almost all of the wealth of the commonwealth. At the same time he points out that 1.6% of the commonwealth as a 400,000 acre conservation goal is inconsequential. Why isn't 5% equally inconsequential? Why do we need 23 million acres of conservation land and why concentrate all the people where they can't use, manage, and enjoy it?

By Ed's own argument, concentrating all that wealth is going to make the landowners who own "the right" 5% very happy, but then we have to deal with something like 50% of the population that currently live in "dysfunctional urban use areas" in what we now believe should be a conservation environment. We are going to make their land and property pretty much worthless, we are going to charge them 10x more for trumped up location variable costs, and forcibly (or economically) relocate them to someplace they have not chosen to live. We are going to permanently make sure they don't ever have a chance to change their minds through durable conservation law.

I can't think of any better way to create a backlash, like we have never seen. If someone thinks there is an equitable way to pull this off, I'd like to see it.

 At [3:09 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Actually, we already have a way to do this equitably. It is called go raise the money and buy the land. It is a unique and age old proposition that guarantees that both parties agree on the value, and who owns what.

If Kaine wants to buy that 400,000 acres and set it up for all to enjoy, and if Jim agrees to the tax increase that makes it possible, then I don't have a problem no matter where the land is.

If I help pay for conservation land that is located in such a way I can't

use it then I'm no worse off than I am paying for Metro, which I also can't use.

It would be nice, once in a while, to pay for something I can use. I suppose equity is too much to ask for, no doubt someone would see me using and launch a tirade about subsidies.

Aah, equity, how do I know thee? Let me count the ways.....

 At [8:18 PM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Ray, you said, "All in all, I don't see any justification for Ed and Jim's claims that 'The Market' most highly values those areas that are most dense."

Compare the cost of real estate on a square footage basis in Washington, D.C. Arlington and Alexandria with real estate in Loudoun, Fauquier or Stafford.

The fact that the average price of new home sales may be higher in outlying communities is not the point -- the houses are two or three times bigger. Of course, people also value the size and amenities of new construction. But compare the price paid *per square foot* and I'll wager you'll find that people pay a premium to live closer to the urban core. What people value is the location (which you seem to be confusing with density).

 At [10:19 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

I'm not arguing about the price. It is clear the prices are higher in some locations (I won't quibble over density for this purpose). Where I have a problem is claiming that this shows that "the market" most highly values those properties.

All it shows is that the people who choose to live there are willing (and able) to pay those prices. The fact remains that a high family income is

strongly correlated with a preference for less dense areas. Even among those who can afford it, more people choose not to live in those areas than do, and they are willing to pay more for what they get, which is a larger and more comfortable home.

Then you come down a notch to people who simply can't afford the prices and have to buy a more modest home farther away. Like the 77 mile commuters, they have calculated the trade off in time and fuel is worth it.

Then there are those that can afford to buy but don't. They have decided they would rather use the equivalent money on something else.

When the stock market goes up or down, some people make money and some lose, depending on whether they bought or sold and which way the market went. Google and Berkshire Hathaway sell at high prices, but no one would say that people value them more just because the price is high. If anything people shy away from the high prices because there is more downside than up.

If, however, there was a flood of volume in Google, I might agree with you. On a volume basis far more homes are being sold in less dense areas. It is hard to see how you can claim, then, that they are less desirable.

I'm sorry, I think your characterization of this issue is just wrong, and this kind of obvious error poisons the rest of your arguments. Even if those people are buying those homes because they think there is more upside, I don't see that labeling them as speculators improves your position. (I don't actually recall you resorting to this, but several other commentors have.)

There are many markets, and many realities, but the best theories are

the ones that accommodate the greatest number of facts while depending on the fewest number of ideas. I think it was NOVA Scout who had an excellent post on the dynamics of where people buy and why. (Maybe it was Virginia Centrist, I'm not sure.)

If we as environmentalists are going to try to persuade people to support the adoption of policies, beliefs, and value systems that we believe will help produce a better more sustainable world, then we are going to need to have arguments that don't make us sound like crazies, and proposed solutions that people will want to buy - at the price offered.

 At [11:12 PM](#),  Tobias Jodter said...

*The difference is that developers are willing to pay for what they get.*

That is highly debatable. If that's the case why are the developer's lobbyists shilling for tax increases all the time? Why are they constantly pushing for tax increases to build roads or bond issues to build schools/parks/police/safety/etc if they are really paying for the cost of their development? Could it be they want someone else to spend the real money?

The big undiscussed issue here is IMMIGRATION. If the population of the US wasn't growing so rapidly there wouldn't be this rapid growth and development. Who cares who they are or where they come from and why they come here - as long as they spend money...

One of the main reasons for the growth in NOVA is the reallocation of money from the rest of the US to grow the size of government here. I'd love to see what percentage of the new people moving into NOVA is a direct AND indirect result of sucking at the teat of the government pig.

Doesn't sound like capitalism to me - more like communism - reallocation of wealth and resources to a preferred select few i.e. big

government and it's subcontractors.

 At [3:38 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: steep slopes and environmentalism.

building on steep slopes has adverse environmental impacts.

That is a fact that anyone who believes in environmental stewardship should know.

It's not the placement of the house, it's what has to be built to serve that house - the road, the parking and the water/sewer.

When you clear land on a steep slope, you remove the vegetative buffer that soaks rainfall and you increase the speed and velocity of the runoff - which causes scouring and erosion which puts those sediments into the watershed which smothers the aquatic life - both plant and animal.

Worse than that - pollutants such as oil, antifreeze, and basically anything that ends up on the impervious surface - almost immediately ends up in the waterways vice being filtered by soil and vegetation.

Next time it rains, do yourself a favor and stop at a bridge in an urban area and you'll see the proof and remember - this is headed for the Bay.

The number one threat to the Chesapeake Bay is not farmers, not sewage treatment plants but storm water runoff from impervious surfaces - growth and development.

This is a reality not a supposition. People who really care about the environment can not ignore this.

water/sewer. If a house on a steep slope has a septic field - there are obvious problems again because the sewage does not soak and filter but rather runs downhill.

If you want sewer - then you have to build the infrastructure - downhill to receive the gravity flow. This is very, very expensive and most developers do not want to pay for it but want taxpayers to pay for it. So, the real question is - is this a legitimate public expense for steep slopes vice land that could be developed for less expensive infrastructure.

Finally, I DO support the landowner retaining his density by-rights. If zoning permits 3 homes to an acre - and there are steep slopes and/or other land features that render some of it unbuildable - like wetlands or buffers, et al

- then YES - let him keep his density. It should NOT be used as a back-door method to deprive him of his rights.

I won't speak for all environmentalists - BUT I will point out that Ray calls himself and environmentalist but very much distinguishes HIS environmental values from others whose environmental values he disagrees with.

I will point out that it's similarly unfair and unjustified for Ray to claim that "other" environmentalists are up to no good while his motivations are truly pure environmental stewardship.

Many folks claim to be environmentalists - they like to "wear" the "concept" but when it comes time to recognize realities that require reconciliation - the true test in my mind - is not to tar the side whose ideas you don't like but instead to put something on the table to advance the issue.

If one truly believes in environmental stewardship - it takes more than a self-applied nametag claiming that one is... while deriding what's been put on the table by others.

Either get in the game — or stop pretending to be something that one is

not.

If one wants to claim to be an "environmentalists" then articulate how one would protect the environment - specifically in the growth and development arena - how to control storm-water runoff from impervious services.

Equity is a most important concept. No one person or group should be burdened unfairly but all of us must accept our rightful share.

WE go forward on what we AGREE on and the folks I value most are those seek to understand both sides and to get things on the table that can help move us to agreement.

We spend way too much time defending our own personal interests and values in my view and not near enough time trying to understand.

 At 4:17 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

Headline: Fauquier Times-Democrat

"Prince William Planning Commission rejects 6,800-home development"

"Dozens of western Prince William residents turned out April 12 to voice their opinions on the Brentwood development, proposed for Gainesville on the Fauquier-Prince William border. After a five-hour debate, the Prince William Planning Commission opted not to recommend the 6,800-home development."

[http://www.timescommunity.com/site/tab2.cfm?](http://www.timescommunity.com/site/tab2.cfm?newsid=16533919&BRD=2553&PAG=461&dept_id=506066&rfi=6)

[newsid=16533919&BRD=2553&PAG=461&dept\\_id=506066&rfi=6](http://www.timescommunity.com/site/tab2.cfm?newsid=16533919&BRD=2553&PAG=461&dept_id=506066&rfi=6)

I think this article fairly demonstrates both the issue of WHERE people should live and at what DENSITY.

By all appearances, this appears to a well-designed multi-use

development that not only provides new homes but proposes a fairly efficient utilization of land AND the developers proposed substantial infrastructure upgrades for transportation.

The article illustrates the concerns of the public - and the diversity of those concerns:

"Everyone looked at the situation in Gainesville and agreed that traffic is a nightmare. The conclusions they drew from this fact varied.

Some argued that congestion is already horrific and therefore Brentwood should be rejected because adding 17,000 new residents would only make matters worse.

Others contended that congestion is already horrific and therefore Brentwood should be approved because the developer will pay to improve the roads that may otherwise never be fixed."

What we've heard in the Fredericksburg Area is very similiar. Often heard is the thought that "it's a good development but it's in the WRONG place".

"It needs to be somewhere else - where there is adequate infrastructure."

It's an interesting argument in that it's the same basic argument in NoVa where high-density redevelopment is also proposed.

Note that "more efficient settlement patterns" is absolutely NOT on the radar screen of the average citizen.

The developer cannot be blamed. He can only incorporate so much transportation infrastructure before the entire project would become so expensive that the allocated per-house costs would render them uncompetitive on the housing market.

He's essentially agreed to mitigate the locational impacts but not the regional impacts.

So - he could propose this development almost anywhere within a reasonable commuting distance of NoVa - even 50-70 miles away in Spotsylvania or even Caroline County and still have the same basic problem - regional transportation impacts.

It's not unreasonable to surmise that if there is a market for 6800 new homes that turning down this proposal.. won't mean that 6800 homes won't be built.

They will.. and they will be built as smaller scale "piecemeal" projects - perhaps a hundred or two hundred at a time... probably not as mixed-use and almost surely with less transportation infrastructure as most projects of the smaller size - get approved with right and left turn-lanes and perhaps a signal - vice a new interchange.

 At [9:01 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Larry, I fundamentally agree with you about steep slopes, my "what if" was a straw man for the purposes of creating brainstorming. I'm well aware of the problem as part of my property in Fairfax is swamp / floodplain. Over the years I have observed the increase in velocity of the stream as more development occurred upstream.

I don't claim that my ideas are any more pure than the next guy. I'm merely stating my observation that there are many environmental arguments made that don't necessarily make any sense, or not enough sense to justify the costs, or may cause more problems than they solve.

Frequently they are repeated verbatim as if they were a Mantra, or as if enough repetition will make them true. There is such a thing as public education and such a thing as brainwashing. When I see that those

arguments are supported by demonizing the opposition, using

emotionally weighted adjectives and other intellectual cheap shots, then my BS meter goes off. I'm pretty much convinced that the right environmental sentiments have been highjacked and are now being used deviously.

Cite the case of the woman in Washington state that bought a place and proceeded to clean up a pile of discarded appliances at the back of the lot. She was fined \$15,000 for destroying habitat: the blackberry vines that covered the dump.

Your response on the slopes issue is a good example. All I did was ask, what would happen if we looked at it differently? We could save the flat land for more valuable things. Any new development is going to have stormwater control anyway, maybe engineered control is actually better than natural vegetation in some cases. Developments are required to have catchment basins sufficient that no additional runoff occurs anyway: maybe we can save some valuable level land by not filling it up with houses and catch basins. We can use the level land for septic and build the houses on the slope. Maybe the vegetation that soaks up the rain works better on the flat surfaces where it has more than a few seconds to do its thing. Maybe.

What I can tell you is that in Fauquier, at least, there is NO accommodation for land set aside for environmental reasons. The way it works is that they have a sliding scale. So first of all, the larger your lot the fewer rights you are allowed proportional to your size. The reasoning is to help save the largest contiguous plots: the effect is to punish those who managed to preserve the the land the longest.

Then they deduct for wetlands, streams, steep slopes, setbacks etc.

The septic requirement is that you have over a 100% reserve area in case you need to replace it some day, and that goes on the best, most

level ground. Then, if there is anyplace left to build, they will want proffers to support all the services they don't provide. I think it is pretty clear that environmental regs are used as a back door to prevent development.

Your response was to defend a given position as if anyone who thinks otherwise is a moron, or has ulterior motives, and not to even consider whether there might be some value in the alternative.

BTW, I'm pretty sure the biggest source of sedimentation in the bay is agriculture: if it isn't it is only because agriculture has been supplanted by development. Look at the CBF satellite photo of the Bay, and you can see vast areas of the lower Potomac and Rapahannock colored by runoff from agricultural areas.

I'll agree that water runs off a roof faster than a flat field, I'm not sure it is any cleaner or carries less grit when it leaves the field. I'll agree that lawns are over fertilized. All I'm saying is that if we are going to control runoff we should treat bare horse pastures or dirt roads the same as we treat bare construction sites: otherwise we risk looking like we have a bone to pick.

As for your second post: that is pretty much exactly what I have been trying to say. If we set up a situation where no one can win, we guarantee that everybody loses.

 At [10:16 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

We can agree that BOTH sides recite mantras - right? :-)

So what's new?

We have folks who only know what they want to believe - and we have folks who truly want to understand the other side - and work to find equitable responses.

Do some greens attempt to utilize laws and regulation to stop growth?

Yes.

Do some landowners attempt to use laws and regulations to maximize their profits and minimize their financial responsibilities that are a direct result of their land use? Yes.

That's why I refuse to adopt the mantras on the green side and why I strive mightily to understand the side that I don't.

If both sides hardline - we get nowhere. . fast or slow. Change comes from those who want to understand and want to accept responsibility. Those who don't want to understand nor accept responsibility also get to play unfortunately.

re: stormwater/farmers/et al.

Three questions:

100 years ago was there MORE farming or less farming of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed?

100 years ago was there MORE or LESS impervious surfaces in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed?

100 years ago - was the Chesapeake Bay healthier or sicker than it is today?

Are farmers guilty of poor farming practices that pollute? Without question.

Are suburban and urban non-farmers guilty of dropping animal feces, anti-freeze, motor-oil, pesticides, et al on impervious surfaces and/or cleared land trimmed of vegetative buffers? Yes - but of course, it's not their fault and thus nothing they can do about it.

But, look at the gross numbers: How many farmers are there to compared non-farmers?

Conclusive evidence? No.. but .. I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to say.. check out how much fertilizer Home Depot sells in NoVa verses Crozet, Virginia.

One cow pooping in a creek pales in comparison to one apartment building parking lot in terms of toxic brews draining into waterways.

Hell.. the cow can poop upstream and drink downstream with less ill effects than one drinking the runoff water from that apartment building parking lot.. :-)

I think many have a mindset that rain has a "cleansing" effect and it does... because it flushes thousands of gallons of oil and antifreeze right into the bay everytime it rains.

The healthiest year of recent record for the Chesapeake Bay was the DROUGHT!

It'll probably take scientists 20-30 years to "discover" this upon which they'll claim triumphantly to have finally "solved the puzzle".

And a final concluding thought about rooftops..

One rooftop - no matter whether it is one floor or 100 floors.. drains the same amount.

One does need to ask the question:

from the stormwater perspective - is DENSITY better for the environment ESPECIALLY if some of those floors are parking garages?

 At [11:01 AM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

A lot of good thoughts.

Virginia's senior conservation executive responded off line with several notes including "... imperfect land conservation is better than no land conservation."

He is absolutely right but someone has to put conservation in perspective vis a vis functional human settlement patterns. The current trajectory is not sustainable.

At 6:01 AM yesterday Jim Bacon asked for examples. A good point. The original statement was based on a survey we did for a client several years ago. It needs to be up dated.

We started a list, it grew long. Jim, you will recall the map showing the location of the Core's of 16 potential Balanced Communities inside the Clear Edge in the northern part of Virginia that we presented in the Spring 2003 session on Shaping the Future. There is a bad conservation story in every one.

We established some categories and will put up a response as a separate item soon.

Larry Gross asked for our take on "highest and best use."

Inside the Clear Edge "highest and best" is the use / uses (most often "mixed" so it is uses) that contributes to the evolution of Balanced Communities. Balanced Communities help everyone, owner, users and the general public. There are a lot of options for every parcel (and every group of parcels) and those options change over time. We must not only balance J / H / S / R / A but also private rights and public responsibilities. The market and democracy have to be the vehicles. Fundamentally different "comprehensive" plans is a place to start as we outline in Handbook.

Outside the Clear Edge the answer is the highest and best use comes

from fairly allocating the location variable costs. All the costs, like to

cumulative impact of miles driven and septic systems and distribution of electricity. There are 40 +/- of them.

EMR

 At 12:02 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Both sides have Mantras, and both sides live in houses. Agreed.

In colonial days the Potomac River was a hundred feet deep in Georgetown, and large ships frequented the Tobacco River. The Tobacco River is still not developed but it is a foot deep or something like. So the answer is that a hundred years ago the worst of the damage was already done.

For generations, the biggest source of damage to the Chesapeake was forestry and dairy in PA, and I'm not sure that even today the biggest source of pollution isn't cattle in PA. IF the damage being caused today is from development, then that is a recent situation, by comparison.

I concede the oily runoff from streets is a problem. Maybe cars should have diapers, like they make horses wear.

Where would we dispose of the diapers?

It's not the one farmer, its the hundred or five hundred cows, and if you want to compare volume....

Last I checked, Fauquier still had more cattle than people, but its about to swap over.

By the way, those cows are feeding the people in the apartment building. You can't have either one without the other.

So, what you are saying is that we can protect 100 times as much soil from erosion by putting up 100 roofs over it as we can by putting up one

roof? Sure enough, water that runs off a manmade surface runs off faster, but it doesn't take much of the surface with it. Every year I mow up a few more rocks, and it isn't because the rocks are getting taller.

What's the issue here? Is it soil erosion filling up the Chesapeake, or is it making sure that the water that runs in is as clean as possible? The Chesapeake has been filling up for centuries yet it was much cleaner and much deeper before man came and screwed it up. no argument. But like you said, those 6800 homes are going somewhere, so we still have to figure out which river shed is going to take the heat and how much we want "those newcomers" to pay to prevent it. If we don't figure it out, and figure it out affordably, those people will be living in the streets, and we'll have to put diapers on them.

Pretty much the same amount of water is going into the Chesapeake today as was 400 years ago. All the water that falls on the watershed goes downhill unless the plants or animals borrow it for a while. But the Chesapeake is filling up from the bottom with silt. So, all that water has to "pile up" a little more in order to make its way down. And the way we perceive that is as shoreline erosion, because the water is actually sitting a little higher on the bottom.

So anyway, that water is all going down, sooner or later, and we are going to clean it up, more or less. For 300 years the answer has been less and we put the result in the Bay. Now we are going to stop, interrupt and filter much that water, and what are we going to do with the sludge? We are probably not going to carry it back to the suburbs on Metro.

As for developers and environmentalists, I've had developers knocking on the door to offer me a deal. They give me money and I give them what they want.

I can't say the same for the greens.

Being a green myself, I take money out of my own pocket and pay myself to do what I think needs done, as best I can. Frankly, I'm getting a little sick of it.

 At [12:50 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

“... imperfect land conservation is better than no land conservation.”

I don't suppose you would consider that imperfect community development is better than no community development.

 At [2:10 PM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

imperfect .. yes.. and certainly should not be the enemy of perfect by any means.

The Bay is literally what washes off of the land and of course the rivers themselves are too and transport runoff.

Waterways can assimilate waste and still be quite healthy. John Smith and company wrote much of the bounty often so thick that mere dip nets were all that was needed.

The tipping point comes when the runoff contains higher and higher levels of contaminants and the river/bay cannot assimilate them.

We went through this with really bad sewage treatment in the 40's, 50's, and 60's but we did make the commitment to get that cleaned up.

We now are faced with a different challenge which is known as storm water runoff - both in quality and quantity - because of impervious surfaces.

Cows/pigs/etc al do little or no harm in they are in pasture and the runoff if buffered.. so that it filters through the soil before it gets to

the creeks... not unlike a lot of folks septic fields - which essentially do the same thing...

The exception is CAFOs - Combined Animal Feeding Operations - which are not unlike cramming a lot of humans together and then shunting the waste - untreated to a creek or lagoon.

But, if you visit a modern sewage treatment plant - you'll see they essentially do the same thing that filtering through soils does...

they settle out the solids through sand layers then chemically "clean" the impurities that are not solids.

Impervious surfaces are a very different critter. A double whammy. The water is not filtered ..through soil/sand layers but instead is transported directly and immediately offsite laden with oil, antifreeze, dog/cat feces, pesticides (which are deadly to aquatic life), etc.

Storm ponds are now required and that is a big help but basically they retain the brew until a big storm event comes along and overflows the pond... into a receiving stream.

You may have noticed - many storm ponds are fenced - for very good reason. They are not good places for humans nor animals....

So .. to bring this back full circle - Conservation Easements placed in watershed areas and especially on steep slopes IS a GOOD THING .. even if it is done privately and especially if a landowner does it when given incentives to do it - by letting him retain his development rights with no penalty if he does set aside land for watershed protection.

It IS a good thing.. imperfect yes.. but good.

EMR and others actually promote clustering on land parcels ...according to the terrain. In other words.. cluster the homes on relatively flat.. well drained areas and set aside and protect steep slopes and wetlands.

Doing that also can result in less infrastructure in that when you cluster rather than equal-plot cookie-cutter.. you need less roads - another good thing - because they are impervious surfaces also.

and as I pointed out earlier.. a 20 story apartment building does not generate any more runoff than a similiar footprint one-story building.

I'm pretty sure we agree more than we disagree on many of thsse issues and I'm also quite convinced that the more I understand your concerns and vice versa - we'll agree even more. :-)

 At 3:26 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

*Cows/pigs/et al do little or no harm in they are in pasture and the runoff if buffered.. so that it filters through the soil before it gets to the creeks... not unlike a lot of folks septic fields - which essentially do the same thing...*

This is just not true.

The Susquehanna River is the Bay's largest tributary and, on average, contributes more than one-half of the freshwater that enters the Bay.

The largest amount of nitrogen entering the Bay is contributed by the Susquehanna River, which drains some of the most productive agricultural land in the Nation.

In general, the amount of nitrogen entering the Bay from each tributary is related to the area of agricultural land drained by that tributary and its contribution of water to the Bay.

The levels of phosphorus from the Potomac and the smaller rivers are related to their contribution of water to the Bay. Phosphorus levels

entering the Bay from the Susquehanna River are low in comparison to its water contribution. Phosphorus, which is bound to soil particles, gets trapped behind a series of dams in the river. The high level of phosphorus entering the Bay from the James River compared to its water contribution may be related to discharge from sewage-treatment plants.

The increase in nitrogen is probably caused by the continued use of nitrogen fertilizer on lawns and cropland, growing agricultural animal populations and associated wastes, and atmospheric deposition of nitrogen from industrial and automotive air pollution.

<http://water.usgs.gov/wid/html/chesbay.html>

Runoff from farms is generally declining as farmers adopt nutrient management and runoff control techniques, and because the overall amount of farmland is declining.

Nutrients from septic systems are increasing throughout the watershed as development spreads farther into the countryside, beyond the reach of sewer systems.

Among the major land use categories, urban and suburban lands contribute, per acre, the largest amount of nutrients to the Bay when septic and wastewater treatment plant discharges are factored in.

(Note the per acre caveat. the largest source is still agriculture, by far.)

<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/stressor1.htm>

The lower Susquehanna River dams currently, trap about 50 percent to 70 percent of the sediment and prevents it from entering the Bay. Note that the Susquehanna serves large agricultural areas. Stormwater runoff actually adds little in the way of sediment, but the sudden rush of water stirs up sediment that already exists in the stream beds.

The storm ponds are fenced primarily to prevent drownings. It also turns out they make a convenient location to dump murder victims. They are sized to contain water from a storm of a given severity considering the area they serve. They are designed to hold the water and to percolate it back into the ground. If a storm pond runs over, it is a design failure. They need to be cleaned periodically because they also act as sediment collectors. The same problem (benefit) exists with the Susquehanna dams. Clearly storm ponds, stream buffers and other mitigation are important and low cost.

You are making the wrong 20 story comparison, or only one comparison. Consider the runoff from a 20 acre site of 20 single family homes. Then consider the runoff from a 20 acre site with one home (or one tower). Pretty much the same amount of water will land on each site and the same amount will run off. Which one will carry more sediment with it? I can go out in my fields and watch the soil move from year to year: underneath my house I can't.

On the 20 home site the amount of land around the home should be plenty of buffer to slow down the runoff from the roof. But then you have the driveways etc. Net, net the water runs off faster but carries less with it. Then it goes to a storm pond and goes back into the ground. On the tower site the water is basically uncontrolled, unless it has a storm pond, too. If the tower has a parking lot, it might be equivalent to the driveways, but more concentrated.

That's nutrients and sediments. We haven't covered toxics, but I can tell you that, bad as they are, cars are not the biggest source.

Don't get me wrong, I partially agree with what you say, but I'm not convinced we are putting the right emphasis and money in the right

places. We mandate sidewalks and then we wind up with unconnected sidewalks that we don't need or use, and at the same time demand less impervious surface!

We require someone to build on a flat spot, then he has to make his driveway twice as long to reach it. Maybe the hillside wouldn't have been so bad. Maybe he puts a ranch on the flat, but has a twostory walkout on the hillside.

We need to think more and mandate less.

In the meantime, clustering is prohibited, mostly and large lots are required.

Sunday, May 14, 2006

## TOM WOLFE ON MOTHERS DAY

Had enough of the saccharine, over-commercialized Mother's Day fare?

Try going to [npr.org](http://npr.org) and downloading Tom Wolfe's National Endowment for the Humanities Jefferson Lecture delivered last Wednesday.

We have always thought that "From Bauhaus to Our House" was Wolfe's best work. Think what he could do with McMansions (and on what they mean for mothers)!

In the meantime, Wolfe's Jefferson Lecture on the impact of "modern" language is outstanding (nothing directly to do with mothers or Mothers Day).

Wolfe is off in his time-frame by a factor of 5. He is a novelist after all.

The perfection of the voice box and brain organization which enabled the articulation of "modern" language occurred 50,000 thousand years ago +/-, not 11,000 years ago. These enablers evolved about the same time as a new generation of tools and artifacts in what Jared Diamond terms "The Great Leap Forward." By 11,000 years ago the earliest urban places were already 2,000 years old +/- and they required language for sure.

Like most novelists Wolfe uses far too many words but his perspective on language and communication's impact on religion, status and what it means to be human is worth wading through the verbiage. Actually the lecture is 34 paragraphs long and if you read the first five and the last three you will get the core message:

Language and what we call "Civilization" has terminated the process of evolution.

We will expand on a theme we addressed in *The Shape of the Future* in

an upcoming column: Society is too complex for Homo sapiens (or Homo loquax as Wolfe calls us) to navigate with dysfunctional settlement patterns. The Forest Gump perspective.

Wolfe adds a new twist: If evolution is over why bother to create functional human settlement patterns since we are doomed anyway?

EMR

Thursday, May 25, 2006

## POPULATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Deena Flinchum raised an important point concerning population in the comment on "Lessons From PRT and "Mass" Transit" posted on 22 May.

Sustainability is not a simple or easy to achieve objective. Sustainability is beyond contemplation without Fundamental Change in the current population trajectories at the regional, continental and global scales.

As noted in "*The Shape of the Future*," any consideration of sustainability must address the overlapping spheres of Economic, Social and Physical reality.

In the Social sphere, social stability must address three overarching areas of concern:

Making all humans citizens (democracy)

The number of citizens (population)

The way citizens treat one another (genocide, slavery / subjugation, bigotry / discrimination / xenophobia / the equitable distribution of resources)

Population is obviously key to any discussion of sustainability.

We also argue that achieving a sustainable trajectory for civilization is not possible as a direct goal.

There is an interim launch pad and that platform is functional human settlement patterns. Until citizens understand how to create functional settlement patterns they will not have the tools necessary to address the far more complex issue of sustainability.

It is in this context that we link human settlement patterns and sustainability together.

Without this linkage fantasies like:

The religion with the most souls wins, or

The nation-state with the biggest guns wins are rampant.

These myths are almost as silly as the assertion of Anonymous 8:10 PM who said:

"Well, as far as I'm concerned, they (illegal immigrants) are welcome.

After all, most of them will vote Republican, if we let them.

"Would you rather have them here working for us, or over there competing against us?"

Competing for what? The nicest lawns? The cleanest windows?

If potential immigrants become key contributors to Balanced Communities in El Salvador or Ivory Coast that is much better than their contributing to unbalance and over-consumption in Greater Houston or Washington-Baltimore New Urban Regions.

EMR

Sunday, June 18, 2006

## SUBREGIONAL JOB LOCATION

Before anyone other than The Great Fuzz Ball goes off and says "See, I told you so!" concerning today's WaPo story on job growth between in the National Capital Subregion let us all take a deep breath.

"Region's Job Growth a Centrifugal Force" reports that COG found the R=20 plus jurisdictions gained 78,097 jobs vs 94,847 jobs for those outside R= 20. That 16,750 job difference is just 0.7 of one percent of the 2.4 million jobs COG projected to be inside R=20 by 2025.

The growth of 94,847 jobs puts the "outer" jurisdictions well on the way to the 230,000 jobs that were projected by 2025 in this territory but that rate of growth still brings the "outer" areas up to less than 10 percent of the Subregions total jobs inside R=20 at that time. For a summary of these issue see "Where the Jobs Are," 24 May 2004 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

Besides the small percentage of the Subregion's jobs this "news" focuses on also consider:

How many of these jobs are construction jobs on housing and residential service projects that will be going away when the buildings are completed? (Have you checked the trajectory of big house prices or how long units are staying on the market in the past six months?)

How many of these jobs are low paying service jobs supported by those with good jobs closer to the centroid (aka, in the "Core") that have no time to mow their grass, care for their children or even walk their dog?

These are 2000 to 2005 numbers, as Larry Gross points out in his posting on the Gas Shock thread, \$4.00 gasoline is going to change "everything."

One fact is very clear: As of last week, employers were paying twice the rent per square foot for "Class A" places for employees near the centroid and within R=10 as they were in the R=20 to R=30 Radius Band. The latest wage numbers say that is true for the per month earnings as well.

Encouraging new job creation outside R=20 or R=25 (most of the new jobs in both Loudoun and Prince William are within R=25) is a good thing but only as long as those jobs contribute to creating a balance of J / H / S / R / A in Greater Culpeper / Culpeper, Greater Warrenton / Fauquier and other Disaggregated Communities outside the Clear Edge.

The WaPo article says that the "move-out-trend" is supported by the military job move to Ft. Belvoir. Ft Belvoir is just outside R=10, not beyond R=20. How soon the WaPo folks forget the radius map published just 8 days ago.

To its credit the reporter notes that there is a growing consensus that there should be a jobs / housing balance (a J / H / S / R / A Balance) and compact settlement patterns.

The story suggests that the state and municipal agencies continue to do a terrible job of fairly allocating location variable costs and of creating functional, balanced settlement patterns.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 4:15 PM [15 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

## 15 Comments:

 At 9:09 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

OK, so they are paying twice the rent.

Tell me, are they making twice the profit?

If so, is it because they have "cost plus" government contracts at our expense?

By the way, who is "the Great Fuzzball"?

 At [9:18 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Isn't the whole point of the article that the "growing consensus" for compact development is a consensus mainly among planners and largely ignored by everyone else?

 At [11:22 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

"Fairfax County has emerged as the largest jurisdiction in the Washington metropolitan area as measured by the number of residents and at-place employment. The value of goods and services produced in the County—the County's economy—exceeded the value of goods and services produced in the District of Columbia, the region's historic economic center, in 2002 and is projected to grow at a rate more than triple the District's economic growth rate over the 2000-2020 period."

Stephen S. Fuller, Ph.D.

George Mason University

 At [6:19 AM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Ed makes a valuable distinction between construction/service jobs, which serve the bedroom-community economy, and "good jobs" closer to the core. The high-paying, "good," jobs tend to be associated with what economists refer to as "primary" industries -- industries that bring money into the region (as opposed to "secondary" construction, retail and other service jobs that merely recirculate money within the region).

Northern Virginia's largest industry cluster is in information technology and telecommunications. The logic that drives the locational decisions

of ITT companies is considerably different from the logic that drives the location of a construction company, a J.C. Penney's store or a McDonalds. ITT companies require a workforce with a high level of education and training, and very specific skill sets, and their location decisions are driven in part by a desire to maximize the size of their potential hiring pool. Let us look where *those* companies are locating. They are clustering in specific locations such as Arlington, Tysons Corner, Reston/Herndon and so on, where they can be accessible by the widest range of potential employees possible.

Building on Stephen Fuller's remarks above, I would argue that Fairfax County is emerging as a new centroid for the ITT economy, bifurcating from Washington, D.C., which remains the centroid for the government/lobbying/trade association economy.

(There may be three centroids if you consider the biotech industry in Maryland, but I'm not very familiar with that region so I will not speculate.)

Such an observation departs somewhat from Ed's idea -- I'm just thinking out loud right now -- that the R=10 (Radius equals 10 miles) and R=20 should be drawn from the center of Washington, D.C. Perhaps the radius for the government-centric economy should be drawn from downtown Washington while the radius of the ITT economy should be drawn from Tysons Corner.

But I would argue that Ed is entirely right to observe that the most important jobs -- the jobs that drive economic growth -- concentrate in the center of the relevant labor market. He is also right to observe that the job creation on the periphery of the Washington New Urban Region is qualitatively different than the job creation closer to the center.

Roughly half the jobs in the economy are in the construction/retail/

local service sector. It is no surprise when these jobs follow the population as it migrates to the periphery of the New Urban Region. But from my observation, the ITT jobs are staying close to the Fairfax County core.

At 8:34 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

I agree. To better understand, we need to differentiate between source jobs and jobs that would not exist except for the source jobs.

I'd posit that even more than half of total jobs are.. jobs that exist to serve the goods and services needs of those who hold the core jobs. A lot of government jobs ranging from code inspectors, fire/rescue, and teachers also exist because of the "core" jobs - because of the children that belong to both the core job employees AND the service-sector employees.

These jobs are clearly delineated often times when the economic development folks "sell" the idea of attracting such core industries because of their "spin-off" jobs.

The other aspect of this that I feel is even less understood is how much a particular job PAYS verses how much an average priced home is - in the area adjacent to where that person works.

So, even a core job in the DC Area that pays less than what it takes to afford a modest home - will result in yet another commuter who will drive as far as they have to - to find a home that they can afford on their salary.

And of course the folks who have jobs that are service jobs related to the core jobs most often are paid even less and have even less opportunity to find nearby affordable housing.

All of this - I assert - is a major cause of congestion. It's much more than

just people trying to get from home to work - it's the length of the commute and thus the longer time that a car stay on the road - along with thousands of others cars also on the road for long commutes.

In the end - it's not because people won't live in compact communities - many would - if they could afford even an entry-level unit. Because they cannot, then they drive and once in the exurbs.. apartments/ compact developoments are harder to find than ordinary 1/4 acre lot homes - for sale or rent.

 At [8:45 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

In Arlington, Fairfax, and Alexandria construction accounts for 7 to 9 percent of jobs. In Loudoun, Fauquier, and PW, it is 9 to 12% of jobs.

I'd speculate that there are a higher percentage of citizens with construction jobs on the periphery because the homes they can afford are located there. The actual construction sites where they work are all over the map.

But Ed is mistaken if he thinks that those jobs are going away. I know several families that have been in the construction business for generations, some of them are in Warrenton and some are in Fairfax. I believe they would feel that only elitist snobs think construction is unimportant or temporary. Whatever you think drives economic growth, it is construction that brings it to reality. Once it comes to reality, it is the service sector that cleans, mows, maintains, and plants that reality. Those balanced communities we hear about need to consider and make a place for those sectors and not dismiss them as unimportant.

In Fauquier, construction provides the highest payroll of all the businesses sectors in the county. County officials will try to tell you that agriculture is the county's largest business, and if you measure only gross output, they may be right. But if you look at profits or payroll,

then agriculture is dwarfed by construction. It is official policy in Fauquier to limit construction by any means possible, but the next three largest employment areas are all government related. If you kill off your main breadwinner and the next three in line are all government, then where does productivity (and the ability to feed the government) come from?

I think the "centroid" is really an L shape with one leg being DC to Dulles and the other leg being DC to Fredericksburg. Ed can paint this any color he likes, and I have no doubt that the center will remain strong for years to come, but the evidence clearly shows what the trend is (at least for now, maybe \$5 gas will change it.)

I believe our plans will be more successful if we base them on what is likely to happen (and what the trends show us has been happening for years, and in multiple cities) instead of basing them on the consensus of a handful of planners, who apparently come to the process with a dog in the fight.

 At 9:10 AM,  Ray Hyde said...

I agree with Larry: it is the length of the commute that causes the problem, but it is not because the cars spend longer on the road.

If the average commute is 10 or 20 or 30 miles, then the area served is 300 or 1200 or 2800 square miles, and you have proportionately more people trying to get to the same space. It doesn't matter where or what shape you think the centroid is, you now have a much larger area attempting to get into a much smaller area to work.

Say what you like, when I first moved to the area, I lived in Cleveland Park, in the District. Three times I have moved farther out and three times I landed closer to a better job. My first commute was 12 miles, (all within the core) and took 35 minutes, my present commute is 25

miles and takes 35 minutes. I hate to think what my original commute would take today. Some day I'll go re-run it just to find out.

So, how do you make the commute shorter? Either have more affordable and desirables homes closer in or have more desirable jobs where people actually live. Affordable and desirable homes closer in simply can't happen because those places are already crowded and expensive.

Ed is partly correct, there is some market push for those expensive places, otherwise they wouldn't sell, but the real reason they are expensive is because they are inefficient: high tax, expensive to build, expensive to maintain, expensive to operate. No amount of market push will change that, but if other opportunities develop and people go elsewhere, then you will see a lot of inexpensive housing, a la Detroit.

 At [10:59 AM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

Jim raises an excellent point, any careful analysis requires several centroids.

I am just trying to get the discussion moved off of 200 year old municipal boundaries that are today irrelevant.

The centroid we use for our discussions of the Virginia portion of the National Capital Subregion is the Virginia end of the Memorial Bridge.

I would guess that the centroid for federal work would be along Pennsylvania Ave in the Federal District.

The one for Bio Med is somewhere inside the Beltway (Bethesda?) in Maryland.

For IT it is in Virginia but perhaps closer to the R/B corridor than Tysons. If METRO get to Tysons then it will be there.

Steve F. is of course right about the numbers for Fairfax but the end of

Fairfax that bites is inside R=10 (from my original centroid).

None of this changes what we have been saying for two years about the dysfunction of scattering urban land uses across the Countryside outside R=30.

EMR

At 7:13 PM,  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

EMR - Rail to Tysons does nothing to improve traffic. After spending billions on extending Metrorail, the State projects that the traffic will be as bad, if not worse. (Plus, we lose the billions of dollars that could be spent somewhere else.)

Why; because all of the new density will add more automobiles, both from new residents and from new workers commuting to a larger Tysons Corner. The proposed rezoning of the Tysons Corner shopping center adds 9,000 new parking places to the existing 7,000. Moreover, none of the spaces would be for shoppers. Rather, the plans would add 9,000 spaces for the autos belonging to the condo residents and workers in the new office towers.

In addition to the Tysons Corner Shopping Center rezoning request, there are more than 20 proposed amendments to the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan for Tysons Corner alone. How many new automobile trips would those projects generate if approved?

From a business perspective, there is already an extra property tax levy on commercial property in the Tysons Corner and Dulles Toll Road Corridor. I know several smaller business owners in Tysons who will be moving to the west once their leases expire. The added costs and density, with no measurable improvement in traffic will feed the very business sprawl many would like to stop.

Also, it's unlikely that any new housing at Tysons would be inexpensive. The land costs are high. The owners of Peacock Buick had 20 offers for its 3.5 acre lot. Moreover, my friends in real estate tell me that construction costs become much higher once a building exceeds 3 or 4 stories, which the Tysons Corner buildings would do. Therefore, it would be virtually impossible for there to be much affordable housing at Tysons. Couple this with the desire of many people for single family homes and we will have even more people driving to Tysons.

We will continue to see individuals and businesses move south and west from the NoVA suburbs to seek better properties at lower prices. We need more jobs in outlying communities and much more teleworking.

 At 5:10 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: average commute - keep in mind that if you have situation where you have a lot of local commuters and a lot of distance commuters - that the average commute could be a very misleading measurement.

Picture a histogram with a one and two sigma distribution. That data would tell you much more than "average".

re: commuting for affordable housing

I think folks in this blog will generally agree that affordable housing is a primary factor in folks who first move to this area to take a new job - and then try to find a place to live that fits their salary.

We've become not unlike NYC where there are tales of up and coming corporate execs and even FBI field agents who will refuse a job in that city because they know that they'll be consigned to commuter hell if they want to find a place to live that fits their salary.

I think the same thing is going on in the Wash Metro area - except - I must say that I often meet folks in the Fredericksburg area who say that

they THOUGHT they were going to live in NoVa until they realized that they could not afford an 800K "starter" home.

Yes, a "solution" would be to have jobs go where folks live and now commute but is it a likely scenario? Is it a practical thing to advocate for or advocate laws and/or regs that would essentially "encourage" (force) companies to NOT locate in NoVa and instead be pushed to locate in the exurbs?

I would ask instead - what exactly are the factors that influence a company's decision to want to locate in NoVa ... OR locate in the exurbs AND ... is THAT something that needs to be better understood and thus perhaps point to something that COULD be advocated for?

 At [5:51 AM](#),  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

Larry - Excellent suggestion re why do companies, especially different kinds of companies, locate where they do. This type of research could probably be done by George Mason University. It would also be useful to know where workers at large job centers (e.g., Tysons Corner, Rosslyn, Reston) live.

 At [9:17 AM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

TMT

I did not say METRO to Tysons Corner would "improve traffic" congestion.

I said METRO to Tysons Corner might shift the IT / T centroid further out the I-66 / DAAR Corridor. Centroids for Radius Analysis in large New Urban Regions have shared-vehicle system access. EOD.

The only "solution" for traffic congestion in Tysons Corner is for the Beta Community of Greater Tysons Corner (including the Beta Villages of Greater McLean and Greater Vienna)-- as well as the other 16 Beta

Communities inside the Clear Edge in the Norther Part of Virginia -- to evolve and become a balanced Alpha Community. EOD.

All other "solutions" are bromides, delusions and excuses. EOD.

EMR

 At [9:30 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Larry, I don't understand your point about distribution.

Consider a little brain experiment. Suppose you have a 400 sq mile area with a uniform traffic grid, uniform rent, and uniform payscale, so that every destination is equally desirable. You have 400,000 vehicles.

Averaged over the 20 x 20 mile areas the average trip distance is 14 miles. The auto density is 1000 per square mile.

Now reduce it to 100 square miles. the average trip length is now 7 miles, but the vehicle density is now 4000 to the square mile.

So, even if you allow the same amount of time for "rush hour" to occur, you are going to have twice the likliehood of encountering another car on your (shoerter) trip. Actually, it is worse than that because you have only one quarter as many intersections and therefore more congestion. And, although the distance is shorter, the time of travel is not.

Then if you throw in situations like Seven Corners or the mixing bowl the situation becomes much worse locally, and the effect spreads like ripplles in a pond.

Then if you consider that the rent and payscales are distorted by a factor of two (according to EMR) you find out that some work destinations are more desirable (more pay) and some home locations are more desirable (less rent, or lower combination of rent and travel cost).

If you charge more for travel (full locational cost) then you change the shape of these cost distortions, but not the effect. Anyway you slice it, a denser, more compact area leads to more congestion.

Is it practical to advocate for laws or regs that would encourage or force companies to locate differently? Maybe not, but surely it is an easier task to relocate a few companies than to write laws or regs that encourage or force millions of individuals to relocate.

It seems perfectly clear to me that an overabundance of local job density is THE cause of predictable congestion of the type that repeats every day. If we throw up our hands and say we can order homeowners around but not businesses, then we are screwed.

As it stands, either a home or a business needs permission to be created in a given location. But due to the idiotic way cost of community services studies are done, and due to the imbalance of taxes paid by homes and businesses there is a strong incentive to accept businesses and deny homes.

We already have the laws in place to control both business and housing, but we are doing a lousy job of administering them and a lousy job of understanding the consequences.

Instead of putting blame where it belongs, we prefer to demonize developers, speculators, and the business as usual interests. We prefer to take the easy way out with homilies like "you can't pave your way out of congestion".

As far as I know, there is not a single square foot of class A office space in Warrenton, which is otherwise a lovely town and a pleasant place to live. I seriously doubt you could get approved for such a space if you tried; on account of the historic district, among other things. But the

county is pushing for commercial development 15 miles away in the new Vint Hill commercial development area. The economic development managers for Vint Hill have proposed a thousand new homes for the area to create the housing to incentivise businesses to move there.

I believe that what we know about where people live and work is based on surveys, and the data is pretty spotty. For one thing it is a pot picture and gives no evidence of the changes over time. It is the changes over time that ill us because the road network essentially does NOT change over time, and there is currently no desire to make needed changes as we shift from central cities to edge cities or even edgeless cities.

As for businesses, there is an entire industry with computer models and economic predictions, living expenses, and shipping and travel costs and dozens of variables built in. Still, you would have to think that if a company can afford twice the rent to be in one location, then it has more resources available to make alternate decisions than the average homeowner.

 At [9:12 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

The original plan for the capitol beltway called for it to be supplemented by two bypasses. Forty years later they have yet to be built. A proposal for a 17 lane route 7 just shows how much the center of activity has moved.

 At [6:06 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: brain experiment

I can tell we're on totally different wavelengths.

But.. let's take a grid... let's say a city grid with multi-story buildings, 20, 30 stories, with mixed development - businesses (both employment

centers and service industries) and apartments/condos.

Now, explain to me why such places do not "strangle" in congestion.

Explain further.. why such places have not built additional mega roads to handle all the traffic both from the "compact" area AND exurban commuters.

This seems to be the argument as to why it's "better" for NoVa to have exurban commuters rather than more compact development.

Is the basic premise - that NoVa "compact development" cannot be multi-story buildings - similar to what we see in other urban centers?

Is the basic premise - that mega highways should be built so that exurban commuters can continue to commute to NoVa so that it will not have to transition to more efficient settlement patterns?

In other words.. is the premise that NoVa will not and should not transition to a more city-style urban center?

I guess my primary thought is that the way NoVa is currently growing - is not sustainable.

On the current path - you'll have more and more exurban commuters that will need more and more roads - and you're simply not collecting enough money to build those roads - so somebody is going to have to come up with the bucks and I'm betting that it will be in the form of direct user fees and higher gasoline prices - which ... might render moot.. discussions about how things "should" be.

Friday, June 23, 2006

## SOCIAL ISOLATION

In today's WaPo Page A 3: "[Social Isolation Growing in U.S.](#), Study Says: Researcher Cite Drop in the Average Number of Confidants as an Indicator." The story reports on the General Social Survey funded by the National Science Foundation being published today. The conclusions receive "I-told-you-so's" from the likes of Robert Putnam ("Bowling Alone") and others.

With those billions of cell phone calls occupying what seem to be everyone's ear and attention how can there be growing isolation? Is this another failure of IT to overcome the impact of dysfunctional human settlement patterns?

Dysfunctional (disaggregated, scattered, unconnected) human settlement patterns (sometimes called "urban sprawl") cause social isolation? Who would have thought it?

Anyone who has been reading Bacons Rebellion. For details see the social chapters of "The Shape of the Future." (Chapters 8 and 9.)

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 12:33 PM [12 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

### 12 Comments:

 At 1:09 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

"I would rather sit alone on a pumpkin, than be crowded on a velvet cushion"

Henry David Thoreau

At [5:56 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

I'd rather sit alone damn near anywhere than to sit at the right hand of God. Hell is other people.

At [3:34 PM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

*Signs of the times:*

A quarter of Americans say they have no one with whom they can discuss personal troubles, more than double the number who were similarly isolated in 1985. Overall, the number of people Americans have in their closest circle of confidants has dropped from around three to about two....

And this quote from Lynn Smith-Lovin, a Duke University sociologist:

"We're not saying people are completely isolated. They may have 600 friends on Facebook.com [a popular networking Web site] and e-mail 25 people a day, but they are not discussing matters that are personally important."

Longer work hours and longer commutes are factors blamed for the social isolation. Robert B. Putnam, author of "Bowling Alone," has estimated that every 10-minute increase in commutes makes it 10 percent less likely that people will establish and maintain close social ties.

At [8:17 PM](#),  [Big Kahuna](#) said...

Cell phones actually \*reduce\* social interaction. Back in The Day, when you sat across from someone at dinner, you were with them. Now, as soon as that cell phone chirps, the person across from you becomes a shell; physically there but emotionally and cognitively elsewhere. It's not a situation humans deal with well on a subconscious level, and the

long term results are uncertain.

 At [4:04 PM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

Anon 6:56 is far to modest.

Hell is not “other people” in general.

Hell is other people that feel just the way Anon 6:56 does.

Anon 6:56 is not alone. In accordance with the 20 / 20 / 60 Percent Rule about 20 percent of the population feel the way he does.

About 20 percent also believe the world is flat, that babies are delivered by storks and that building more roadways without fundamental change in human settlement pattern will solve traffic congestion.

The future of Civilization depends upon maintaining a democracy so the 20 percent view on any issue do not rule.

EMR

 At [4:06 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

The first two comments in this string are strange:

One fundamentally misunderstands Thoreau or takes him out of context to serve up a meanspirited, snide comment.

The other suggests both irreverence and idiocy.

Most people can think of groups from 2 (a grandfather / grandson) to 375,000 (opening day at OctoberFest in Munchen) with whom they would like to spend time.

The problem is not other people, it is a lack of time to share with them.

 At [5:34 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Maybe, but Thoreau also said an number of other things of a similar nature, such as "I've never met a companion as companionable as solitude." and "I have a great deal of company in my house; especially in the morning when no one calls."

Surely there is a wide range of sociability from vivacious to standoffish. For some reclusive means cloistered.

Then there are the true antisocials and sociopaths. Surely there can't be any basis for claiming that the geography of how we live will change the way we feel about each other. It is like claiming more densely inhabited spaces will help prevent obesity.

There is an essential difference between solitude and loneliness.

Thoreau and Slocum both spent long stretches of time alone. Who can tell me which of them said "These people think they have me in jail." ?

 At [6:39 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

"About 20 percent also believe the world is flat, that babies are delivered by storks and that building more roadways without fundamental change in human settlement pattern will solve traffic congestion."

And these folks generally LOVE being surrounded by people who will listen to - and re-enforce - their nonsense. People who don't have to be so engaged can put their time to other and better use.

 At [7:11 PM](#),  E M Risse said...

Jim:

Thank you for reading the story!

Settlement pattern determines the length of commutes and the opportunity to make connections.

I would say RHTCs, the focus of PROPERTY DYNAMICS are directly impacted by these findings.

EMR

 At [11:32 AM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

Good news for those who believe that people are hell:

There are a lot of web sites for you to find fellow true believers:

Try: [www.wildroots.org/uncivilized.htm](http://www.wildroots.org/uncivilized.htm)

Do not expect to find these folks at your local Chamber of Commerce fund raiser and they do not support building more roadways, but hey, you have to take the good with the bad.

EMR

 At [11:34 AM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

More good news.

Those who believe people are hell and that separation and social isolation is a good thing may enjoy blissful elderly years.

AP reports on a new study on Alzheimer's with a quote from a neural scientist who believes the new data shows that "feelings of social connectedness can help preserve brain function."

If you hate people and social interaction, no problem, soon you may not even recognize them. People well try to avoid you too.

[www.cnn.com/2006/Health/06/26/senior.moments.ap/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2006/Health/06/26/senior.moments.ap/index.html)

EMR

 At [12:07 PM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

OOPS

That web site two posts back is:

[www.wildroots.org/uncivilized.htm](http://www.wildroots.org/uncivilized.htm)

(A "z" not an "x" in uncivilized.)

Amazing how many notes I got to point that out in just a short time.

EMR

Monday, August 14, 2006

## WHERE THE JOBS ARE NOT

From time to time *WaPo* publishes data that debunks the Subregional Job Dispersal Myth. Those who benefit from belief in this myth claim the core jobs in the Virginia portion of the National Capital Subregion - as opposed to houses and services - are scattering across the Countryside. See "Where the Jobs Are," 24 May 2004 at <http://www.baconsrebellion.com/> and subsequent collums that deal with job location.

Today is another of those times. The "Commercial Real Estate Report - What's New in Northern Virginia" is a regular and useful - al be it misleadingly titled - service of *WaPo*. The map and table presenting the survey of office buildings completed or under construction "since 2003" is takes up a full page in today's Business Section.

A quick application of Regional Metrics indicates that there are over four times the square footage of new and under construction office buildings in the Radius = 10 Miles to Radius = 20 Miles Radius Band as there are beyond Radius = 20 Miles.

There are twice as many square feet in new and under construction office buildings inside Radius = 10 Miles as there are in the band between Radius = 10 Miles and Radius = 20 Miles and eight times the number outside R = 20.

This is fully consistent with the data published over the past two decades:

The Subregion's core Jobs are in the Core, Period.

The value of the buildings and the rents paid by the tenants document that this is where the jobs that are most important to the Subregion's economy are located.

Several notes:

There are buildings under construction in the R = 10 to 20 Radius Band than in the R = < 10 area. On the other hand the buildings are larger closer to the core. R = 10 to 20 average building size is 175,000 sq ft vs 317,000 sq ft average building size inside R = 10.

There are new office buildings in the Over R = 20 area outside the survey area. There is a small building going up along I-66 east of VA Route 234 Bus in Greater Manassas and another in "downtown" Gainesville. It can be assumed that if there were a lot buildings going up, the area of coverage would have been expanded. The buildings such as this are often occupied by residential service activities, not core (economic base) jobs.

The survey does not include owner occupied buildings for good reason.

The location of owner occupied buildings is often the result of an employers wanting to create a new profit center as a speculative office developer using their own employees as captive tenants. It has been suggested that this strategy contributed to the downfall of both AOL and WorldCom. The AOL complex is soon to be less occupied - and if our Internet connection speed is any indication, soon to be empty - and WorldCom washed through bankruptcy and is now MCI.

In both cases by attempting to double dip and be real estate speculators these companies created work environments that were not attractive - among other things they were and are inaccessible to most potential employees in the Subregion.

To attract the sort of employee that a company needs to compete and survive in the global marketplace the job location must be intelligently located. Finding cheap land as both of these companies did is not enough. The Creative Class is not attracted to locations like ones near Wal\*Mart in the Weeds.

The most important point driven home again by this survey is that most of the new offices are in Greater Alexandria, Greater South Arlington, Greater North Arlington, Greater Tysons Corner, and Greater Reston with several others located in places such as Fairfax Center and Greater Chantilly. The vast majority are in the first five and all five of those Beta Communities have a large imbalance of jobs over housing.

There are jobs needed to balance the existing (and planned) excess of housing over jobs in Greater Ashburn, Greater Cascades / Sterling, Greater Chantilly and Greater Centreville. That is why "South Dulles" - about which ones reads with increasing frequency - makes no sense as will be explored in upcoming columns.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 4:26 PM [38 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

### 38 Comments:

 At [4:52 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Nonsense.

According to MWCOG more than 50 percent of the region's 1.4 million existing jobs remain in the inner suburbs, even though 53 percent of total job growth between 2001 and 2005 occurred within the outer suburbs. Tyson's corner alone has more jobs than DC and more office space than downtown Atlanta.

It takes a long time for changes to affect how our cities operate, and one of the failures we have made in planning is that by the time we get around to agreeing on what the plan should be, we are effectively planning for something that is past tense.

If more than 50% of the job growth is occurring in outlying areas then we should plan accordingly instead of denying the facts. It is Suburban Maryland that leads the area in commercial construction.

Certainly, the core is still strong. Having already built it, it is unlikely to go away unless conditions there continue to get worse. But it is the outlying areas that are experiencing the most growth and those are the areas where we should concentrate our efforts to create sustainable communities before they self generate without sufficient planning.

So what if core commercial buildings are larger? How does that contribute to more mixed use? It is the smaller and more dispersed buildings that do that.

MCI and AOL had problems, of course, but those were problems with their business model, not their location. There are plenty of NEW businesses in Loudoun that are succeeding quite well, thank you. And Loudoun along with PW have the fastest rate of job growth in the area. True enough, the rate is against a small base, but once you reach a certain size the rate is bound to slow, just as job growth in the core areas demonstrates.

 At 9:32 PM,  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

Intuitively, it makes sense that job growth, especially from newer and smaller companies, would be greater in outlying areas than in the core. The costs for rent, taxes, etc. are much higher in core areas. I often hear complaints from friends and acquaintances about the high costs of rent in Tysons, Reston and D.C.

A large company that wanted to expand into this area and expected considerable federal government business, for example, might rent space in Tysons, Reston or other high-priced areas. But not every business can afford that level of overhead.

The Post has published two articles about high costs driving out local businesses in favor of big chains. (Not that there is anything wrong with big and successful companies.) The stories related to Clarendon in Arlington and Connecticut Ave., north of Dupont Circle in the District. Many of the small businesses simply could not afford to operate in those locations as they redeveloped. I recently read a similar article about the loss of local merchants in the Tribeca area of Manhattan.

My experience has generally been that big and dense locations tend to have much higher prices and rents than small and scattered locations. Of course, there can be great price opportunities for moving to run-down big and dense locations, but they are, of course, subject to the risk that the area does not turn around or turns around too slowly.

If we see the combination of lower business costs and lower-priced housing in more remote, less dense, locations, aren't we going to continue to see continued development in those areas (i.e., sprawl)? Similarly, given the cost of land and construction, aren't places such as Tysons Corner and Reston, likely to be among the most expensive in which to live or to operate a business?

In theory, mixed use makes sense. But in practice, these new, dense developments will be quite expensive when they are located in the core. Mixed use, with mixed incomes, probably has a better chance of success in places such as Fredericksburg and Harrisonburg, IMHO.

 At [9:33 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

Do a simple search on The Washington Post's job board.

As of this post there are;

-951 available jobs in Alexandria

-1233 available jobs in Arlington

-6127 available jobs in Fairfax County

-655 available jobs in Loudoun County

-248 available jobs in Prince William County

It's not scientific, but the results are telling.

 At [9:56 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

It is telling.

What it tells me is that it is a lot harder to fill a job in Fairfax than in Prince William. People don't want to travel to get there, and don't want to pay the higher costs of living there, only to battle the crowds trying to get out of town on the weekends.

Companies find it difficult to offer the required pay increases to entice people to do what they don't want and still remain competitive.

I left a job in Fairfax for one farther out and closer to home, and got more money to boot. What is not to like?

 At [10:16 PM](#),  Ray Hyde said...

Ed fails to note the other story in today's paper, "Fairfax Split on Open Space". Fairfax City has spent over \$12 million to acquire open space, at the behest of voters. In fact, they pledged City Hall and other properties as collateral, because they didn't have the tax money to spend.

Apparently, not everyone thinks that the central areas should be fully developed to the 25th story. The current debacle over building heights in Fairfax county is further evidence.

 At [5:58 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

Reality check - I am one of the creative class that everyone claims to speak for - I'd about ten thousand times rather live in Western Loudoun or Fredericksburg than in the inner core. So would most of the (similarly successful and educated) friends I have.

Name calling (wal-mart in the weeds? give me a break) doesn't strengthen a poor argument.

The central pull is the Feds. The folks who have a choice of where to work often prefer to work in the outer rings.

 At 7:04 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

Just back from 10,000 miles of seeing America and here's the deal: Jobs are in the urban areas and mostly gone from the rural areas with the exception of some farming and some remaining manufacturing.

Businesses want an available and ample labor pool that is educated and techno-savy.

They're simply not going to locate in rural areas where their labor pool needs are not assured.

In other words - my observation is that business, and it's needs are driving the equation. Everything else is secondary a directly-related impact of the initial business decision.

Almost every state or region has it's centralized labor market (urban areas) where many national and multi-national companies have chosen to locate - again not to sell products at that location but to attract qualified labor that can staff and operate the enterprise.

It doesn't matter whether they locate in the core or on the fringe - as long as their labor pool is MOBILE and willing to commute.

It's the same in Phoenix, Tucson, Grand Junction, Memphis,

Birmingham, Atlanta, Charlotte, etc, etc.... it's the same exact deal.

In the DC area, yes, the Feds drive the equation... and perhaps without the Feds.. the DC/Northern Va area would be a small urban area as compared to our mega urban areas.

Our Interstate road system was originally configured to move us from one urban area to another... and points in between.

It was never designed for the purpose for which it is now being used - to provide region-wide mobility for urban areas.

Even beltways were originally conceived to move traffic AROUND the urban areas so that travellers could avoid the urban cores - the theory being that the urban cores... would not actually expand and uses the beltways themselves to leverage expansion.

Nor did the designers of the interstates foresee that workers would use them for not only longer-distance commuting (as opposed to living close to where one works) but to utilize them to shop - not locally - but miles away - trips that would take hours if not for the existence of an interstate-grade road and/or beltway.

So - this is the reality.

Also reality - we have a LOT more roads that we used to AND we drive a LOT more than we used to - almost triple the miles that our parents did. Transportation planners call this VMT - vehicle miles driven.

If we want more roads ( I won't use the word "need" because that implies there is no other solution) - then we are going to have to pay for them - and urban interstates cost ten times more than rural interstates - many, more than 100 million dollars per mile.

The cost will also include the loss of green space and affordable housing simply because given a choice between paying to take down a

skyscraper for a road verses plowing a park or modest homes - the outcome is preordained.

And I'll close by pointing out that way back when - companies included in their cost of business - what it would take to supply their labor needs. They even would build housing for their workers as well as the necessary infrastructure.

Now days, they simply locate in urban areas - and let the governments worry about where people are going to live or how they will get to/from work.

No blame here - just observations.

and the answer is simple - but not easy - if folks want more roads - they're going to have to pay quite a bit more than they're paying right now - probably double or more.

ditto for transit... there are no free lunches... here... essentially if we want more/better mobility... get your wallets out - and any politician worth his salt would admit that in any dialogue about what to do next.

 At [7:45 AM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Larry, welcome back from your 10,000-mile trip. Where'd you go? What was the game plan?

Regarding your comments about jobs in urban areas vs. countryside:

You are absolutely right. For all the predictions that the Internet would free people to live and work wherever they want, people are not flocking to small towns and rural areas. Oh, sure, you have individuals with a wealth of experience and connections who can choose to live where they want and continue to do business as "consultants," but the vast majority of people cannot. They go where the jobs are.

Most companies today aren't worried about access to raw materials, or railroad lines, or seaports -- the drivers of economic growth in the industrial era. As you correctly observe, they first and foremost want access to skilled and educated workers. That means one of two things: You locate where the workers are -- the metropolitan areas. That doesn't mean all small towns are doomed, but they are swimming against the tide.

The lesson for policy makers: The fundamental economic units in a globally competitive economy are labor-sheds, labor markets, New Urban Regions, whatever you want to call them. These units compete primarily upon their ability to develop, recruit and retain human capital. That's why education has become an integral component of any regional economic development strategy. Likewise, that's why it's crucial to create human settlement patterns that enhance mobility and access, and that create the kinds of communities where people want, and can afford, to live.

 At 8:14 AM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

"and the answer is simple - but not easy - if folks want more roads - they're going to have to pay quite a bit more than they're paying right now - probably double or more.

ditto for transit... there are no free lunches... here... essentially if we want more/better mobility... get your wallets out - and any politician worth his salt would admit that in any dialogue about what to do next."

AMEN

I don't think we are really talking about rural areas being centers of job expansion, just that the core area is no longer r5 or r10. There is a natural progression of homes moving out, then retail, then commercial. PW was a bedroom community for years, but that is rapidly becoming

no longer the case.

To ignore the facts or to proclaim them as otherwise is folly. To plan only for half (the truly urban half) of what we know is happening would be an enormous mistake that only perpetuates our current problem.

As Larry notes, it is a lot less expensive to build in the less congested areas. Therefore we get more bang for our buck and a longer extension of utility into the future by concentrating our planning and building where the most new growth will occur as opposed to where there will be the most additional growth.

The one thing there is no doubt about is that it will take money, even if we use all of the alternatives to road building that are available.

At 9:14 AM,  Toomanytaxes said...

6:58 You clearly have not been listening to the rhetoric of the Fairfax County real estate industry. Everyone wants to live in a condo near rail. Ha, ha! You are absolutely right; most people want a single family home that is affordable. That's what the Census Bureau data show. That means more pressure for sprawl. A partial solution is to continue to encourage good-paying jobs to move to less-expensive locations where the workers live. More Places. (Ray, you should have filed for a copyright on that one.)

Larry & Ray. If we want the roads or transit, we need to pay for them. That's right, but who are the "we's" in this argument. Some of the "we's" want roads in locations near where they already live for a better commute. Others want roads near where they own undeveloped land so that they can develop the properties. Still others want roads from the outlying bedroom communities to locations where they own commercial buildings. Finally, some people don't want more roads because they fear that more roads simply means more development and higher taxes.

Then we also need to define who are the "we's" who need to pay. Some want higher general taxes. Others want user fees (toll roads or gas taxes). Some want development impact fees or higher proffers. Some people simply don't want to pay higher taxes whatsoever or fear that those higher taxes would just be used for more development.

On this question, former President Clinton's analysis is the right one -- it all depends on the meaning of the word "we."

I continue to maintain that the development/infrastructure/tax or fee issue revolves around the fact that there is generally a big split in identity between those who benefit from development and those who perceive that they pay a big price for it. There will be no political consensus or solution to this issue until that identity split is addressed. Yet, we simply don't see our elected officials talking about the issue. What's in for me? What will this cost me?

 At [9:17 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

"For all the predictions that the Internet would free people to live and work wherever they want, people are not flocking to small towns and rural areas."

Well, yes, actually, they are. Look at the explosion in growth in many formerly stagnant areas - and the boom in university towns, such as Blacksburg and Charlottesville, and the ring of counties around each, that allow professionals to live in a more rural or small town setting, and still work in a job center. Those jobs are fiercely fought over.

Many people are moving as far out as they can and still have a decent professional job. For the highest skilled folks, there's a lot of latitude.

"Oh, sure, you have individuals with a wealth of experience and

connections who can choose to live where they want and continue to do business as "consultants," but the vast majority of people cannot. They go where the jobs are."

As more and more folks are telecommuting, more and more of the "creative class" people are choosing to live in outer areas and work from home, or commute in a day a week or a few days a month. It's a noticeable pattern, particularly with high-skilled professionals. No, it's not a majority - yet. Get to \$5 per gallon of gas, and it's not going to be just the whiz kids.

We need to be looking at the trends of the future, and this is a very noticeable trend - especially with the most skilled and desirable workers - that many - not most, but a substantial number - of them prefer less intensely urban settings. Creative class kids in their 20's often want to live in the city. In their 30's and 40's and 50's, with kids, not so much.

Also, a substantial number of the folks in the big city urban core are newer immigrants, not US natives - no idea why, but look at the demographics of places like Fairfax or LA. Their numbers are masking a real pattern of out-migration.

Not claiming this is the majority - but this is a strong pull with a substantial number of people with a very definite less urban preference.

 At [9:26 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

The 10K trip not your normal..vacation but did focus on visiting National Monuments and lesser known National Parks along with visiting many, many "places" - where people live ... beyond urban areas though we did pass through them when we had little choice.

and those urban areas.. walk, talk and feel like Wash DC... or worse..

(aka Atlanta - where the commuting area easily extends 70 miles and

beyond the core). Rome Georgia has a rush hour like Prince William... ditto Gainesville, etc.

Rural America is STILL there... 50, 100, 200 miles from urban areas and people still live in those places - but for the most part they are not vibrant centers of economic activity. More than a few have closed manufacturing plants nearby... some stil have their plants.

Some are doing fine and some are doing "ok" but many are just hanging on - and I suspect the primary jobs are governmental... with "spin-off" jobs that provide goods and services.

A good metric - I think - would be to differentiate between money generated entirely locally.. and money brought in - say salaries for postal workers... or Park Service employees, etc... OR a company that provides NET jobs... such as Saturn... Toyota, and/or supplier companies.

In other words.. distinguish between jobs that are core jobs and jobs that would not exist if not for those core jobs and really are spin-off jobs.

WalMart is .... EVERYWHERE ... and wherever they are.. there are boarded up small shops and even shopping centers whose "anchor" could not compete against WalMart.

(I don't dislike WalMart - they function exactly like our forefathers wanted - a competitive economy that rewards productivity - but even if I did - it would be futile because no where that we went did we see empty WalMarts; that means that most all of the local folks.. actually DO WANT the WalMarts.

Give WalMart credit - they KNOW what demographics are needed for their stores to thrive... very... very few dead Walmarts that

overestimated their market area....

The only jobs for young people outside urban areas are fast food, clerking, etc and jobs for well-educated young people are sparse... and lower paying.

An Irony - There is LOTS and LOTS of EXCESS infrastructure... homes, roads, schools, water/sewer... all built for towns whose populations were larger... years ago but have now shrunk.

In fact, I'd bet that if one totaled up ALL the available, underused infrastructure, it would probably match up with what is needed ... but unfortunately in the WRONG PLACE.

So the moral to the story is that America has moved - to it's urban areas because that's where the jobs went.

Many folks who already live in urban areas don't want more people and more congestion and more density much less pay higher taxes to provide the "come-heres" with more roads, schools, homes, etc.

I'm not encouraged nor optimistic that Americans will give up their cars... or even drive them less miles.... until and unless... gasoline reaches \$4-5 a gallon... or more.... forget folks buying New Urban.. living closer to work or taking mass transit so that things will be "better"... for others.

: -)

People will bitch about the "awful" congestion.. and suggest that without new roads that urban areas will become economically strangled.. but I don't buy that either.

People, companies.. will do what they have to do... to preserve their interests vice committing economic hari kari. When companies actually

start moving OUT of the urban areas... would we WRING our hands... or  
breath a sign of relief?

Companies are not going to move their operations to rural America.. at least not anytime soon - they'll more likely move them to the urban fringes...then .. because their labor force is still in the same region - AND they want their folks Physically on-site... so managers .. will actually have something to do (God forbid.. they'd have to actually determine the work product of an employee 100 miles away).

But I'll end on a hopeful note.

We visted friends in New Mexico who are refuges from the DC urban mess.

Her job is to give seminars on Medical Billing Codes ... instead of fighting her way to Dulles/Reagan/BWI... she now takes a relatively easy trip to Albuquerque AND she holds fewer seminars and makes MORE money as her employers wanted her services badly.

In her case - the Internet IS critical.. and a key issue was if DSL was available where they wanted to live - it was.. and after 40+ years in the DC Area.. they now awake to crisp mornings.. and the only congestion is the horses jostling for the best grass.

Important to recognize.. that she had something that was needed - that folks are willing to pay for... and so she COULD dictate the terms of her employment.

.. so I do believe that the Internet will play a central role... in WHERE businesses actually DO business... but by the time we get a good handle on HOW.. it will have already happened.

Proactive Planning.. is apparently not our long suite!

 At 9:45 AM,  Ray Hyde said...

"An Irony - There is LOTS and LOTS of EXCESS infrastructure... homes, roads, schools, water/sewer... all built for towns whose populations were larger... years ago but have now shrunk."

Yup. 20% of our traffic and 40% of our traffic congestion occurs on 10% of the roads.

"...people are not flocking to small towns and rural areas." A recent copy of Progressive Farmer documented just the opposite.

 At [9:52 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

FYI, you don't need DSL. Satellite Internet is available pretty much anywhere via hughes.net, and is reasonably priced, and works pretty darn decently. My small business uses them.

Also, jobs outside the urban core are a lot more diverse than you appear to realize. Actual rural jobs I actually know about include farming with all its myriad specialized variations (from raising chicks to nursery stock to flower seeds to heritage livestock and plants to organic farming to raising horses), free-lance writing, pottery, painting, other arts and crafts, remote computer administration and support. Plus doctors, lawyers, accountants, architects, physical therapists, and dozens of others.

MANY rural jobs are home-based businesses, which are typically taking advantage of favorable zoning flexibility.

Quite a few vital rural areas are centered around colleges and universities, around state and national parks, etc.

The trend has been people moving in for jobs. Now a lot of people are interested in moving back out - and with satellite Internet and telecommuting, they can.

At 10:41 AM,  Larry Gross said...

jobs with high salaries.... verses jobs such as organic gardening...  
botique... cottage industries... etc....

I'm not running those jobs down... only pointing out that a more modest  
lifestyle accompanies them by default.

And I agree.. more and more folks are deciding that money (higher  
salaries) are simply not worth the serious compromises in lifestyle...  
and ARE leaving the urban areas ...

... but the overall numbers... tell the story... most areas like the DC  
area are STILL growing... still expanding.. still gaining more and more  
people... and .. yes.. we might be approaching the day when they  
stop.. and jobs become very dispursed... and many out into the rural  
areas.... we may, in fact, be in the middle of this trend... and not know  
it yet ..(but I doubt it).

Young folks... not yet established... financially or career-wise... and  
still have marriage and family ahead of them... have a hard row to  
hoe... so to speak .. in trying to START their journey in a rural area...  
unless of course Mom/Dad already have an established business  
(internet-driven naturally)... for them to join... and who knows.. maybe  
we're witnessing the birth/early childhood of such a thing.

I certainly think that such potentials cannot be ignored... but will take  
time to play out.. in numbers... that actually result in significant  
numeric reductions in the growth of jobs and people in urban areas.

And .. I'd certainly think a provocative thought would be to consider  
whether folks leaving the urban areas for internet-driven rural  
lifestyles... would not only outpace new urban concept efforts.. but,...  
perhaps render them moot... and amusing artifacts of do-gooders  
attempts to tinker with settlement patterns. (no insult intended to

anyone who may have a dog in the settlement pattern "hunt")

 At [10:49 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

"a hard row to hoe... so to speak .. in trying to START their journey in a rural area"

That's right. Most of my neighbors are retired or semi-retired consultants who previously were young urban singles and paid their dues in high tech, government, or defense jobs, and then got out. But they are pretty much on the fringe. I don't think we are talking about pure rural development as a big growth area, but to ignore the situation of the edge cities and THEIR subsequent expansion is just wrong. And the Dulles situation shows the importance of managing the situation in a timely manner.

 At [1:50 PM](#),  [tobias Jodter](#) said...

This thread is why I enjoy reading this blog - it should be mandatory reading for all politicians... toomanytaxes needs to run for office - you'd get my vote...

On a side note this article from the WP is quite germane to the discussion:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/29/AR2006072901046.html>

 At [6:33 AM](#),  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

TJ - Your words are too kind. I'm active in public affairs, but politics are too dirty. Years ago, in another state, I helped run two successful election campaigns for a state senator. I was exposed to way too much ugly mud-slinging and back-biting. I'll stay active in public issues, but not on any ballot.

 At [6:46 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

I'm still wondering why some urban areas grow "up" and others expand "out".

Or perhaps both happen... in concert... but still left with wondering what the criteria/dynamics are.

I know this may sound a bit weird... but if one takes the goals of New Urbanism and applies them to multi-story buildings that house businesses and residences ...

mobility - less cars - more walking - more using public transportation

storm water runoff - one roof sheds the same amount of runoff..

whether there be one floor or 40 floors below it.

Home is near shopping, medical, work, etc... and can be done without a car.

I dunno about schools... no clue

do they have schools in skyscrapers? :-)

but the basics are - why out rather than up especially when density is deemed a more efficient use of land?

When we advocate governments to incentivize New Urban type projects - why do we not also advocate incentivizing multi-story mixed-use projects?

I'm sure this is a case of ignorance on my part and someone out there can readily supply the rationale that determines whether a developer seeks to build a multi-story project centrally located vs building a flatter project on the urban fringe.

 At [7:01 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

AR2006072901046.html

excellent article! Thanks for the link!

Reminds me of that show "Green Acres" where city folk... of independent means make their way to a rural area and bring with them their own tastes and then recognize that others like them also have the same needs.

This kind of thing IS occurring all across the country but almost always in areas where an old town already exists and has quite a few shuttered shops readily available for re-use.

Important to point out that the "new" shops usually are not things like markets or hardware, etc that serves the needs of the pre-existing rural folks who already live there.

Rather... somewhere... usually within 30-40 miles.. there is a WalMart where EVERYONE obtains their day-to-day needs.

I'm not saying this is good or bad - only that it is not what it used to be.

I do wonder that if this type of resettlement is going to accelerate - what THAT means...

Does it mean a lot of our older essentially abandoned towns are going to be brought back to life because of the internet and UPS?

Will we see the small villiage settlement pattern.. become a major way that our expanding population will settle?

In 50 years.. will the issues of Sprawl and awful traffic congestion be little more than memories of the bad old days?

 At 7:40 AM,  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Larry, This is not a complete answer to your question, why do some

communities build "out" rather than "up," but it is part of the equation.

Apparently (I say "apparently" because I'm no expert) there are significant costs associated with constructing buildings over 8 floors in height. Erecting buildings above that height can be justified only in locations where property values are very, very high.

At 7:53 AM,  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

Jim, a number of people in the construction and real estate industry have told me that the breakpoint where construction costs escalate is just above three or four stories. They tell me that it is much cheaper to build garden apartments or one-to-three story buildings for an industrial park than high-rise condos or tall office buildings.

I notice that, in years past, local governments used to build high-rise apartments for low-income housing, but not anymore. There were lots of problems with these buildings, and I suspect that they are now too expensive to build also.

At 8:07 AM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Larry, I hope you got to visit Glacier: it is the hidden and unsung gem among America's great parks.

I think TMT is right, you can pick a house out of a catalog, but a multistory structure has to be custom engineered, then there are setback and step back requirements, the community needs ladder trucks for emergency services, not to mention local resistance.

It has to be a very high value proposition before you can think about it, and the driving issue is land prices. There are engineering trade offs that tell you when you can afford to go from one story and acres of parking to multiple stories with parking structures, and high-rise with underground parking.

 At [8:31 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

I have a friend that lives in the Del Ray area of Alexandria. His wife takes Metro to work, but has a car for her other trips.

He drives 40 miles one way to his job in the suburbs.

 At [5:34 PM](#),  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

I'm not sure whether this is too remote or not, but here goes. In one sense, it is important for government contractors to be near their customer -- in this case, the federal government. However, can one also make a strong argument that, by concentrating so much of the federal government's contractors in one general area, a disaster-related risk has been created? Would a terrorist attack or natural disaster in this area not only cripple the federal government, but also its contractor network? Should so much government contracting be done so close to the capital?

In the telecom industry, companies such as Verizon have their large packet switches and databases for their signaling network in mated pairs, but not in the same city. Similarly, many information service providers have their servers located in more than one location.

Does this principle apply to government vendors? Should it? Has NoVA become a national/homeland security risk because of the huge concentration of government contractors in the same general area?

Would the federal government be more secure if more contractors were located in Alabama or Kansas? Clearly, if more vendors were located in those areas, we might be blogging other problems, rather than growth and transportation.

 At [9:42 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Transportation is a problem because too many jobs are in one place.

That causes many other problems, including the ones you note. One of the stated reasons for the BRAC move was to increase security. Another may well be that people hate their commute. Despite that, the cost and perceived danger and inconvenience of city living drives many people away from choosing that alternative. And all of the means of making it more attractive are means that will make the city even more expensive.

Yet the Smart Growth crowd insists that the answer is to do more of what we've been doing, more densification, and they somehow think that will result in something different from what we've got. And this is in spite of economic evidence that several small cities produce more than one big one of equivalent population.

There is no evidence anywhere that increasing density can do anything other than concentrate our transportation and pollution problems. And yet one strong driver behind this is to prevent sprawl from eating up precious open space: we are going to concentrate our problems as an environmental imperative.

At the same time, city residents are demanding more open space. Fairfax mortgaged their town hall to buy open land. In the outlying areas we are zoning land as off limits to those who would willingly buy it otherwise. In so doing we are also prohibiting some people who would willingly do so from selling it. Outrageous lot sizes mean that they can only be sold to those who will willingly hold most of it open, and can afford to.

But whether we buy it or preserve it in other ways, the main purpose of those policies is to use the land for nothing. We justify this and put the value on it by calling it viewscape, watershed, habitat, forest, farms etc. At least Fairfax is honest. They are buying the land at the express request of their citizens, and they are sending the citizens the bill to the tune of \$12.5 million.

Eventually all this land saving is going to mean that new development will go someplace else. The very process of trying to increase both densification and save open space is going to result in the grass looking that much greener on the other side of the fence, and the property there that much more desirable and valuable.

With conflicting policies like these, we should change the state flag and make it the horns of a dilemma on a field of green confusion.

 At [6:21 AM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

TTM, You raise an interesting question regarding the concentration of federal contractors in the D.C. metro area, and whether it would make good policy to encourage a broader geographical dispersion of the contractor base. In my observation, the contractor base is getting more and more concentrated. Barely a week goes by without some out-of-state company announcing that it's setting up an office in Northern Virginia to better serve its federal customers.

Back to a point I made earlier, while in theory the Internet makes it possible to do business from anywhere, in practice, the dynamics of the knowledge economy create countervailing forces. Face-to-face contact is just as important as ever, perhaps more so. When the primary means of production is people, building and maintaining relationships is critical. Witness Silicon Valley, Hollywood, Wall Street. The same applies to government IT. Vendors need to be physically close to their customers in order to interact with them. Satellite conference calls will do in a pinch, but they're no substitute.

On top of the human factor, you've got the "skills" factor. Doing business with the federal government requires a detailed knowledge of federal procurement practices. Business is not done the same way as it is in the private sector. To gain access to people with that knowledge base, you

have to be in the Washington area.

 At [6:45 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

Local offices for government IT are typically sales people, not the folks doing the work. Look at Oracle's Reston office - you don't have the developers there - you have sales people and some trainers.

A VERY substantial percentage of IT folks telecommute some or all of the time - and many more would and could do so if they had a chance.

IT work typically involves a lot of individual effort, making it ideal for telecommuting and remote locations.

 At [6:49 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

"There will be no political consensus or solution to this issue until that identity split is addressed."

Excellent discourse on who "owns" the problem and who will pay.

But methinks there WILL be a political consensus - at some point - and it may or may not be happy days for any.

I doubt seriously that any local politician is going to be thrown out of office for NOT raising taxes despite claims to the contrary... :-)

Where I come down on this is that what will not fly is to collect money from everyone and then have a political process where the proceeds are allocated without regard to where that money came from.

What this boils down to, in my view, is that if NoVa folks want more roads - they're going to have to pay for them.

If folks who live in Fredericksburg want more roads to commute to NoVa, they're going to have to pony up that money.

Even then.. not everyone in either jurisdiction will want to pay for more

roads

.. and this is why I think, in the end, people are going to end up paying on an individual basis for new roads.

.. you drive - you pay. if you want to drive more -then you'll pay more.

This concept was not possible before the advent of electronic tolling but is now and road use can be charged just as electricity or water/ sewer is.

This obviously will not work for surface streets so folks who use only surface streets.. i.e. live and work locally will be fine.

Commuters - yes - they're going to feel the pain - between tolls and higher gasoline costs - they're going to have to go back and re-calculate the cost of where they live vs the cost of how much it costs to get to/ from where they have chosen to live.

At some point - the answer to the question about whether one MUST drive a lot verses someone who WANTS to drive a lot - will be answered by simple economics - not politics or policies.

 At [7:24 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

I think an economic approach would be far more palatable to more people than a regulatory approach - provided that the economic approach is based on real use of real infrastructure.

I worry a bit when I see folks here talking about the expense of county water and sewer, and charging it back, when we're discussing small farms that are on individual well and septic. Seems like some of these folks have never lived outside of a city.

 At [8:40 AM](#),  Ray Hyde said...

If you have electronic tolling there is no reason it can't work for surface streets as well as arterials. I think part of the call for tolling comes from people who think it won't affect them much.

It still misses the point of drive heavier pay more or drive more wastefully pay more and therefore taxes may people unfairly. It also requires an entire new infrastructure.

Set the tax on fuel where it really needs to be and you will achieve the same result of drive more pay more, and additionally you will collect for drive heavier pay more, use more HP pay more, don't keep your car tuned up, pay more.

One possible problem with the gas tax is that short trips use proportionately more gas, so those that live work and shop close to home would also pay more, proportionately.

Unless electronic tolling is quite granular, it will result area related inequities or zones of free transit and that will become a political football closely related to land values. I don't think that is what people have in mind when they talk about linking transportation with land use.

I think that anonymous 8:24 is correct. If we actually charge the TRUE locational costs we might be very surprised at the results.

 At 9:03 PM,  [Toomanytaxes](#) said...

Ray, I think that we are back to the questions of "which fuels do we tax" and "how do we tax them"? I expect that we will see more vehicles powered by other than gasoline and diesel fuels in the future. As we see more and more hybrids on the road, we are also seeing lesser contributions to the transportation fund. Should two vehicles that are equal weight and driven the same number of miles pay drastically different tax payments because one is a hybrid and the other isn't? I

could make good arguments on both sides of that issue. But, in any

event, the problem will only grow larger.

We may see all vehicles contain a mandatory RFID tag that can be read when a vehicle enters or leaves a state, a county, a toll road or a "congestion zone." Other factors such as time of day, vehicle weight, etc. can be factored into the equation. Usage-sensitive pricing is what it is. Ditch the fuel taxes and bill the drivers monthly. I suspect that an RFID tag and a database could also trigger a message to the state police that Vehicle XYZ has failed to pay the last two months' fees and needs to be stopped and ticketed.

Moreover, the same tags could be used by public and private roads. We might even see demand management as roads lower their prices for heavier trucks that drive at night in congested areas.

I'm sure that there are reliability and security issues that would need to be addressed, but there are quite a few smart people in this country, many of whom live right here in Virginia.

 At [12:40 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

My basic approach is that anything that is sold gets taxed, including labor and services. Therefore you would tax all fuels, including home heating oil, natural gas and firewood.

In exchange, you would then leave capital alone unless capital asset is sold. That way capital can do its job and generate more wealth and more spending and more tax revenue, without being slapped with imputed taxes as in real estate tax.

People who earn more buy more and use more would get taxed more. People who save would not get taxed as much as people who spend. Our wasteful ways go far beyond tooling around in our SUV to pick up a loaf of bread.

Under my plan, road use would not be explicitly taxed because no money is changing hands. However, because road use is so closely tied to commerce, the effect is the same. We just have to set the tax high enough to support the road use we actually need, which hasn't been done so far.

 At [6:06 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

"it still misses the point of drive heavier pay more or drive more wastefully pay more and therefore taxes may people unfairly."

Ray - I don't understand this.

If you want to drink 5 2-liter bottles of coke a day - you are not being unfairly taxed (with the sales tax).

You're starting off presuming that many folks "have no choice".

Why not let folks make their own decisions about what they must do and what they choose to do or not the same exact way they do with anything that costs money?

Providing everyone with unlimited infrastructure no matter whether they really need it or not is the economic equivalent of giving lumber away and letting people decide if they "need" it.

This is the fundamental issue with roads that cost millions of dollars per mile to build and maintain - and a gas (fuel) tax that would have to easily triple to provide enough money to fully fund the backlog of roads (assuming that they are all needed and needed right now (ludicrous)).

Even with water/sewer/electricity (all of which are health/welfare issues - the cost is keyed to useage and we all know what happens if you don't penalize people for excess useage.

They'll leave the hose on... all the lights on... etc...

Only when there is an economic penalty for excess useage will folks make decisions based on what is best for them - economically.

Imagine if the electric company had to plan capacity for the grid - if electricity were sold below cost and no penalties for excessive useage.

Well, you don't have to imagine what would happen.. it's happening right now with roads.

 At [7:21 AM](#),  Anonymous said...

Larry, a significant part of the cost of gasoline is taxes.

There's a HUGE economic penalty for driving more, which anyone who actually has to drive a good bit for their job (I do) is intimately familiar with.

How do you define excess usage? Especially considering that usage of roads directly benefits the economy - making commerce possible, making our Virginia tourism possible, allowing a free market in jobs and easing the ability to change jobs and bounce back after layoffs, etc.

Spending extra time on the road costs in TIME (probably the most important), in expensive gasoline, wear and tear on your car, and additional insurance costs. No one who spends a lot of time in a car thinks it's free - it's incredibly expensive to drive a lot.

I have "free" water (well water) and I sure don't leave the hose on. I have "free" sewer (individual septic) and I sure don't flush the toilet extra just because it's free.

But with gas at nearly \$3 per gallon, driving sure isn't "free".

 At [9:00 AM](#),  Ray Hyde said...

Larry, I agree, that wasn't very clear. If you have tolls you will collect

tolls from those in that area. And everyone else takes a pass, so tolling is more inequitable than gas tax that snags everyone who drives, or receives goods that were delivered by road.

Gas taxes automatically charge more for those that drive heavier vehicles, drive longer distances, make multiple short trips, and it makes no distinction as to whether the trip is wasteful or not. The infrastructure is already in place to collect the gas tax so it is far more efficient than new tolling mechanisms can be.

However, there are some places where tolls make sense, I'm not excluding them entirely.

I agree it is ludicrous to think that we need to raise the gas tax times three to fund all the roads we may or may not need, but your argument against the gas tax, that it won't raise the money we won't need any longer because people will drive less only implies how well it will work.

Furthermore, I don't agree that roads are offered at below cost. All the roads we have are paid for somehow, and we are paying the bill. It is true that some of the cost comes out of real estate taxes and income taxes, but both of those sources are also highly dependent on the roads.

 At [2:12 PM](#),  [E M Risse](#) said...

Valued Reader:

If you have gotten to this comment you know there have been a lot of ideas tossed against the wall in this string. Some good, some not so good.

Among the latter category is the very first comment.

It starts with a one word paragraph:

“Nonsense.”

The next paragraph cites data which, if it were understood by the commenter, does not contradict the Blog posting.

The data is confusing because it relies on municipal jurisdictional borders that do not conform to the organic components of human settlement patterns. In spite of this Wash COG data over the years have generally supported the data published by WaPo and in this Blog posting.

COG data is confusing because of the use of the phrases "inner suburbs" and "outer suburbs." Those who benefit from citizens misunderstanding the location of jobs relish this confusion.

That is why at S/PI we use Radius Analysis. Tysons Corner is inside R=10. "Core" is capitalized and has a specific meaning. When it is all sorted out the picture is very clear and undercuts the posters desire to build houses for urban residents on his wifes farm.

The commenter goes on in the next three paragraphs to intentionally use confusing words such as "cities," "outlying areas" and "core" (not capitalized) to further muddle the issues raised.

"Nonsense" is in fact a good description of what follows that comment, not what comes before it.

This also causes many of the comments that follow by others to be a little off point.

We will try to address some of the misconceptions in future columns.

EMR

 At 6:03 PM,  [Groveton](#) said...

I have bad news for the "creative class" people who can live and work in rural settings distant from customers and colleagues. If a company can

parcel the work out to someone over the internet in Charlottesville they can parcel the work out to someone over the internet in Chennai as well. And the person in Chennai will do the work at about 1/5 the cost. I have traveled and worked extensively throughout India (Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad to name a few places I've worked). The Indians are smart, hardworking and creative. The big barriers to sending technology work to India are the need to work directly with customers, the need for face-to-face collaboration among technicians and the need for personal leadership of technology teams. I love Charlottesville (went to college there) but I'd be nervous if I could live down there and do my job over the internet.

Tuesday, October 03, 2006

## MORE ON HENRY GEORGE

Jim Wamsley raises an important point with respect to the application of Henry George in his comment on "Shades of Henry George" posted yesterday.

Wamsley suggests the application of "concentric areas." In the context of Regional Metrics we call these "Radius Bands."

This tactic for application of Henry George would work well for small, isolated urban agglomerations that do not exceed the scale of an Alpha Community -25,000 to 200,000 population depending on the distance the agglomeration is from the nearest large New Urban Region(s).

Simple concentric areas / Radius Bands will not work for the application of Henry George in larger agglomerations, especially for large New Urban Regions or their subregions. A discussion of this idea may, however, help some grasp the importance of a Comprehensive Conceptual Framework for understanding functional human settlement patterns.

In larger urban agglomerations such as the Virginia portion of the National Capital Subregions (population 2.2 million +/- ) one must also use place "concentric areas" / Radius Bands around the Core of each Alpha or Beta Community, the Core of each Alpha or Beta Village - especially if the Village-scale agglomeration has at its Core a shared-vehicle system station.

At S/PI we believe it would be necessary to have a set of Radius Bands around the Core of each Alpha or Beta Neighborhood and perhaps around the Cores of some Alpha or Beta Clusters.

These rings of differing urban intensity / flux would be overlapping (any given site in five or six different Bands) and thus very difficult to calibrate

for a Henry George tax application.

It would be better to follow the Three-Step Process outlined in *Handbook* and sketched out in "The Shape of Richmond's Future," 16 Feb 2004 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com).

Even with the Radius Band / concentric area technique, there is still the need for a Clear Edge between the Urbanside and the Countryside.

The application of "Reverse Henry George" as summarized by Jim Bacon in the original posting would be useful in the context of our notes although Henry George purists hate the idea with the passion of True Believers.

We recognize that those who are in denial about the organic structure of human settlement pattern and / or who hope to profit from the further scatteration of urban land uses across the Countryside (the creation of dysfunctional human settlement patterns) will attempt to obfuscate reality.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 12:08 PM [24 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

## 24 Comments:

 At 2:58 PM,  [Jim Wamsley](#) said...

I would like to thank E M Risse for expanding on my two sentence comment.

"A split rate tax system does not need to be based on one boundary. ..."

I envisioned a set of areas around the Core of each Alpha or Beta Neighborhood and perhaps around the Cores of some Alpha or Beta Clusters.

These areas would be based on the current development patterns, using

assessor's records for land value and for improvement value. In the core area taxes would be assessed on land value. In one or more transition zones, taxes would be assessed on ratios of improvements to land values. Outside the "clear edge" residences and non agricultural improvements would pay the taxes.

As EMR said in "The Shape of Richmond's Future," "At first these parameters may also sound hard to calculate, but recall how easy it is to do the gerrymandering now employed to ensure all the majority party candidates are in "safe" districts and the minority party candidates are in "unsafe" districts. Computers can do marvelous things." [http://www.baconsrebellion.com/Issues04/02-16/Richmond's\\_future.htm](http://www.baconsrebellion.com/Issues04/02-16/Richmond's_future.htm)

This does not change the current idea that every one should pay fair taxes. Each area would pay taxes based on the cost of services. Again, "Computers can do marvelous things."

 At 7:10 PM,  [E M Risse](#) said...

Jim W:

Good amplification.

I see now why you jumped on the "one line" implication and you are right.

What the Clear Edge does is delineate where you go from Henry George to Inverse Henry George.

Your observations are right on.

EMR

 At 7:54 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

I'm not sure I would use gerrymandering as an example of the wonderful

things computers can do. All that shows is that computers can do wonderfully screwed up things when the person driving the computer has an ulterior motive.

The idea that each area would pay taxes based on the cost of services ignores the fact that many areas can't afford the cost of services. Some areas use a lot more police services than other areas, and the other areas benefit. The areas that do use the most police services are frequently the ones that can afford to pay the least. Fairfax is exporting the cost of providing services to the labor force that its businesses require to adjoining jurisdictions. The labor force, in turn, is trying to exporting the cost of the roads they require to the state, but the state won't pick up the tab, even though most of the money comes from NOVA.

As it stands, we don't even have the data to accurately show who travels where and when, even though we know exactly where the daily backups will occur. We certainly don't have the data to show how one areas costs compare with another. What we do know is that taxes are highest in the most densely populated areas, which suggests that even if we had concentric rings of taxation, they might only exacerbate the situation we have now.

Whichever way that works out, if people in an area are paying their full costs, then what is wrong with scatteration? I suspect that if such a thing occurred and it turned out that people willingly paid full price to live in scattered areas that he would dream up something new bad to say about everyone else.

For the record, I consider Ed's oblique attacks against those who wish to profit from scatteration to be a vaguely disguised personal attack. The only problem I have with profit is a lack thereof. As for scatteration

~~there are at least some arguments that it makes more sense than~~

constructing a city on a concrete slab over a railway station that provides access to less than 1% of the available destinations.

I won't hide the fact that I'd like to build one new home on the farm. With 170 acres to work with, that shouldn't be a problem. I'd put it on site that I'm not farming anyway, and is unsuitable for that purpose. I'd build it as a modest equestrian oriented home, with the best green features affordable, and build it as an auxiliary dwelling without separating a lot from the farm. Both the income from the rent and the income from the equestrian activities would accrue to the farm, and be transferred with it when the farm is sold. And, hey, they already built the road to service it, across what was once a profitable farm.

Unfortunately, I am prohibited from doing that, which is causing me a loss of income and it is costing the farm even more. The ALLOWABLE alternative is three fifty acre lots plus three houses crammed onto ten acres or so.

I believe that Ed and I agree that the second scenario is a disaster: it will result in more scatteration, less land preserved, still more distributed services, and it would pander to the elite, who may very well be those most likely to travel long distances to high-powered jobs. But that is exactly what's going to happen if I have no other alternatives.

That screwed up circumstance is the direct result of zoning laws promulgated by morons who think they know what is best for the county, never mind what happens to its residents. Never mind the facts on the ground, we are going to make policy based on dogma.

Bacon is right: people should be allowed to do as they please provided they pay the provable costs, but not the 10X fantasy the ed would like to see charged.

JAB is right: leave the capital alone and tax the income. When people are allowed to do as they please, they will mostly do what provides more income, or what ED calls egregious short term profits.

If there is one thing people dislike it is change, even though change is the one thing that makes profits possible. If you have multiple, mutually interfering concentric bands of taxation around multiple alph beta nonsense communities that are themselves changing then it will take legions of data collectors and analysts to collect and rationalize the data, and legions more to run the models to tell each of us what we owe, down to the dooryard and cluster.

Considering what computer geeks get compared to what road crews get, what do you suppose will be the least expensive option? One of the problems we have now is that there is no predictability in what we owe in taxes.

I know how much I will earn next year and how much I can pay before I crack. That's a target I can see and understand. But if it depends on a bunch of constantly changing concentric circles that depend, like the Marshall water supply, on how long we can put things off then I can't make any plans whatsoever.

So much for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; we'll just turn that over all that nonsense to the sees-all knows-all central planner and his horde of computer geeks.

 At [4:56 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

Not being able to build one home on 170 acres and the only alternative is 3 on 150 acres. I must be missing something.

Why can't the new house be put on 50 acres and move on with life? Is this the proverbial "cake and eat it too" with the house on less than 50

acres?

With respect to "lines" and computers.

My locality has tried to draw "the line" where the limits of water/sewer are.

In addition, it allows land to be taxed for it's use via a land-use tax.

But let me use the water/sewer example as a contrast to the line concept.

When water/sewer is extended the issue is WHO will pay for the line that will be extended.

Customers who hook up in the existing service area pay an "availability" fee to offset the future capital costs to replace the capacity of the treatment plants that is being consumed.

But say a line is extended 10 miles then beyond the availability fee, how would the cost of the extended line be allocated? Would the entire cost of the extention just be divied up and allocated to all or would them be some criteria where those farther away would pay more?

I know the geography and demographics can be crunched with computers but I'm interested in how the implementation might work.

 At [11:41 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

I'm not talking about cost of services issues. My position is that this is an engineering and financial problem. If services are to be provided then those that get the service can sit down with those that provide the service and negotiate something they can both live with. Or not. Maybe it is just too expensive.

Maybe he builds his own sewer plant and agrees to staff it with certified county personnel. But, if it is just a matter services and the provable

costs thereof, then NO is not a valid option.

How the costs are allocated is a different matter. Say I have a hardware store in town, and I live above the store. I might object to paying any part of the new cost of sewer line, because I don't need it. But, some of those new homeowners may turn out to be my customers, so I can't claim there is no benefit. Maybe all those homes in the hinterland make my central location worth more. That's a benefit, too, but I'd still hate to pay higher taxes on something I haven't got yet. But if I'm taxed only on income, both those objections go away.

I'm all in favor of allocations that are more fair, if we can figure out what they are. Right now we decided it is fair to have business taxes subsidize home taxes. Maybe its right and maybe its not, but thats what we have and what we agreed to do. To then turn around and say, no new homes because they don't pay their way amounts to a new requirement, and it is bogus.

Maybe the county says we are only going to run school buses 15 miles from the school, if you live outside of that you have to provide transportation. But as Bacon points out, you can't just say no on that basis, people ought to be able to pay their own costs and live where they please. And, if the bus already goes past the new house, well, you don't have (much) of an argument.

Using the costs of services argument against development is a loser. If the costs are not allocated fairly, then argue that, but don't use increased costs or bad allocation as an excuse to get what you want. And don't gin up bogus costs because that only makes the argument weaker and more transparent yet.

People can't (or may not be able to) live where they please if the present owner is forbidden to sell. I've explained this before, and

apparently people don't believe it. I can theoretically build six houses, by-right. MAYBE, but unlikely as a ten legged toad, I could get even more with a rezoning and big enough proffers on the table.

But, practically speaking, I can't build just one. I can't build one without separating a lot. In order to separate a lot I must file a subdivision plan that will cost around \$100,000, whether I file it for one home or for six. The hundred thousand dollar figure is an estimate that still has a number of open ended TBD's in it t could be a lot more.

The county will probably jerk me around for a year or so and cause me to change the plan several times until it is to their liking.

Then I still have to execute all the stuff that is in the plan. Surveys, roads built to state standards, drainage, environmental studies, tree census, soil survey, and traffic studies, etc.

The only way you can afford to do it is to spread the cost over as many houses as possible. That is why you see a farm one day and a subdivision the next. It is what the rules require.

Even if I could put one house on fifty acres, practically speaking it would need to be a fine large home, and I couldn't afford to build it or keep it. Instead of farming it, I'd wind up mowing the guy's forty acre lawn, or maybe I'd still farm it and he'd get the tax benefit. He would have the salary to use it where I don't.

It is part of a deliberate plan to subsidize and game the system in favor of having only wealthy people live here. My supervisor told me that to my face, in so many words.

It's a great plan, and I think every county should employ it. All we have to do is make everybody wealthy enough to live that way.

There is no real government exigency in much of the requirements:

they are artificial barriers for the sole purpose of preventing development. For example, one requirement is soil samples every four hundred feet. The county already has a soils map, but I will have to hire a soils engineer and dig holes all over the property just so we can say, yep, agrees with the map. The only real soil requirement is under the house and in the drainage field. The rest of the soil is still going to be what it is and where it is, with or without the expense of the survey.

Some one will no doubt say "Oh no, this is important data and the government needs to have it." Fine, they can send their engineer and dig their own holes. They did it once before and that's how they got the map they have.

Rather than mow the guy's lawn, I'd likely I'd take the money and retire to Mexico or Costa Rica. Except I have the same problem as Bacon

The point is it isn't what I want. It is what somebody else wants. I agree with EMR that a house on fifty acres is stark raving nuts. Yes, I want to have the cake and eat it too, if that's what you choose to call it. Either way, it is still my cake. I think my plan is better than the county's plan, but as far as they are concerned, it is not even a matter to discuss.

What I want is a modest home, as an auxiliary unit to the farm, not a separate lot. It would be a rental that comes with horse facilities, riding privileges. I can situate it so it improves the farm and not destroy it. I'd rent it to a teacher or a state trooper to keep the poachers out, maybe. The income would be more than the rest of the farm makes, and enough to offset the other losses. When the farm is sold it would transfer with the farm and continue to make the farm more affordable than otherwise.

I would incorporate green features in the house. But under the county plan, I can't afford to do anything. I'd have to get investors or a

developer, or both to meet all the requirements, and, just as EMR found, they aren't likely to agree to anything strange, expensive, untried, or "green" that doesn't meet their market analysis. And they would insist on maximizing their short term profits, meaning as many homes as possible as large as possible. I'd wind up with something I don't want and they would get most of the money.

There are several farms near me with as many as four auxiliary units, and they do quite nicely. The reason they are able to do it is that those units were built before the zoning laws. Some of them are ostensibly over a hundred or even two hundred years old, although you couldn't tell it now.

Once upon a time, we could have done the same. But those rights were taken when zoning came along. Since then the remaining rights have been whittled away on three separate occasions. But, those that used their rights when they existed can still prosper because of it. It's a case of those that preserve the land the longest get punished the most.

I have no doubt whatsoever that there are people out there working up for the next round in the woodshed. So when you look at the rash of crash building going on in Loudoun, (quick before the rules change again) its no wonder.

If it is really and truly a matter of costs, then figure out what they are and send me a bill so I can make plans or decide not to.

If it is a matter of costs that are not "fair", then lets work on that.

But don't use that as an excuse to say that someone else can't do something just because we all hate (more, not our own) development.

If you have a new drainage requirement that uses up four of my building lots, then why not allow more building on the remainder, the net

density remaining the same, or let me sell the building rights? Why just take them with no recompense? It's because it has nothing or little to do with drainage and everything to do with the fact that we don't want (more, not our own) development.

But don't do what Fauquier did, which is tell me, in writing, several times, what we are allowed to do, and then, after I spent money on their plan, say oops, sorry, now you can't do that, the door is closed.

 At [5:29 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: engineering/financial problem.

It's basically the cost of the infrastructure and who pays.

re: tax on income only - if this were done how would infrastructure costs be allocated because I doubt seriously that income tax only would come close to paying the actual infrastructure (but maybe they might).

re: "business taxes subsidize home taxes" - this is an Urban Legend.

think about this..

where do those business taxes come from?

They come from adding an extra fee to the sales of goods and services.

Businesses do not pay taxes - they pass ALL of them on to customers and what's left is Gross Profit.

However, you make a strong case with respect to rules and policies whose intent and impact is to make it difficult to develop your land and I don't disagree except to point out that the reason this is done is precisely because officials know that there is substantial financial exposure for infrastructure if they allowed you and others to develop.

Simply stated - they cannot afford to let you develop because if they did - they'd have to provide infrastructure that they don't know where the money would come from under the current tax regime.

I'd posit that if we had a road capitalization policy similar to many water/sewer policies that the restrictions against property development might ease because the financial liability issue itself would ease.

In other words - first there would be an "availability" fee - that would be the fee paid into a capital investment fund that would be used to expand capacity on the overall network. (similar to the "availability fee" on water/sewer).

Then each new home would have to pay their share of what it would take to upgrade the road to serve all the residences that would be ultimately built along that road. That cost could be computed by looking at the build-out potential then the amount of traffic generated.. then the design of the road necessary to move that traffic.

You would be allowed to develop your property once it was assured there was enough money to service the bond for the road improvements.

THIS IS THE ISSUE. WHO .. pays the bond to insure that adequate road capacity exists for development to proceed.

Developers do this all the time. They get a loan. They build the infrastructure. Then they sell subdivided land as fast as they can to recover their money so they can pay back the loan and recover their investment plus any profit.

What you're asking is that you and others be allowed to sell and develop land with no responsibility for the infrastructure impacts. You're, in essence, advocating that those costs are not your costs but someone else's costs.

There is nothing that prevents you and others around you from banding together in a limited partnership to offer a development plan to your supervisors that assures that infrastructure does not become a liability to

the county - more to the point - to county taxpayers.

The claim that we have a system where the "little guy" can't develop his land is really about those who want to develop property without having responsibilities for the infrastructure deficits that will result as a direct consequence.

At 6:00 AM,  Larry Gross said...

re: "Maybe he builds his own sewer plant and agrees to staff it with certified county personnel. But, if it is just a matter services and the provable costs thereof,"

There's problems with this approach.

1. - First, private water/sewer authorities go belly-up then what?

I'd only be in favor of this if those who connected had to be financially responsible under any/all scenarios and never the taxpayers.

2. - How do you allocate discharge permits into public waters?

Are you advocating treatment plants that do not discharge at all?

AT Lake Anna - in Spotsylvania County - there are folks who want water/sewer but because Dominion Power only releases a minimal amount of water - those folks cannot get a discharge permit.

So.. they want.. either someone to force the state to give them a permit (in essence pollute beyond acceptable limits).

OR.. they want the county to construct a 10 mile extension of water/sewer to serve their area - and of course they want the county and it's taxpayers to foot the bill...

It's been pointed out to them that they could undertake the expansion themselves as private investors but of course everyone knows that it's

not a profitable enterprise.

so.. they continue to lobby the county to give them "relief" ... which is in my mind disengenious because what they want is others to pay for what they want.

At 7:33 AM,  Larry Gross said...

My comments above probably sound more harsh than they should.

I AM sympathetic to the -unwarranted- imposition of abitrary rules that result in inequities.

but I maintain that these inequities are, in fact, responses to other inequities that result from development that occurs and results in infrastructure deficits.

The inequity is that taxpayers end up with both the Tax Bill AND impacts to quality of life as a direct result of degradation of levels of service due to development that not not pay it's own way with respect to infrastructure.

elected officials have essentially three choices:

1. raise property taxes as high as it takes to pay for any/all infrastructure that results from unfettered development.
2. allow infrastructure to degrade and deteriorate in terms of service while raising taxes only as much as they can get away with.
3. Place draconian, unfair and inequitable limits on infrastructure-dependent development to only what the locality can reasonably financially absorb... over time.

The answer to the bigger issue is to ensure that development does pay it's own way with regard to infrastructure to start with.

If existing policies don't ensure adequate provisioning of infrastructure in the first place - then bad stuff (inequities) flow downhill from taxpayers to individual property owners in the form of elections where those officials who raise the tax rate get voted out and replaced by those who promise to restrict growth.

Property owners who support reform to fix the infrastructure issue - help their own cause - and property owners that fight policies and laws to ensure adequate infrastructure - hurt their own cause - because in doing so - they perpetuate a continuation of policies that restrict property owners.

All of the above is quite obviously opinion - and I'm sure arguable but I hope it doesn't sound as harsh or uncaring as perhaps earlier posts have.

At 11:17 AM,  Ray Hyde said...

I think we are on the same page, mostly.

I agree with what you say about businesses supporting housing being an urban legend. My position is that one way or another all the bills that get paid are paid by someone who lives in a house: as you say businesses pass their costs back to us.

And all the taxes that get paid get paid out of income. My real estate doesn't pay the taxes, they come out of my pocket. We can push and shove and have user fees, and tax this, tax that, but they all come out of our pocket in the end. I don't see anything wrong with more of a user pays approach. Where I have a problem is when there is no relationship whatever between usage and charges, and no relationship between ability to pay and charges.

My county proudly claims I'm paying three times as much as I cost, and they don't see anything wrong with that! Those that have infrastructure

are pushing the costs off onto those of us that don't have it. And then

they claim we can't have it because THEY are paying too much already.

I have two roads out front that were built partially at the farm's expense over thirty years ago. You can play baseball on the street here. All that time the farm has been paying 300% of what it costs, plus giving land for the highway. And now you think I should pay more?

Maybe that's right. If so, send me the bill and get out of my way. But that isn't what is happening here. What is happening here is that they don't want development under any circumstances, anywhere, ever.

In areas where property values and taxes have gone up 20 times as fast as wages, something is going to have to give, eventually. One acre lots in Alexandria are going to become quarter acre lots, or townhouses or condos. But if development and subdivision is restricted because of the cost of infrastructure, people will have to move out. They can't subdivide, can't afford to stay, or housing isn't available, which amounts to the same thing.

But where will they move to if everywhere is restricted from development? Meanwhile the same thing is happening to people with fifty acre lots or two hundred acre lots. Eventually, you just can't afford it, and you have to downsize or move out.

Unless you are so wealthy it never makes a difference, which is what my local government wants. So they prohibit downsizing knowing that you will have to go and be replaced by someone wealthy. Which is exactly what my supervisor said to my face. It has nothing to do with infrastructure.

Yet it is exactly this urban legend that houses don't pay their costs that is used explicitly and frequently by the county and others to exclude

~~new building. My point is that if it is an urban legend then houses do~~

pay their way, and cost of infrastructure is an invalid argument.

If they don't pay their way, then it is at least partially unfair to push all the costs off on newcomers as impact fees, because some of the costs are really ours: our teenagers are now driving, etc. Some of the costs are just cost growth. Either way, if it is just a cost issue it does not justify saying no, permanently. It does justify raising the price and reallocating who pays for what.

We see this in planned communities. They have not assessed the present owners enough for their infrastructure so instead of raising the fees they added an initiation fee only to new residents. Stuff costs more so fees and taxes have to go up. Get used to it.

However, even though infrastructure is a real issue, and it must be paid for some way, that isn't the real reason for what is going on here. Here, they are deliberately creating a lack of infrastructure and then using it as a smokescreen to cover their actual intentions. And if it is an Urban legend that housing doesn't pay its own way, then county officials are outright lying about their reasons for preventing growth, because they use that argument frequently.

What is going on here is that those in power have decided that they don't want development, ever, under any circumstances, never. They are planning a Third Reich of conservation that they intend to last a thousand years.

One official said "Zoning only works so long as the body politic has the political will." Well, who does he think the body politic is? Another said, "My intention is to put land use on autopilot for the next twenty years."

So, their plan is to put as much land as possible into conservation easements so that their successors can NEVER undo the plans they

make. They are deliberately abdicating their authority for land use for themselves and their successors, to nongovernment agencies. It amounts to stealing the right to vote on land use issues from our grandchildren.

It is the reason they have PDR program but not a TDR program. They don't want the development anywhere, not even in the so called service districts. It is the reason they have reduced the size of the service districts and eliminated one entirely. It is the reason they plan to encircle the service districts with conservation greenbelts, so they can never grow when needed.

It is the reason they have succesively and continually abrogated previous promises made in order to take the sting out of earlier downzonings.

One of the required proffers is that in order to build on 15% of your land you must hand over a conservation easement on the other 85%. Since you are already forbidden by zoning to build on that 85%, no additional protection is needed or gained. The only reason for the permanent easement requirement is to ensure that the present government can dictate its policies from the grave. This requirement makes it clear that when they say growth management, what they mean is no growth, ever.

It is antidemocratic, and it is wrong. I shouldn't have to sign away permanently rights I already don't have and can't use, as a condition of using the rights I do have.

No growth is the reason the Marshall water supply has been a disgrace for thirty years. It is one thing to say we are temporarily out of water taps, or that new water taps are going to now cost twice as much because the cost of adding water service has doubled since the last expansion. It is something else to say we are not going to create any

more water taps, ever.

The only reason they are doing it now is that they have finally run out of excuses, the public is irate, it is a crisis situation and a public hazard. It is going to cost \$6 million, and that isn't nearly enough. They need to spend more like \$18 million. But if they had done it ten years ago it would have been \$3 million, and twenty years ago it would have been \$1 million.

They are deliberately creating a lack of infrastructure and then using that as an argument for preventing growth. Until very recently, their antipathy even to business was legendary.

Anyway, isn't the whole point of paying for infrastructure with bonds to push the payments out so the new people can help pay for them? I'm not going to live forever, but even if I did, in this county it might not be long enough. Meanwhile, they are wasting my assets and my time. Whoever the wealthy SOB who buys this place at a huge discount to its true worth, may wind up being the guy who makes another killing when he gets to subdivide it later.

That is exactly what happened to the original landowners on Martha's Vineyard. They got screwed by exactly what is going on here, but the second and third landowners made out big time.

 At [1:00 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

This isn't about infrastructure.

In the first place we have none here, unless you count the convenience dump site.

In the second place, right down the street from me a guy is building a house on a six acre lot, no problem. It is a by-right build.

I have six acres too, only mine is part of 170 acres. What is the

difference between him and me? The only difference is that the magalomaniacs that run this place have it their head that my 170 acres is important for some reason.

Fine, if it is that important, then show me the money. It's like Anne Mackin said in her article last year, "Don't zone the scenery, buy it."

 At 6:45 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

Ray - if your land is taxed by use, and it's similiar in concept to the land-use rate in Spotsy - it has to be quite small in comparison to other properties of that size that are not classified as "land-use" I would think.

Since you are restricted in developing it... I'd suspect that .. that also is reflected in it's appraised value.

You also would would be paid for placing some or all of it in a conservation easement.

If your land was not in "land-use" then your tax bill would be quite a bit higher.

Your elected officials and I emphasize the word "elected" have decided that the majority of the folks who have elected them do NOT want ... land developed more than one house per 50 acres except in designated service districts.

Va law actually REQUIRES local jurisdiction elected bodies to consider ALL proposals from landowners who want to develop their property beyond it's designated use - which they are - by Virginia Law required to designate.

Service districts can be expanded or created per proposals.

I think what your view is - is that you have land-owner rights that exist (or should exist) beyond what your local officials say.

But I don't think even you would want a county where everyone can do anything they want with property that they own.

You just want your own situation to be less restricted per your own wants.

I still think - the issue is infrastructure.

If you and others could develop your property so that it would not impact roads, schools, water supply, etc then there would be no need for restrictions.

It can be rationalized that allowing the development of one property won't materially affect the existing infrastructure but if all landowners were given the same right that you want then it's clear that collectively there WOULD be degradation of the infrastructure.

It is your view that somehow the cost to mitigate those impacts belongs to others - newcomers, existing residents, future residents.

My view is that without specifics - the end result will be degradation of the infrastructure - without a plan to keep it from degrading in the first place.

This is the same argument that TMT makes.

Until we have, embodied in law, specifics with regard to preservation of infrastructure as development proceeds then we're going to see inequitable approaches to land development - namely restrictions on land development.

And the reality is...that many of these inequitable approaches are perfectly legal if they are approved by elected officials .. with the remedy being - to vote them out if those policies are not agreed to by a majority of voters.

The reality is that Adequate Public Facilities even without the explicit law is.. in fact, being implemented via other methods.

 At [2:09 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Larry, the county tells me according to their own figures that farms pay 3X what they cost. I haven't seen the figures, and I'm not sure I would believe them if I did. They say, that is why they need to preserve the farms, because they make so much money off of them.

I say, if you want to save the farms, then why are you ripping them off to support the development you don't want. Their argument makes no sense.

I don't know of anybody with land of any size that doesn't do whatever it takes to be in land use. There is considerable fraud involved, so I hear. Comparing it to something else is meaningless.

The real tax is that I can't live my life as I please, here. My neighbor building his house apparently can.

No, the restrictions are not reflected in the appraised value. It is appraised at full value, and then the costs are waived in favor of land use. If land use ends, they back charge me at the full rate for five years, even though I never had the benefit of the use for those five years.

No, it is not certain that my tax bill would be higher if it was not in land use. A California tax accountant studied Fauquier as a case study and concluded that land owners in general pay higher taxes because of land use, as well as many farms. It depends on how many structures and what infrastructure your farm has. Wineries and Dairies get hit hard.

No, I would lose money by placing it in a conservation easement. I do not qualify for the counties purchase program at this time. I make too

much money and the farm too little. I could give away an easement and take the tax credit, but I don't earn enough to take the tax credit in the allotted time. I can sell the tax credits at a discount to someone who has more income than I. Under that scenario I give up the value of the land or discount it, and then I give up more value by selling the credits. It is a fools game.

Selling the credits or the easements is a capital gains event, and it reduces your basis in the property. The property may not actually sell for less money, in which case you will pay capital gains again, against the lower basis. 30% net tax is a fools game.

I'm better off to not use the easement. When the place is sold to someone really wealthy, he can use it and get a bigger break. It is a sales incentive, consequently the ability to place an easement is more valuable than placing it.

These are little details the easement mongers fail to advertise.

My elected officials have accepted the idea accepted by the majority of folks that stealing is OK. That treating a guy with a large lot different from the guy next door with a small lot is OK. If those people don't want land developed at more than one house per fifty acres, then why do so many of them live on one acre? If that is what they want, there is an already legal and accepted method to get what they want. They can buy it.

The fact that my elected official is unethical and pandering to mob rule in favor of protecting the legitimate interests of a numerical minority is my problem, but it isn't my fault.

The actual fact is that even if that isn't what the people who elected him want, that is what he wants. He has told me to my face he would

~~like to see me replaced with someone wealthy. I don't think that is a~~

legitimate government interest, elected or not.

I'm not asking to develop it beyond its designated use. I'd actually like less. All I'm asking is that I not have additional requirements placed on me that my neighbor, currently building doesn't have, merely because of what is left after I build.

Virginia Law may require them to consider it. But I and others, so I understand, have been told, don't bother to ask. In point of fact, the fees and cost required are so High I couldn't afford to anyway.

No, I'm claiming nothing beyond what I have been told by officials. In fact I have them in writing, but the current administration refuses the information I have.

I have land, I have building rights, I can't use them. My neighbor has land, has a building right, he is using it. The sole difference is the size of the remaining parcel.

He is not required to make any commitment, proffer, payments, or further promises with regard to the land he builds on. He can build a house on it today, and next year come back and request a business license for that site. He might not get it, but he can ask. He is not required to make any commitment, proffer, payment or further promises for any other property he may own.

I see no reason why I should be treated any different from him, and that is the only thing I ask.

This is not an infrastructure issue. It is a by right development in both cases. Neither of us have water supply, the roads here are little used. You would have to go at least ten miles from here any time of day or night to encounter congestion. The roads wouldn't even be here except they were built on land already provided by the farm. I have no

children, and never have. Between that and the 300% the county claims I'm paying, I think I've paid more than enough. My tenant might have children, but he will be a Fauquier resident already, most likely. Net increase in infrastructure required - none.

This has nothing whatsoever to do with infrastructure, at least not in this case. Besides which, as a by right development that should already have been considered. The county is making no claims on my neighbor, and all I want is the same.

I agree with what you say about incrementalism. I can't see that everyone before me is entitled to their incrementalism and I'm not. They congest my raos as much as I congest theirs. Seems fair to me.

This has nothing to do with infrastructure.

There is only one issue here. The current administration wishes to restrict the property in such a way that the rules are no longer subject to vote. So that no vote by any number of voters can ever overturn their decision.

Unlike my neighbor who is allowed to build with no further concessions on the part of any of his property, I am not allowed to build unless I grant this permanent concession. It won't matter whether we ever achieve a fair way of paying for infrastructure or not, whoever owns this place will never be able to participate in the wealth that growth generates for everyone else.

You are right it may be inequitable and legal. I think it is not only inequitable, its unethical, un-american, and it is stealing, but it is still legal.

Slavery was legal too, but that didn't make it right. Call me an abolitionist with respect to land inequity. I'm not a property rights

fanatic, all I want is to use the rights I have, and which the county  
agress I have.

Can't do it. Not allowed. Not unless I agree to extortion that my  
neighbor didn't have to agree to. Extortion specifically designed to  
prevent exactly the kind of democratic action you propose.

I suppose my supervisor means well. But he is worse than Bloody  
Nicholas the Tsar. Like Nicholas he has not the imagination to  
understand the harm he is doing to his people in order to preserve the  
old ways. There is a river of blood, sweat, tears, and cash flowing out  
here simply because he and his henchmen want something they don't  
not own and are not willing to bargain in good faith for.

You can join him in rationalizing this any way you want. It is still wrong.  
It is wrong, wrong, wrong.

I'm here every day, and I know what it means. There are things here I'd  
like to preserve and protect, but I can't. I've seen what it means to old  
people living in poverty surrounded by land that's of no use to them.

This has nothing to do with APF. This is sheer, single-minded, open  
space, conservation dogma being deployed by a handful of powerful  
people who could care less about anyone else but themselves. Who  
have forgotten that they are governing people, not just land. People  
who offer nothing and take much.

Just because it legal.

It makes me want to throw up. And I'm a conservationist. I just don't  
happen to believe that the ends justifies the means, no matter how  
base, cruel, or ignoble. As you say "other methods".

And not only does he want to use these means, he wants the result to  
last forever. He specifically wants the voters, the democratic process,

and the body politic out of it. Frankly, I don't think he or the rest of the government put together are smart enough to know what's best for the farm tomorrow, let alone in a hundred years.

Apparently, anyone who has an opinion has one that counts more than mine, but I'm the one carrying the load. Recently one of my wife's friends remarked how good the place was getting to look. And it is, slowly, no thanks to my supervisor, the county, or anyone who claims they are in favor of saving "our" open spaces or "our" agricultural heritage or whatever tripe they want to trot out. I know my wife's friend has less money than we do, otherwise I'd have said, thanks, glad you enjoyed the show, send a check.

You can have your infrastructure arguments, your inequitable approaches to development, your APF, your specifics, your other methods.

But when the bottom line is still wrong, cynically achieved, byzantine, unethical, and unfair, don't plan on getting either respect or accolades from me.

I'll reserve that for my neighbor down the street, working like a mule on his house, and doing the job finestkind, as they say in New England. Using real materials and doing it the old traditional way. I'll probably help him and maybe have a beer. I'm happy for him, and I hope he enjoys it.

Maybe someday he'll be able to return the favor.

 At 7:06 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

"It is appraised at full value"

Questions: What is FULL value?

If the land-use tax is based on it's current use.. then what "use" is the

one that requires full taxation and loss of the "land use" status?

why would they have a much higher appraisal level if the land will NEVER be able to be developed?

re: elections - right/wrong/fair/equity

they're not connected necessarily.

If the public thinks it's elected officials are not doing a good job with growth (regardless of specifics)...they can ...and sometimes are voted out.

The Reverse works also. If a county has a LOT of landowners who feel that their rights are being abridged - the solutions is to change the elected officials.

Hearings are also opportunities to make public statements about the issues - fairness and equity - and to educate the wider public as to why current policies should be changed - to build support for change - even if it has to be done via elections....

I know it works. Two examples:

1. - Local supervisors were summarily thrown out of office at the last election for their irresponsible actions (in the minds of the public) with respect to growth.
2. - The new board attempted to put severe restrictions on Family Subdivisions - and the resulting furor resulted in the issue being elevated so that all voters could see the unfairness of what was being proposed and it went down to defeat.

Even newcomers concerned about growth had to admit that such restrictions were wrongheaded and hurt ordinary people whose only way of obtaining affordable housing was being taken away.

So.. my advice.. look into the Family Subdivison Ordinance. :-)

 At [7:15 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

Ray - I simply don't believe that officials would restrict landowner rights just so they can maintain the "viewscape".

Ultimately - it's all about what the county would look like if it grew the same way that it's neighboring counties grew - and your elected officials have decided that most folks who live in your county do NOT want it to look like neighboring counties.

And the difference - has a LOT to do with infrastructure - in terms of where it is and isn't.. what it looks like and who pays for it and how it gets paid for.

There is hardly any jurisdiction that can demonstrate that growth "benefits" communities per se and especially so with counties that basically are population repositories for folks who have jobs in other jurisdictions because those counties get all the headaches of growth and none of the benefits of the jobs.

I fundamentally believe that landowners "rights" are subject to their neighbors "rights" and do not take precedence and the way that such issues are resolved is through elections.

Ownership of land does not grant unfettered use of that land and I suspect that almost no one would agree that it should. Almost everyone will want restrictions - and so it becomes a community issue - again - resolved by voting.

 At [12:17 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Ownership of land does not grant unfettered use of that land, and I never said it did. But the fact that new neighbors now have land

ownership does not grant unfettered fetteration of land they don't own, either. That is just crazy thinking.

And, to the extent that land use was already fettered by, for example, a stated limit to the number of development rights, how can you then claim that a proposed use within the limits of that prior fetteration is unfettered use? That is totally irrational.

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But here is where you are going in a circle. You believe the landowner's rights are subject to their neighbors' rights. Doesn't that cut both ways? Aren't the new neighbor's rights also subject to the landowners (previous) rights? Didn't the neighbors living on small lots already use their development rights? Aren't they using them and enjoying them and gaining appreciation from them? Isn't it the landowner that has lost his view while the homeowners enjoy the one he provides? Aren't they the ones who first imposed growth on him?

The neighbors don't need their rights protected: they've already got them. The landowner needs his rights protected, because all he's got is a piece of paper (Three in my case). Promises that aren't worth the word and honor of the elected officials that made them. If anything it is the neighbors rights that have taken precedence over the landowners. And they are asserting new ones that could never have existed previously as well.

No dice on that argument. It is entirely circular.

You want to eliminate development rights? Fine, eliminate the development rights of the new neighbors along with the landowners, and send the neighbors back where they came from. Then see who hollers the loudest and who talks about precedence.

Oh, you can't really do that, now they have a vested interest in bricks and mortar. Yeah well, before they came I had a vested interest in honor and integrity, in promises made and kept. They have a vested interest in THEIR bricks and mortar. They have no vested interest in mine. But if my development rights are fungible, so are theirs. They outnumber me, but their rights don't outnumber mine.

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I can understand why you are incredulous. It took me fifteen years to really understand. Trust me, this is all true.

Your question is a valid one. What IS the land use that the full taxation is based on? Here is the answer: NO USE.

I pay full tax if I don't farm it, and I'm still prohibited from any other use. I would pay full tax for the privilege of sitting here and watching it revert to jungle. If I do use the land for farming, I get a lower tax rate on the farmland, but my total tax paid is still higher than residences pay. I pay the same tax on the value of my residence and two acres as anybody else with a similar home on two acres. But, they can sell their home and two acres at will, and I cannot. In addition to my residential tax, I pay tax on the farmland, fees to enroll in the program, and tax on farm structures and vehicles, farm sales and employment taxes. I pay the same tax on farm structures as any similar structure, even if that structure would make more money if it were not on the farm.

In exchange for my farming activities the county makes a net tax expenditure of about \$5000. In other words, I can afford to farm it so long as my operating losses don't exceed \$5000. Otherwise, I'm better off to do nothing and pay the tax, and better off still if I just sell the farm. Not surprisingly, the average farm loses around \$2000.

The land is assessed at full value. I'm not sure how that is determined,

but it is a lot of money, far more than the farm can ever be expected to pay taxes on. It has to do with what other properties of similar size have sold for, same as other real estate. There is a real but small market for these properties among people who are willing to pay just to have the land. But, it can take years to dispose of a multimillion-dollar property.

There are a lot of people who are affluent, but not so many that actually have real money, as I learned when I was raising venture capital. Money doesn't sit around: people have to put it somewhere to work, and then they don't have it to spend. People who have that kind of money are too smart to put it in a highly restricted farm property that won't make money.

Beyond them, there is another, 10X, class. These are the people that have so much, that the farm losses are insignificant. They can even afford to deliberately lose more money on the farm, putting chandeliers in the horse barn and such, because otherwise the feds will take it anyway. These are places with a staff of fifty to run a hundred acre farm, including a couple of accountants and lawyers, maybe a publicist, plus the grooms, the muckboys, groundskeepers, wait staff, the hounds man, and the personal shopper and assistant. They can afford nearly anything they desire, but they are not stupid.

The land is worth much more in aggregate, to more people and a larger market of them, when it is offered in sizes that real people can actually afford. If the land was less restricted or unrestricted, those who are willing to own large properties at a loss would have to compete with more people and they would have to pay a higher price to get what they want. They support restrictions because they are not stupid.

As a result, land restrictions are a direct subsidy to the few really wealthy buyers that exist. As the comment my supervisor revealed, that

is the true reason for land restrictions, so the wealthy residents he prefers to me can buy more for less. Land restrictions increase the profit of developers, and they are a secondary subsidy to those that already own ordinary houses. But they are a killer to those that want a new home, and those that own land. The newcomers are not voters yet, and the landowners that wish to develop are few in number compared to the population. They are on the political outside or in the small minority.

After the land is assessed a full value, whatever market it is in, there is another process under which some committee assesses various lands, topography, soil types, water availability, and agricultural prices and then determine how much the land can theoretically earn based on that use. Typically it is around \$400 per acre, although I have never earned that much.

The Fauquier agriculture agent has said that a soybean farmer here might make \$75 per acre, before equipment and labor costs. I do better than that with hay, and it is a better cash crop and requires less expensive equipment, so I don't grow soybeans, or corn. I'm really only suitable for pasture land, and no one else around here grows soybeans either, which pretty much suggests its a bad idea.

However, if I did, I might eventually qualify for crop subsidies. Now you are talking real money. The ten largest farms in the county get around \$80,000 a year in subsidies each, and the 20 largest get almost all the subsidies that are paid. I'm an average size, not large, but bigger than many. I could go that route, but it is not easy. Again, 5-year history is a prerequisite to join the club, and you still may never get a tee time.

I could do cattle or horses, but I'd need water supplies and fences to the tune of 100k or so, plus barns for the horses. (more taxes) Then I'd have

to deal with the horse boarders, and the insurance company. This is actually doable, but I'd have to give up my other income and work full time for a lot less money. Retirement job, maybe. With the responsibility for animals, you need a full time sitter. All you need is for someone to hit one of your escaped cows with their car, and they will own the farm.

So, what happens is that I get taxed on 2 acres and my house just as if it was a lot I could sell, same as anybody else (although I can't actually sell it of course). The rest of it is assessed at somewhere between \$3000 and \$10,000 per acre depending on where you are and a handful of other large lot sales. Call it \$5000 per acre, and my tax on the vacant land only, is \$6700, plus another \$3000 or so for the house.

But the tax on the vacant land is deferred not eliminated, provided that I farm and can prove that I do so, and all I have to actually pay is \$587 dollars on the vacant land, based on farm use, plus the \$3000 or so I would pay if I was anyplace else. So I pay the regular tax, plus a 17% surcharge for the vacant land, only so long as I farm it. Plus another \$300 filing fee to remain in the program. Plus tax on the barns and sheds. So it is really a 40% surcharge over and above my residential taxes just for the privilege of busting my butt and making very little money farming.

But it is still \$5000 less than the tax on the fair market value of a residence with a 170 acre back yard.

For most people, the way it works out in practice is that the farm can afford to lose around \$5000 a year and still come out ahead over where you would be if you just paid the taxes. In order to have that privilege, you must show a nominal farm income, not profit, of \$1000 per year.

I do a lot better than that, but it's the first thousand that is hard. In my

case it means three tractors, four trucks, two mowers, two balers, haywagons, rakes, assorted other equipment, sheds to keep them in, and all the tools and skills to keep them working. Call it \$200,000 dollars, and I'm using antique equipment. Real equipment costs a lot more.

Its the first thousand dolars thats hard because you have to also bring in enough to amortize that \$200k. After that is is just time, fuel, and labor.

All that premium (\$1200 or so in addition to residential tax) is pure profit to the county: no additional services are required or supplied for that money. As I said, the county claims the premium across all farmers is 300% of what they cost. Some farms have much better barns etc. Dairies and wineries really get hammered, because of their infrastructure.

As soon as I gross \$1000 dollars, the smart thing to do is stop work, before you break something. Take the money and run. That is what many people do, and I'm sure there is considerable funny business on transactions regarding the required farm income vouchers. It is basically a fraud, in that case.

It's the first \$1000 that's hard though, and I find that once I've invested in equipment, labor and fuel, that I might as well keep going and get what I can. The operating profit is small, but at least it is something and it pays the help, provides a job. I play fair and try to improve a little each year. No cheating on the income or expenses, and I send in the sales taxes required, though I'm sure many don't. My trucks are licensed, inspected and insured.

But, operating profit doesn't include the value of renting the land. If you count that, then there is no profit and never will be. Not at these

land prices.

If I stop farming, then the deferral is reversed for five years retroactively and I would owe \$33,000 for the privilege of deciding to do nothing (or something else) in the future, even though I actually farmed during that period for which the deferral is revoked.

That would more than undo all the operating profit I ever had, AND the county wants to increase it to ten years of rollback. The punishment will continue until morale improves. We'll make it so expensive to stop, that they HAVE to farm.

One retiring farmer said that it's a hard business to get into, a hard one to stay in, and a hard one to get out of. Again, the rollback it is all pure profit to the county because I'm already paying the same tax as anyone else, and they haven't paid for any more services during the rollback period. If I stop farming in order to develop, then they are going to want proffers for services and infrastructure ( that they don't really provide and don't have), plus the rollback.

In order to make my small operating profit, the farm drops another \$10 to \$25 k a year on the local economy, in addition to our living expenses. The usual economic multiplier is 3X so that's another \$75k benefit to the county.

Because of the "Tax break" which actually costs me \$1200 extra, and the rollback, you really must farm and keep farming. There isn't any way out, so that \$10-25k a year might as well be a farm user fee or tax. Like a user fee, you do get stuff for the money, but you have little choice as to whether to spend it or not, or what to spend it on.

OR, I can grant an easement, stop farming, and get the same land use taxation. All my costs and labor of farming go away, and I can do something else, maybe. Probably the easement would prevent that, too

unless I go somewhere else to do it. I could convert the barn to a boat shed and turn out a few boats every year for more money. But that is manufacturing, not farming, and I'm not zoned for it.

There is another problem. The easement is forever, but the county does not guarantee land use taxation is forever. It's an asymmetric deal that you would have to be an utter fool to accept. When the tax on regular land gets high enough, those voters are going to insist that those wealthy landowners stop getting that huge land use tax subsidy, even though it isn't. If there is a real revenue crunch the county is going to start looking around. Not only that, but most people, including some farmers do pay higher taxes because of the land use deferment. There is legitimate room to gripe.

Now, economic conditions have changed over the last thirty years. Land values have doubled and doubled again, but the money from using the land is still only \$400 per acre, and the premium I pay over my residential tax is still only \$1200. Every year the land use subsidy gets bigger and bigger and the supposed "cost" to other taxpayers gets higher and higher and they get more and more restive. Remember, it is still vacant land we are talking about that really infers no higher costs once the residential portion is paid. The real costs to those taxpayers is the cost of their own services, but now they think they can spread their costs across more residential land.

Want to bet your land easement that land use taxation will continue into eternity? I wouldn't. Especially when taxation can be changed at the polls, but the easement cannot. And the easement is like the land. The longer you wait the more it is worth, so why rush?

But it gets back to your question, what land use is the full tax based on? If those residents now expect to cut the rate for their services by spreading it out over more vacant residential priced land, it won't be

farmland long.

If I get hurt or ill and can't farm, tough luck, go try and find someone who will work it for you. Otherwise, that will be \$33,000 dollars, please. Payable immediately. If you get well and go back into the program, there is an entry fee and a five-year waiting period. And all of that is free money to the county because you still have to pay the same tax as anybody else, as well as the farm related taxes and expenses.

That is the real tax story. So, regular tax same as anyone else, plus 40% premium, plus a major contribution to the local economy, not required by others. No possibility of competing in a free market, 1500 hours of low paid work, And no benefits from the county going the other way.

Good deal, huh?

Well OK try this. The tax deferment is really the money that the county "pays you" for the services you provide by farming: for having your land restricted to farming. If you accept that argument, it is a poison pill, because it implies that other restrictions and services should be paid for, too.

This is the only conclusion you can draw from the introduction of PDR's and TDR's. That much is settled.

Now it's like the question, "When did you stop beating your wife?" only now its more like "What date will you choose to stop cheating our neighbors: before you rob them or after?"

 At [9:29 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: "But here is where you are going in a circle. You believe the landowner's rights are subject to their neighbors' rights. Doesn't that cut both ways? Aren't the new neighbor's rights also subject to the landowners (previous) rights?"

No.

It boils down to a majority vote unless your "right" is explicit in the Virginia Constitution.

Restrictions on land can and do change and evolve according to what is determined to be in the public interest from the view of legislators, local elected officials, and .. yes.. neighbors.

Rights also do not remain static and unchangeable. New laws happen.

I think we're confusing fairness with "rights" or to put it another way - you believe if something is not fair (in your own mind) then your "rights" have been taken away.

And that would be true but it doesn't change the fact that it's legal and, at least, in part, determined - again - by what is deemed to be in the public interest.

Everytime a new ordinance that affects what you can do on your land is passed - your previous "rights" have been abridged.

For instance, a noise ordinance is passed .. and your logic is that because you had a previous right to make unrestricted noise - even if it seriously affected your neighbors that a new ordinance to restrict you is wrong and/or illegal.

That's simply not true.

If enough of your neighbors think that in the process of exercising your rights - you end up infringing on their rights - they can and will have new laws passed.

This happens all the time.

The State and your local officials, can, at any time, in fact, come in and

acquire any or all of your property paying you only for what it is deemed to be worth NOW.. completely independent of it's potential future worth.

Again.. what is thought to be fair - is subjective ... and varies according to individual views - and what is legal "right" are two entirely different things.

 At 9:43 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: "You want to eliminate development rights? Fine, eliminate the development rights of the new neighbors along with the landowners"

The guy who buys a 1/4 lot or a townhouse has virtually NO development rights because they've bought a "developed" property.

They have no property rights - at least the kind that you are alluding to - right?

They can't subdivide their property. They cannot build convert their townhouse into apartments or a high rise. They can't operate a pizza shop out of their living room. They cannot add a room, etc, etc,

I think your beef is with respect to owners of UNDEVELOPED properties where there is disparity between what level of development can (or cannot) occur with respect to ALL undeveloped properties no matter whether they exist in counties, districts, jurisdictions, etc.

What I'm asserting is that the State and Localities not only have the legal right to designate acceptable uses for property but they can change those uses.

Would you agree that the state has this legal right - regardless of whether you think it is "fair" or not.

Aren't you essentially arguing that the law itself is "not fair"?

 At [9:54 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: "The land is assessed at full value. I'm not sure how that is determined, but it is a lot of money, far more than the farm can ever be expected to pay taxes on."

I think your county is vulnerable on this.

If your land is not developable then on what basis is the appraisal?

I successfully argued to the tax guys in my property that their appraisal of land that I owned that was in the 100 year flood plain could not be built on and therefore it's value was not the same as a buildable lot.

Ditto with the remainder of the lot. They only value one acre with improvements - the rest is assessed at a much lower value even without a land-use designation.

 At [5:46 PM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

Let's go 180 degrees on the growth/land-owner rights condundrum.

Say the BOS REZONES a whole bunch of land from Ag/rural to high-density residential/commercial - for any owner of undeveloped land.

Let's stipulate further than the BOS states up-front that no proffers will be required because doing so would unfairly put some land-owners at a disadvantage - compared to professional (wealthy) developers.

So - a totally level playing field for all.

Let's call this mythical county Alterfacquier. ( I thought Ray would like this "touch" - :- ) )

What would be the outcome in terms of infrastructure - schools and roads?

It's the fear that development will occur without at least MAINTAINING

the existing infrastructure levels and that more than likely school and roads would suffer very serious degradation.

Citizens would then fear destruction and degradation of their community and in all likelihood... throw every one of the BOS out of office at the next election at which point... they would do whatever they could to put restrictions on whoever and however...without regard to what would be fair or equitable - because the goal would be to undo as much damage as they could.. wherever such opportunities existed.

This is what I believe drives the restrictions ..... and until the issue about how to maintain infrastructure and levels of service are addressed - widespread support of restrictions will continue.

And note - I'm not advocating one direction or the other as right or fair or even legal but rather the WHY behind restricting property rights.

If we understand the WHY then opportunity exists for both landowners and those that fear growth to AGREE on how to go forward.

 At 11:25 PM,  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

Yes laws can and do change. But when Oregon changed their rules back, then the shoe was on the other foot and the environmentalists screamed bloody murder that their rights were being abrogated.

Essentially Oregon went to the polls twice and agreed that property owners should be compensated when property rights are removed.

Albemarle is proposing a plan where som compensation can be obtained after development rights are removed. Loudoun has flipped from no growth to growth to half no growth.

It seem to me, that we are slowly moving toward recognizing intangible property as real property, same as we do intellectual property.

If that is your position, then you can't very well complain when the

board plants a subdivision next to you, can you? The board will have deemed that it is in the best public interest, and our complaints against growth are over.

You cannot argue for fewer rights for someone else and not expect that will result in fewer rights for yourself. Watch what happens over that new power line to Aldie, and see who is claiming rights.

The guy with a quarter acre lot or one acre lot absolutely as development rights: the ones he already used, the ones he is enjoying by living on, the ones that are appreciating in value while his neighbor is cut out of the market. He can buy or sell his one acre lot on the open market with no interference. If he has a hundred one acre lots he can buy or sell any or all of them at will. There is little or no likelihood that will change, because we agree as to what it is he has purchased.

A landowner may buy land with a hundred development rights, and pay a commensurate price today, and see those rights disappear tomorrow. Wouldn't you agree that the market trades those properties with some expectation as to what it is they are buying?

But by your argument we could, for example, say to the one acre lot owners (with enough votes behind you) OK, you still own your lot, but you no longer have the right to sell it. We, the BOS have decided that more open space is in the public interest, and henceforth you will only be able to sell your property if two of you band together and sell two adjacent lots, tearing down or vacating one of the homes.

Based on your argument would you think such an ordinance would be fair, or legal? You haven't taken anything, you only require that some things no longer be used. The owners are still allowed to sell into a certain market.

It's not a perfect analogy, but you think tht would be OK? The guy with the 100 acres an a hundred development rights thought he bought certain things, but the rules changed. The one acre homeowner thought they bought certain things, but the rules changed.

And you really think that would be all right? To me, that is a scary thought.

I have in my possession three separate letters from the county, obtained over a period of years. The letters describe the county's position on what my development rights are, based ont the particulars of my property and its history in the records office. It is the county that determines land use issues (I have a letter from the governor that says so.)

Why should my land rights exist only in the VA constitution, if the county controls them? And once the county has written them down, then why can't I expect to take the county at its word, and make plans accordingly? Why should they be any more fungible that your right to sell your house?

Doesn't our complaint against growth boil down to complaining that the BOS has allowed change which we think (evidently not them, or the people who elected them) conflicts with our previous "right" to a certain quality of life? If you think you have that right, where are the letters describing what they are and why they are not fungible?

I don't think this argument is defensible, and worse it is self defeating. The only way to protect your rights against growth is to also protect similar rights that support growth.

Go look at the arguments against that proposed power line, and then explain to me how they are justified, based on your argument.

It is written into the constitution that if you take property for public

use, you must pay for it. It is written into law that property is a bundle of sticks. If you take one of my sticks then you have taken all of that stick, and you should pay me for it.

I'm asserting that local governments are breaking the law, and that no one has successfully called them on the carpet for it, yet. There is the case of the guy that bought beach lots in SC, zoned for beach houses. After he bought the lots, the county said, no more beach houses. He sued, in the Supreme Court, and won.

As far as I'm concerned, that puts an end to the argument. Building rights are actual property, part of the bundle of sticks. The county has the right to take them, but just compensation must be paid. End of story.

What we have now, is a situation where local governments are to use your words "using other means" to avoid the spirit and intent of law provided by the Supreme Court.

So far, they are able to do that because it is nearly impossible to get standing to sue. In other words they are deliberately and knowingly being unfair, unethical, and probably illegal, simply because they can get away with it.

In Oregon peopel simply got fed up with it and said, no, you can't do that anymore, and you must give thos you have already cheated an opportunity for an appeal with teeth in it. Likewise, there is another bill in Congress designed to make it easier to get standing to sue and to clarify what is property and what is fungible.

If that rule change comes to pass, then based on your argument, I expect you would have no complaint.

In Oregon Landowners once had unfettered property rights. For the last

thirty years environmental groups pretty much had unfeathered rights to interfere with the previous rights. Now the citizens have ordered the state, twice mind you, to reinforce the idea of what property is and when compensation can/must be made.

So three different rules, over time. In Virginia every county has its own rules and enforces them to varying degrees. So different rules over different spaces.

Bertand Russell once commented that there were several hundred religions in the world, each claiming to be the one true faith. he observed that "At most, one of them is correct."

The Supreme court has said don't steal, The constitution says don't steal, and the ten commandments say don't steal.

What I hear you saying is that it is OK to steal at the county level depending on how you define stealing and how many votes you have.

Nobody who thinks that way is getting my vote. But if they do get elected and they do something you don't like, I don't want to hear about it, after all, they were elected.

 At [1:46 AM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

The basis of appraisal is the same as for other properties. That is, what similar properties have sold for. As I explained, such large properties seldom sell, and when they do it is frequently headline news, locally. They sell into an entirely different market and to different clientele than the average home, and there is much less to find in terms of comparable sales. Consequently it is more likely there will be errors, that the errors will be on the down side, and that the owners are powerful political figures, who can effectively protect their interests.

It has been publicly stated in a number of publications that one reason

Fauquier has been successful with strong anti-growth rules is that it is because it is home to dozens of the wealthiest people in the state. Anti-growth laws are frequently attacked as elitist for a reason. Exclusive zoning is illegal for a reason, but that doesn't mean that officials of a certain mind set are not willing to skate on the edge, especially if it helps their biggest donors.

So yes, the property is appraised with building rights, even if there are other reasons you can't use them. (Steep slope, bad soil wetlands, outrageous proffers, insufficient open space contribution, and rollback bills). I agree the county is vulnerable if they are appraising me for more than it is worth. The only difference I would add is that if the county caused it to be worth less, then not only should it be assessed at less, but I should be compensated for the amount of the loss. The county must have caused that loss for a reason that benefits the county.

The county apparently considers the activity of farming as being a public benefit, so they will offer a lower appraisal provided you engage in farming and keep being engaged in farming.

At one time the property had a hundred building rights which were not being used, (and were in little danger of being used, there being no market). The property was engaged in farming and taxed on the basis of a hundred lots, (even if the lots had little value.)

Subsequently, the building rights were vastly reduced through downzoning and consequently the building rights were much more valuable. In addition a market for them was developing, and that drove the values higher still.

In such a market you would be nuts to farm and farms disappeared at a rapid clip. The county found that in order to repair some of the damage it caused by screwing with the market, that it needed to subsidize

farming through lower tax rates. That didn't really work either, so the county resorted to "other methods" to prohibit the use of the remaining development rights, and simply hiding this fact under the cloak of lower farm taxes.

It isn't clear that either the owners or the county is better off.

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I have not been successful with either of your arguments. Half of my Fairfax lot is underwater but it's appraised as one lot, regardless.

You think that if I built a huge lake on the farm, it would be appraised at less? I could put it all underwater and pay nothing, because it isn't buildable? Typically ponds add value, even though they can't be built on. Looks to me like you pulled a fast one.

But doesn't your argument say exactly what I have been saying? Say You have land and there is no wetland definition. It is worth one price, and You can still use the wetland, if ou can find a way. Now, we have a new wetland definition and you can no longer use the wetland for anything, and you have argued successfully that now your property is worth less, and you should be taxed less (even if you weren't using the wetland). I imagine if the rules change and they redefine the wetland larger, then you could go back and argue successfully that your property is now worth even less still.

I would argue that Fairfax is right. I had one lot, it had one development right, it had some unbuildable wetland. But there was land that was still buildable, and I used that to build the home.

When I bought the land, I knew that some of it was under water and in the flood plain, and I knew it had one building right. Appraisals are based on sales, and sales are based on what you get. I knew what I was

getting, and I can't see that I now have any right to turn around and

claim the land should be appraised at less than fair market (what I paid for it) because there is water on it. It was there when I bought it.

If I was your neighbor I'd complain to the assessor that such a tactic is effectively raising my taxes: you shouldn't be allowed to change the basis of the valuation of your property retroactively, (and neither should the county).

But, after I built my home, new setback rules for streambeds were announced. Had I not already built, those new setbacks would have eliminated my building right.

(The setbacks are screwy because they are figured in feet, and don't count elevation, or runoff. My home is built on solid stone. There is exactly the same runoff after construction as before. Because of the elevation there is no safety issue regarding flooding.) In this particular case, the reasons we use setbacks wouldn't really or logically apply, but because a new rule is a new rule, put there by the voters who know best about everything that is a public benefit, I would have still lost that house, had it not already been built.

In that case the new wetland rule really would have reduced the value of my property. So here you are, arguing successfully that your wetland reduces the value of your property, property you live on and enjoyed the development of.

But yet, you would say the county would have had a perfect right to eliminate my house/development right. I'd have no right to complain, let alone get recompense for the things I thought I bought, and then suddenly didn't have, simply because the rule was publicly supported.

Maybe I misunderstand. Is your situation such that the wetland really prevents you from developing where you might have otherwise? Or is it simply on part of your lot that you didn't build on, like mine? Might you

have had two lots otherwise?

This is very strange thinking to me. The reason we protect wetlands is that they provide a public benefit. You claim that because you cannot build on their public benefit that you must be compensated with lower taxes. Why not just give the wetland to the county and pay no taxes?

Since the public benefit is on your land and you have the only access, shouldn't you be paying more, and not less?

Good thinking, I like that.

Back to the large lots. Large lots with no development rights can sell for as little as \$600 an acre(not around here.) Large lots with many development rights sell for millions more. So you can expect that (part) of you assessment, (and the price you will pay to get the land) depends on your development potential. If that development potential is taken away, you will suffer a very real loss in value. You might or might not get a different assessment and lower taxes. But the lower taxes will never offset the actual loss you took.

In the case of a wetland, there is a defineable and measurable public benefit even if the definition may change over time. But if Development rights are simply reduced, where is that benefit? You argue that it is in reduced infrastructure costs. OK where is the definition and measurement that is equivalent to the wetland?

In Fauquier, the county has defined that benefit as being worth \$2800 per home per year, based on our current budget and current number of homes, and that benefit changes from year to year, based on budgets and assessments.

So if we take 23 home development rights away from some hapless landowner, then he has saved every individual in the county a dollar a

year.

If he had built the homes and made only 20k in profit per home (10% on 200,000 home), and if he invested the profits at only 5% then losing those homes cost him \$23,000 a year, or \$0.35 for every citizen in the county every year. Therefore, if the county reimbursed him for his loss, then every citizen would still have a net gain of \$0.65 per year, and they would have to feel as if they were stealing \$0.35 from our friend.

But why would they do that if they can get the whole dollar through "other methods"?

Consider three identical \$500,000 structures. One is on a one acre lot, and the other one is on half of two half acre lots. Both structures are on one acre, but one has an additional building right associated with it. The third structure is on a half acre lot. Which one will sell for more money?

It turns out that the acre lot sells for only a little more than the half acre, but the one with a potential building site sells for much more. The value isn't in the land, it is in the building right. If that building right goes away the property is worth less, and you should pay less tax. Say a sinkhole or fault line happens, and the place is suddenly unbuildable. You would go get re-appraised and pay less tax. Tough luck, could happen to anyone.

Suppose the county simply takes the building right and says we don't want you to build, (for any public reason). You would expect to pay less tax, and I think you should be compensated for the loss as well. In this case there is a public reason, and so the tough luck is not equally likely or equally dispersed.

 At 5:43 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

re: "The guy with the 100 acres and a hundred development rights

~~thought he bought certain things, but the rules changed. The one acre~~

homeowner thought they bought certain things, but the rules changed.

And you really think that would be all right? To me, that is a scary thought."

No but it is the reality.

I'm ok with what happened in Oregon. I'm okay with more fair laws for landowners in Virginia.

I actually think that fairness and equity are at the heart of the disagreements but I think both sides have their own ideas of what is fair.

People who buy a home - want good schools and roads in terms of quality and level of service.

If they see growth occurring that results in degradation of things that affect them directly - they're going to vent their displeasure at election time.

Ditto for landowners. Loudoun is a good example where elections have swung both ways.

But it's a losing proposition in terms of numbers for landowners as population increases the number of folks who merely own one home on a small lot and are experiencing crowded schools and terrible roads and believe that uncontrolled/unmanaged growth is the reason why.

This is exactly what is driving the entire debate in Va about land-use and transportation.

Most folks don't buy the "no growth" approach but they also don't buy the argument homes can be built without providing adequate infrastructure.

The wealthy land-owners in Facquier and adjacent Piedmont KNOW that

cutting up land parcels WILL result in infrastructure degradation - higher taxes, crowded schools and maxed out roads - under the current Virginia processes for land development.

From that point on - their goal is to use whatever means available to them to prevent that outcome.

You disagree with the unfairness of it all - and I agree - but again - I feel that it will continue until we find a better way to grow - one that brings adequate infrastructure online so that existing residents don't feel that their "rights" to quality of life are being destroyed.

I know the answer will not be - that for ever "right" taken away from raw land owners that an equivalent "right" will be taken away those living on developed land.

If your sole interest is to advocate "relief" for the landowners and you are not concerned with the WHY behind those who support restricting your rights - then ... good luck.

I'd say this - if Virginia had Citizen Referenda - like Oregon - you COULD take your case directly to the people and not have to deal with the local BOS .

So.. why don't I see the landowners in Richmond lobbying their representatives to give Virginians the right of citizen referenda?

I'd actually SUPPORT you in that effort! :-)

 At [7:29 PM](#),  [Ray Hyde](#) said...

"If they see growth occurring that results in degradation of things that affect them directly - they're going to vent their displeasure at election time.

Ditto for landowners. Loudoun is a good example where elections have

swung both ways.

But it's a losing proposition in terms of numbers for landowners as population increases the number of folks who merely own one home on a small lot and are experiencing crowded schools and terrible roads and believe that uncontrolled/unmanaged growth is the reason why."

Exactly. This is the best statement of where we agree. Those people have the right to go to the poles and vent their displeasure, even if I sometimes think their displeasure is invented or hypersensitive.

Likewise, those that wish to develop should expect to pay their share. Those that want excessive rezonings should pay more - and that means rezonings in both directions.

But whoever takes the chair, on either side of the debate has an obligation to see that fair play is fair play and not just mob rule.

I, too, know the answer will not be - that for ever "right" taken away from raw land owners that an equivalent "right" will be taken away those living on developed land. Of course not. It is ridiculous. How can you take away something that is already have used up? I only make the point to show how ridiculous the argument is, from both sides.

If you are running out of fish, the answer is to eat less fish, find better ways to grow them, and take better care of the ones you have, not to kill the fisherman. You cannot stock YOUR freezer full of fish, and then sy to those without elctricity or freezers, "Times up, no more fishing, ever". Some day, your freezer will run out of fish, too.

The fact that many people believe that denigrating builders and big developers is the way to solve their problems doesn't make it so. They may not even understand what this tactic does to the underlying landowner, housing prices, and their own taxes.

Elected leaders are the government for everybody, and they have an obligation to minorities. They have a role to play in education about the real facts.

But if the elected officials go down the popular and easy road, and it fails; then that isn't a recipe for continued employment either. Flip flopping governments is the binary way of reaching equity, but it is a hard and expensive means, for both sides. Why not find compromises we can live with instead of taking no hostages, winner take all at the polls?

I AM concerned with the WHY behind those who support restricting others rights. Frankly, I think one reason is that they have been repetitively handed a bill of goods. Growth does have costs, too much growth definitely leads to bad results. There are also benefits.

But, particularly here, only one side is ever told. One side owns the newspapers, one side has most of the elected seats, and one side now thinks they can get away with anything, with impunity. The whole county is engaging in self-promoting group think, with no real conversation going on. For example, when I hear multiple public officials saying any home valued at less than \$750,000 isn't paying its share of county costs, and I know the average home is only around \$260,000, then obviously something has to be wrong with that statement. Or else, something is totally out whack, our bills aren't being paid, and we need a really huge tax increase.

I'd be willing to do something real about the WHY as you call it. But my observation is that no answer will be acceptable to those presently in control.

If I thought it was about price or proffers, I could live with that. If I thought it was about rate of growth and timing, I could live with that. If I thought it was about real environmental problems, then I'd work for

real changes. But when the county has two full time runoff inspectors that inspect ONLY builders and you see farms everywhere with much worse problems, then you have to wonder.

Here, the only acceptable answer seems to be never, not at any price, non-negotiable. Over fifteen years I have come to the feeling that I live in my home, but the farm is occupied territory - occupied by the county and run for their benefit at my expense. My wife tells me that she can remember her father having toe to toe, nose to nose screaming matches with officials back when this all started, more than thirty years ago.

I'm perfectly happy to support the efforts of those who wish to preserve our farms, viewscapes, wildlife, and heritage. But they are going to have to find some equitable way to return at least part of the favor and support me too.

The cash flow for infrastructure MUST include the cash flow for green infrastructure. But that idea is too radical, not on the table. It is barely visible on the horizon. But if those in power think that green infrastructure is free, then we are making the same "free" mistake about green infrastructure that we once made about growth.

I can't do it all myself and no landowner can (except, maybe, the super wealthy), especially when the only acceptable criteria is eternity. If we are going to turn over our green infrastructure to them, in the form of tax subsidized private parks, then maybe we need to re-think what a public benefit is.

 At 11:33 AM,  [Larry Gross](#) said...

I'm in total sympathy. My views are not based on what I personally think is right or wrong - as much as a pragmatic view of the "why".

You have wealthy "landowners" in control in your county.

Those folks are not dumb and more to the point - they know how to wield power.

Apparently a majority of them .. have decided that ... residential growth is not beneficial and they've elected folks to carry out that mandate.

This is not about what is fair - no more than irresponsible rezones from developer-friendly BOS is fair.

A more limited change took place in Spotsylvania in 2003 elections - where a pro-growth BOS was delt with by voters and the new BOS has taken some actions that are deemed most unfriendly by landowners.

What caused voters to out them was the simple proposition that growth had been approved but no provisions for adequate infrastructure.

The previous BOS claimed that the State did not give them the necessary tools to .. growth so that infrastructure kept up .. so the solution was to vote them out with a "no growth" majority.

Wrong? Yes. What were the alternatives?

The landowners who were benefitting from the growth.. were totally mum on the issue... Only AFTER the BOS change did they start complaining about "unfair" rules.

Do you see my drift?

Most voters ARE reasonable but if they pushed to the point where they see no alternatives .. they'll sign on to "bad" change ...

That's why I say.. everyone has a DOG in this hunt... and especially so.. folks who own land.. and are being adversely affected...

## MORE ON TRANSFER OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

Last Friday, Jim Bacon posted an item on Albemarle County's proposed transfer of "development" rights program that generated several interesting responses. In the third comment Larry Gross asked what we thought of TDRs. We are getting behind and behind but have not written on this topic recently and were trying to find time for a short post. Then along comes C. P. Zilliacus.

Zilliacus nailed the topic. Montgomery County, MD, the nation-states most widely heralded example of TDRs, is a strategic flop.

The TDR sending area has become a McMansion / Hobby Farm zone. This low density urban area has raised the cost of housing in the Maryland portion of the National Capital Subregion. It has also made it harder to get from jobs in the Core of the Subregion to scattered agglomerations of dwellings that approach affordability in Frederick, Washington and Carroll Counties and in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

The TDR receiving areas are no different than other badly conceived urban agglomerations.

Unless there is a sound regional strategy to create settlement patterns in balance with mobility facilities and is a strategy that recognizes the need for a Clear Edge between the Urbanside and the Countryside, the result is unsustainable.

As noted in *The Shape of the Future*, TDRs (and the other tactics in the generic class we call Transfers of Property Rights or TPRs) are just tools. In the hands of the current governance structure and with a vacuum of rational regional resource allocation, TPRs are blunt instruments that cause more damage than good.

That is true for most of the "land use control" tools as noted in "The Role of Municipal Planning in Creating Dysfunctional Human Settlement Patterns" at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com).

EMR

Sunday, January 28, 2007

## FAIR ALLOCATION OF LOCATION-VARIABLE COSTS

Buried deep in the comments on Jim Bacon's 25 January 2007 posting on Housing in Charlottesville-Albemarle is a 27 January posting by Anon 7:58. He / She makes a good point concerning the uses some owners of small parcels (10 to 50 acres) make of their land in the Countryside.

He / she does not state the case but also makes a strong argument for the fair and equitable allocation of all location-variable costs. Consider:

If a retired couple raises horses, rare livestock, dogs, heritage fruit and vegetables (Anon's list - or if they raise, mushrooms, emus, wine grapes or anything else) for a living that is one circumstance.

If the wife is the spokes person for a phone company in Tysons Corner, the husband supervisors janitors in a highschool in Winchester and the kids log 20 person miles a day on a school bus and 30 hours a week in day care, and the couple raises (whatever) as a hobby, that is a different case.

Or is it?

If both couples pay the full cost of their location decisions it does not matter what the circumstances are.

The problem is that now the urban household that is also a hobby farmer is highly subsidized. Subsidies come via government action at all levels, by utility suppliers who apply flat fees and by goods and service users who pay a higher cost for the necessities of a contemporary life because of the cost of serving scattered urban land uses. What else happens on the land does not lower the cost of the location-dependent goods and services necessary to support an urban lifestyle.

Citizens in a democracy with a market economy cannot afford a "Welfare

State" that supports "Cadillac Welfare Queens."

Those same citizens cannot afford to support the costs of dysfunctional human settlement patterns. A typical bundle of urban lifestyle-supporting goods and services cost 10 times as much as the same services cost in a functional settlement pattern. (The Cost of Services Curve and the 10 X Rule.)

In addition, while some enjoy the spacial disaggregation (and really enjoy the subsidy), the market documents that the vast majority prefer the same house in a functional location. (The 10 Person Rule.)

Some who want to keep the reality of human settlement pattern relationships confusing suggest that settlement patterns relationships developed by S/PI are too generalized. As we note in "The Shape of the Future," the same could be said for accounting for the actions of gas molecules via Boyles Law and other relationships found in natural systems.

The Anon poster was concerned about regulations preventing the non-urban land uses from being carried out and prohibitions against land subdivision of land to create small parcels. He / She would be happy to see to availability of land for such uses increase (and the cost go down) when the use of land for scattered urban land uses are no longer subsidized.

Those who now, or hope in the future to profit, from the current subsidies and the settlement patterns that the subsidies engender wail about property "rights" without taking into account the community "responsibilities" that come with 21st Century urban life.

EMR

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

## FAIRFAX JOB NUMBERS

Alec McGillis reported on the status of jobs in today's WaPo.

Here is a note we sent Alec:

Nice story on jobs!

Two additions to the coverage would put these facts in geographic context:

1. A map with radial distances out to R=50 miles from the Centroid of the Core graphically showing the location of jobs in 1990 and the growth in jobs from 1990 to 2005.
2. A scaled summary quantification of the total land necessary to support those jobs (Jobs / Housing / Services / Recreation / Amenity Balance) at 10 persons per acre at the Community scale.

Hint: There is room in Fairfax County for all the development necessary to support all these jobs within the County if they were distributed in Balanced Communities, and there still would be 50 percent open space in the County. All that is necessary is to let the market work down the vast vacant and underutilized land.

Fairfax has played the hand that was dealt to them by federal and state programs, regulations and laws so it is not all their fault. However, the County has taken advantage of its location to generate employment "tax base" but has failed to evolve the Balanced Communities necessary to curb traffic congestion, energy consumption and other results of dysfunctional settlement patterns.

A lot of folks will read the coverage on job growth and Subregional job

distribution and assume that the jobs are scattering to the fringe of the National Capital Subregion. They well also assume that there is no alternative to scattering urban dwellings by the unit, Dooryard, cluster and neighborhood across the Countryside via orphan subdivisions.

There is an alternative.

Keep up the good work...

EMR

Sunday, March 18, 2007

## AUTONOMOBILITY

I will admit it: Warren Brown is my favorite *WaPo* columnist.

In both his "On Wheels" and "Car Culture" columns, Brown makes a lot of sense concerning private vehicles and their impact on human settlement patterns. His observations illuminate issues related to mobility and access far better than the pontificators found on the Editorial and Op Ed pages or in the Outlook Section. It is a shame that Warren's columns often appear on the first or second page of the Sunday automobile classified section.

For proof of Brown's ability to summarize reality, check out today's "Car Culture" column "There Ought to Be a Law" on Page G 2. We will not try to summarize the column, doing it justice would require reprinting. Warren scores point after point about the stupidity of the current congressional pursuit of less pollution and more fuel efficiency as well as the role of contemporary Mass Over-Consumption.

Having praised Warren Brown, let me also say he sometimes misses a point.

In stories filed from (and following) the Geneva International Automobile Show that were printed on 7 and 11 March in *WaPo*, Warren swallows far too much of the line from Robert Lutz, Vice Chairman for Global Product Development at General Motors. Lutz told Brown, and Brown repeats the view, that the reason small, efficient cars are not sold in the United States is that no one would buy them here. We view this issue differently:

The basic reason that small, efficient private vehicles are not sold in the United States is that all automobile manufactures would make less money per unit than they would if they continued to design, promote,

build advertise and sell only big, inefficient vehicles.

Yes, there are federal, state and municipal regulations that make it hard to import or drive small vehicles... did someone say "lobbyist?"

If small, efficient private vehicle were sold in the United States, the Big Three (and the Big Importers) would face competition from small, regional firms. (Full disclosure: my Grandfather made a lot of money selling his company to General Motors in the 20s. Further disclosure: My parents and I never say a dime of that money.)

Small, efficient cars could be made by regional manufactures. In fact small builders, egged on by X Prize Foundation are way ahead in the race to build 100 mpg cars according to Billy Baker in Popular Science (9 March 2007.)

GM's Lutz says what will sell in Europa and not in North American reflects the fact that they are "two different worlds." He is right; One controlled by big manufacturers one controlled by market forces reflecting a rational price for gasoline and more intelligent agency action. After all, Euro's love their cars too.

As to the market for tiny vehicles, we admit we would not buy (or ride in) three and four wheeled mini-vans and pickups we have seen on expressways in Europe. These vehicles were built to reflect gas prices after Oct 1973. We also would not ride in or drive one of the Second-World / Soviet Era stink bombs we saw in Praha, Dresden or Berlin in 1989. For starters at 6 foot 4, we would not fit.

However, when we first recall seeing a Mercedes Smart Car in Kobenhavn in 1991 we had the money and the interest. That was 16 years ago come May. To this day a lot of alternative vehicles are not available here that are deemed safe in the "over-regulated" European Union.

Warren Brown's column focused on the hearings last Wednesday before

the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on energy and air quality. In today's Business Section of WaPo, Lutz's boss G. Richard Wagoner Jr. is quoted as saying:

"Many of the recent legislative proposals to increase [mileage standards] ... would be extraordinarily expensive and technically challenging to implement - all with little to show for actually reducing oil consumption or emissions."

Rep John D. Dingell responded: "Inaction and telling us what doesn't work is ... no longer sufficient."

What did Warren Brown say again?

He said a core problem is that consumers do not want efficiency as individual drivers and consumers. They would desperately want efficiency in Automobiles if they understood the consequences of Business-As-Usual. Now, if those politicians were honest with those who they were elected to represent...

What did Wagoner say again?

"Many of the recent legislative proposals to increase [mileage standards] ... would be extraordinarily expensive and technically challenging to implement - all with little to show for actually reducing oil consumption or emissions."

In fact, Wagoner, Lutz, GM and the rest of the Automobile crowd are correct: The legislative proposals will not work.

There are two choices to make private vehicles more fuel efficient and less polluting:

Make private vehicles much more costly

Make private vehicles much lighter and much slower

The first option widens *The Wealth Gap* so that access and mobility in large New Urban Regions leads to the Sao Paulo Condition outlined in "The Whale on the Beach" 28 August 2006 at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com) Oh yes, as Wagoner et. al. know, this option would destroy the North American Automobile industry as we know it.

The second option does not meet the current consumer "demand." It would also tank the North American automobile industry. Most important, it would not provide mobility and access for most citizens.

Small, light, inexpensive, fuel efficient private vehicles are unsafe at high speeds and at low speeds they do not serve the disaggregated human settlement pattern which has evolved in the US of A.

Light, small vehicles require half the space to park and provide significant savings in the paved area devoted to driving. They could be part of a comprehensive solution for small urban agglomerations but are not much help in large New Urban Regions where most citizens live and work. It is a matter of physics, not policy:

The disaggregation of human habitation required to accommodate Automobiles is a dead end just as "urban horses" were a dead end. When it come to space required to drive and park, smaller is better but not solution. The cost of energy and the impact of internal combustion engines can be used as a catalyst to move to more functional human settlement patterns. Free, non-polluting energy for private vehicles given dysfunctional human settlement patterns is not a solution.

What to do?

Rep. Dingell and the rest of those who have relied on Politics-As-Usual need to read Warren Brown's column and then go to the microphone and announce:

"In the long term, Automobility is not sustainable."

The only way to reduce oil consumption at all and carbon emissions significantly is to change human settlement patterns.

However, even if the cost of energy and the carbon emissions were not an economic, social and physical drag on civilization, Automobility does not provide access and mobility for most citizens in large New Urban Regions.

It is physics, no philosophy.

EMR

Labels: [Energy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Transportation/Land use](#)

Monday, March 19, 2007

## LETS HEAR IT FOR THE SWEET SPOT

As readers of this Blog know, there is nothing we like better than new, precise words and phrases.

We also like familiar words and phrases used in new ways to help illuminate human settlement pattern-related relationships.

In his posts, Jim Wamsley has been using the term "Sweet Spot" to identify the low point of the Cost of Services Curve - the Second Natural Law of Human Settlement Pattern.

Sweet Spot is a great way to describe the low point of the Cost of Services Curve.

The Cost of Services Curve is plotted in the X Positive / Y Positive quadrant. The cost of a unit of services is scaled up on the Y axis and the density is scaled right on the X axis.

All the 40 +/- location-variable costs of services needed / demanded to support a quality contemporary life style start high at the lowest density (e.g. a power distribution system to serve 50 acres lots) and lower as the density increases.

At some point every one of those services starts back up. The bottom of the curve is the Sweet Spot.

We use transport as the canary in the minefield of dysfunctional human settlement pattern and each mode of transport has its own Sweet Spot.

For private vehicles in common use in 2000 (and still in 2007), the Sweet Spot is 10 persons per acre at the Alpha (Balanced) Community scale.

For shared vehicles with "high" capacity (e.g. METRO, MARTA, Metro, The Underground, U-Bahn, Subway) the Sweet Spot is 100 persons per acre at the Alpha Village (Station Area) scale.

(NB every word in the prior two sentences has a specific meaning.)

Depending on the size of the New Urban Region the private vehicle Cost of Service Curve rises from the Sweet Spot at different trajectories.

Depending on the configuration of the of the shared-vehicle system (and for very large New Urban Regions the mix of systems) the Cost of Service Curve also rises at different trajectories.

Given the dominance of private vehicles (The Automobile) in contemporary settlement patterns in the US of A, we use 10 persons per acre at the Alpha (Balanced) Community scale as the minimum sustainable density.

One other point:

In economic systems it is useful to think of maximizing profit and minimizing risk.

In natural systems, and specifically organic systems, one needs to think in terms of "Balance" and harmony.

Maximizing growth is equated with obesity and cancer in organic systems.

Minimizing growth is equated with starvation and Collapse in organic systems.

However, in the context of sustainability, it is useful to consider a minimum sustainable density.

For now we choose to identify minimum sustainable density as the Automobile Sweet Spot although at some point the whole Automobile-exclusive house of cards will Collapse.

EMR

Labels: [Economic development](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#),  
[Transportation/land use](#)

Thursday, April 05, 2007

## WaPo SPEAKING

Summarizing what officials told him without a direct quote, Tim Craig said the following yesterday in a Metro Section story titled "Va. Transportation Bill On Verge of Approval:"

"Traffic congestion will continue, they say, but might not be as bad as it would have been without the new revenue."

That is a "the glass is way, way half full" statement. It is far more optimistic than any rational person (Craig was paraphrasing "officials") would describe the situation.

Jim Bacon's last two posts are right on! Official actions on land use patterns and densities and the transport systems intended to provide access and mobility are taking citizens in the wrong direction at an increasing speed.

There will be no improvement in access and mobility, regardless of how much money is spent on which facilities unless there is a Fundamental Change in human settlement patterns and that will require a Fundamental Change in governance structure.

You have heard that before but here is a new twist: In the same paragraph as the above quote, Craig also said the northern part of Virginia population "... is expected to grow by more than 500,000 residents over 20 years..."

In today's WaPo N. C. Aizenman cites new data from the US Census Bureau suggesting that the "Metro Area Growth Has Scaled Back Considerably" with an annual growth rate of 0.7 percent.

So, not to worry the population is not growing very fast.

But wait! A multiplier of 1.007 results in a population growth of 792,041 over 20 years. If this is true, then population has slowed but is still growing faster than the 500,000 projection suggests.

Then again, the census numbers are for "The Washington area" also called the "the Washington Metropolitan region." Just what is this? The "new" Washington Primary MSA or something else? See our column "Where is Northern Virginia?" from 11 August 2003.

We have not had a chance to run down the numbers but we would suspect that if one used the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region for the July 2005 to July 2006 estimates, the growth rate for the real region was a lot higher than 0.7 percent per year.

If you can make sense out of this apply to WaPo for an editors job.

Otherwise, stay tuned into Bacons Rebellion.

EMR

Friday, May 04, 2007

## VILLAINS ON HALLOWED GROUND?

In his column "Missing the Point" (30 April 2007) and in his Blog post "Conservatives Should Embrace, Not Trample, Journey Through Hallowed Ground" (30 April 2007) Jim Bacon appropriately challenges the unfounded spins that has been placed on the Journey Through Hallowed Ground (JTHG) project. These attempts to discredit JTHG are driven by hyper-ideological fantasy unrelated to the facts.

There are potential negative impacts from Journey Through Hallowed Ground, especially if the project is very successful. These issues need to be carefully examined and addressed. Jim notes most of the important ones at the end of "Missing the Point." There are however, no grounds for attacks on the project based on the political, ideological and personal scarlet herrings tossed up to date.

While Jim takes on the ideologues, we would like to go back to the prior assaults on JTHG that were posted on Bacon's Rebellion Blog in response to Jim Bacon's earlier column "Honoring Hallowed Ground" (16 April 2007) and the Blog post "Saving the Countryside" of the same date. These unfounded attacks were launched by an individual blogger. The comments were perhaps well-intended but badly misinformed on both facts and context.

The blogger vituperated in several posts concerning supposed disingenuous actions of the president of JTHG. There are no substantive grounds for these attacks on Cate Magennis Wyatt. While those familiar with the situation know there is not basis for the comments and while Ms. Wyatt is fully capable of defending herself, there is a larger point that impacts all discussion of human settlement patterns.

We have known Ms. Wyatt for nearly three decades and have a first hand experience based understanding of her role in eastern Loudoun County development projects along the VA Route 7 Corridor - Countryside, Landsdown, etc. - and her work in Governor Wilder's administration.

There is no justification for suggesting her role in JTHG is less than an honorable endeavor or that it is inconsistent with her work in Loudoun County two decades ago. It would be just as silly to say she was responsible for Russia cutting off natural gas supplies to the Ukraine as it would be to suggest she paid for a Millennium party at Cheops with illicit gains from development in eastern Loudoun County. There is, however, the larger issue: Developers as villains.

The blogger who attacked Ms. Wyatt described the transformation of eastern Loudoun County over the past three decades in graphic terms. Many would agree with his assessment. At the multi-Beta Community scale, the VA Route 7 corridor is settlement pattern dysfunction squared.

Even if Ms. Wyatt was "the John (Til) Hazel of eastern Loudoun" - which she was not - what happened in eastern Loudoun County is not the fault any developer or of "developers" in general.

As we document in *The Shape of the Future*, there are no villains in the agglomeration of dysfunctional settlement patterns on the scale of eastern Loudoun County.

There is blame to be assessed and it must be widely distributed but it is collective blame. The root problem is the cumulative impact of billions of decisions by millions of individuals, households, enterprises, agencies and institutions. Almost all of these decisions are made in the mistaken belief that the actions that were taken were in the best interest of the actor.

If one set out to establish a hierarchy of culpability, elected officials egged on by political donations intended secure favored actions are

perhaps first in line. Governance practitioners at the municipal, county, state and federal level are right behind them because they knew - or should have known - the negative cumulative impact of these acts.

Of course developers, builders and their corporate and institutional partners share blame for the end result. They were driven by the desire to optimize short term profit. However, they were playing the hand they were dealt given in a context established by overarching forces over which they had little control. Most importantly, they were catering to the assumed demand of an uninformed market without functional feedback systems in place. In this case the feedback system would be all the actors having to pay the full cost of their location decisions.

When all the actors are lined up, most of the blame - for the context and the results - rests with citizens and their uninformed and unintelligent actions in the market and in the voting booth. Right next to them is MainStream Media which has failed to provide the information upon which more intelligent decisions could be based. MainStream Media has also failed to attack Geographic Illiteracy / Locational Obliviousness for reasons we explore in our current column "Recent Clippings."

By in large all the actors were doing what they thought was in their best interest - specifically their immediate, short term interest. There are bad apples in every category. Some knew, or should have known that what they were doing would hurt others but In response to Jim Bacon's earlier column "Honoring Hallowed Ground" (16 April 2007) and the Blog post "Saving the Countryside" of the same date.

If any of the actors had paid attention to intelligent analysis of human settlement patterns that have been carried out over the past 80 years all would have known they were taking actions that would have a negative cumulative impact on every individual, household, enterprise, agency and

institution. That, however, does not make any of them "villains" who are

the proximate cause of existing conditions.

As we note from time to time those who profit from (or hope to profit from) the continued trajectory of Business-As-Usual especially those who call themselves "conservationists" are the closest to being villains but even they do not deserve a red "V" on their forehead.

Any attempt to single out villains rather than working to understand what drives the evolution of dysfunctional settlement patterns in places like eastern Loudoun County only generates conflict and divisiveness. This finger pointing just makes matters worse.

EMR

## A GREAT DAY FOR BALANCED COMMUNITIES

Today is a great day for Balanced Communities according to *WaPo*.

This morning *WaPo* published their most recent "Post 200: Where the money is." The biggest corporate offices, the best jobs, the places all the startups want to be, a good place to get a great meal, the best place to ...

Draw in the Radius = 10, Radius = 20 and the logical location for the Clear Edge around the Core of the National Capital Subregion on the map that is the cover of the special "Post 200" tabloid and what do you see? Most of the biggest dots are inside R=10, all the biggest dots are inside R=20 and everyone of them is inside the logical location of the Clear Edge.

Given that there is plenty of room for all the J / H / S / R / A inside R=20, much less inside the Clear Edge - See "NO SURPRISE" posted 9 May and "Lots of Room for Growth Left in Fairfax County" posted 26 April - and you have a sustainable future in focus. Well it is in focus if citizens take actions in the voting booth and in the market to evolve functional and sustainable human settlement patterns within Balanced Communities inside and outside the Clear Edge around the Core of the National Capital Subregion.

Yes, there is a need for jobs to create Balance in the Beta Communities that are inside but near the Clear Edge around the Core (Greater Leesburg, Greater Ashburn, Greater West Prince William, Greater East Prince William. For a start the prospect of recycling the Potomac Landfill into a new Zentrum for East Prince William is on the front page of today's *WaPo*.

Yes, there is a need for jobs and services to create a Balance of J / H / S / R / A in the Beta Villages, Beta Neighborhood and Beta Clusters that need to evolve if there are to be Balanced But Disaggregated Communities in

the Countryside. (For those who came in late, the Countryside is outside the Clear Edge around the Core of the National Capital Subregion and surrounds some larger agglomerations such as Greater Fredericksburg and Greater Winchester.)

Of course, every one of these urban agglomerations - larger ones like Greater Fredericksburg and the smaller ones like Greater Warrenton-Fauquier and Greater Culpeper-Culpeper - must evolve their own Clear Edge to achieve functional settlement patterns in the Countryside and in the Urbanside.

Both in the Urbanside and in the Countryside, the biggest problem is scatteration of urban land uses and the fact there is far too much land set aside for urban land uses. But, for at least the 17th time since we have been counting, WaPo has demonstrated where the lines need to be drawn to evolve a sustainable future.

EMR

Friday, June 15, 2007

## WEEKEND READING

Every so often *WaPo* editors of one section or another strike gold with their front page stories.

The 15 May issue of the Business Section could be called "The Ides of May for Automobiles." You will hear more of that later.

Today the Business Section hit a grand slam. The stories provide perspectives on why The Mobility and Access Crisis, The Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis, The Energy Conservation Crisis and the Wealth Gap Crisis are all becoming worse every day.

The feature story scopes out the dark side of the ethanol subsidy's impact on the price of corn and thus food and other goods.

Below that is a report on how the ethanol subsidy lobbyist are being welcomed with open arms by pandering politicians looking for cover on gasoline prices.

The juxtaposition of these two items should be frightening for anyone concerned with Mobility and Access or Energy Conservation.

The top of the page reports on historic highs for home mortgage foreclosures, one important aspect of the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis.

The rest of the page considers the Wealth Gap - the most important threat to democracy and free markets.

The right side bar documents that all the indicators of white collar gambling - the stock market - are positive.

The left side below the fold tells of a hedge fund trying to oust the management of Sunrise Senior Living to raise the price of the stock. No word on what impact that will have on the lives of the seniors living in 444 senior living facilities in US of A, Canada and the EU.

The bottom of the page is devoted to Steen Pearlstein's summary of the use of debt to generate profits for the flippers of Intelsat.

As a counter-point to all this, the upper right story is on how two senators are trying to block the Blackstone IPO. The problem is the private buyout shops are paying too little in taxes.

For now the private sector is awash in money and does not know how to spend it in ways to make citizens happy and safe a necessity if we are to preserve democracy and free markets over the longer term.

Read it a weep.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Efficiency in government](#), [Energy](#), [Environment](#), [Governance](#), [Health care](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Politics](#), [Politics As Usual](#)

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

## A YARD WHERE JOHNNY CAN RUN AND PLAY

The front page of today's WaPo features "[Getting Lost in the Great Indoors: Many Adults Worry About Children Losing Touch With Nature](#)" by Donna St. George. It is enough to make you cry.

It should make a lot of BaconsRebellion bloggers wince. All those champions of dysfunctional Automobile driven settlement patterns who claim they are investing in big lots for the kids and freedom...

As we point out in our December 2003 column (same title as this post) it is the cumulative impact of all those big, unused lots covered with grass that result in long drives to work, to services and to all the "organized activities" that now fill children's lives.

Two of the first five "child-friendly assets" we list for places to raise children address the concerns of those quoted in the WaPo article.

Now why cannot WaPo hire editors who understand human settlement patterns and the underlying cause of all these front-page stories?

EMR

Labels: [Environment](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

## THOSE LIVING IN OLD GLASS HOUSES ...

Under the post "A YARD WHERE JOHNNY CAN RUN AND PLAY

At 8:46 PM, Anonymous said...

"M. Risse's comments about settlement patterns have a deep foundation of irony for me because he lives in one of those giant houses in a small lot in a modern subdivision rather than in the city or in a place more consistent with his perspectives.

"I am a preservationist, and I live and put my wallet there, albeit I do not sell books about it.

"One can write a book advocating no alcohol but still drink. The reader may never know; does it matter?"

The work of SYNERGY/Planning is centered on a branch of science that is not yet widely understood. For this reason, the experience and veracity of spokespersons is critical. An off-hand statement such as this is deceptive, damaging and requires a factual response.

Let us examine the statement of Anon 8:46 in detail:

"M. Risse's comments about settlement patterns have a deep foundation of irony for me because he lives in one of those giant houses in a small lot in a modern subdivision rather than in the city or in a place more consistent with his perspectives."

What is "ironic" is that Anon 8:46 has no idea about what he / she speaks.

"... he lives in one of those giant houses in a small lot in a modern subdivision rather than in the city or in a place more consistent with his perspectives."

As an overview, if Anon 8:46 had any idea of the parameters of functional human settlement patterns he would know that this "place" - this Dooryard (Derby Way), this Cluster (Menlough), this Neighborhood (Culpeper / Menlough / Hospital Hill), this Village (Greater Warrenton) and this Community (Greater Warrenton-Fauquier) is / are fully consistent with our perspectives.

He / She would also know we recommend never using the term "city" because the use of the word, other than as part of the legal name of a municipality, generates confusion about the structure and function of human settlement patterns and compounds Geographic Illiteracy and Spacial Ignorance.

We will deal with "giant" house and "modern subdivision" below but first some history.

## BACKGROUND

Over first 32 years of our life we lived in 21 dwellings from Puerto Rico to Hawaii. Two were built by my father, six were historic structures. The dwellings ranged in context from a flat over a bakery in Old San Juan to a log house backing up to forest and mountains that stretched for 135 miles - Flathead National Forest Service / Bob Marshal Wilderness / Sun River Game Preserve.

The first house I purchased was a Queen Anne on Maple Street in a small college town from which I could walk to work. When our oldest child could kick a soccer ball into the flower beds we moved to a Planned New Community.

Over the next 30 years I lived in Single Family Attached Dwellings in three Planned New Communities. The cluster density averaged 30 persons per acre and the community density averaged 10 persons per acre. These

places had the elements of good places to raise a family that we list in our column "A YARD WHERE JOHNNY CAN RUN AND PLAY." These were not just places to live but places where we worked and where we evolved the concepts found in our writing.

We were living in a Planned New Community when the 1973 Arab Oil Embargo provided a dramatic view of the future. We did everything we could to cut our energy consumption and reduce what is now termed our ecological footprint. Our family activities, mobility choices and lifestyle were featured on the front page of the community newspaper. When someone says put your money where your mouth is - been there, done that.

The problem was that very few others did what we did. We drove the old rabbit until our employer said he was embarrassed that a senior executive in his firm was driving such a ratty old car. He bought us Porsche.

#### THE SEARCH

When we completed *The Shape of the Future* in 2000 we spent the better part of two years looking for the best place to live next. I have a hearing loss due to military service and noise bothers me. While well located from many perspectives Fairfax Center near the confluence of I-66, US Route 50 and Fairfax Parkway is a very loud place due to the tire howl of traffic on these routes. The political erosion of the original Fairfax Center plan was also a pain to live with.

We considered places from Chincoteague, MD to Shepherdstown WV and from Southern PA to Charlottesville. Due to our regional, national and international work, a location in the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region and not too far from Dulles was ideal.

After settling on a place in the Piedmont of Virginia we surveyed half a dozen urban enclaves and choose Greater Warrenton. We drew quarter

and half mile radii from the Court House and looked at every building for sale. Early 2002 was not a time where there were a lot of houses on the market. We wanted to be within 1/4 mile of Main Street but could not find a building that would meet our needs.

I had not lived in a single family detached dwelling for 30 years and when we could not find an attached dwelling or other suitable structure, one of the tradeoffs was that a single family detached dwelling would provide an opportunity to further our research and broaden our experience. Those who read our work will be finding out what we have learned in TRILO-G. Some of it may surprise you, it did me.

#### THIS PLACE

##### Dwelling:

The house at 124 Derby Way is a "used house" and about average for its age and price range. It is not "giant" by any stretch. It is in the mid 3,000s sq ft on three floors depending on what is counted. There are two bedrooms. The lower level is devoted to our office and a large studio with conference space and four work stations for the different tasks involved in our work. There is also a map and file room, a storage closet, etc. The third level is devoted to my partner and wife's office, studio and a guest room. We live on the first floor although that is also where the main office library is located.

The lot is one fifth of an acre and provides an opportunity to understand the benefits and burdens of living in a single family detached dwelling. It is the first time I have had an attached garage and it serves as a shop. If you have an Automobile, an attached garage is a fine thing.

The travel generated by the dwelling is minimal. We hold some meetings here. We meet with our assistant who lives in Greater Warrenton once a week. We communicate via email and she picks up work when she is out

anyway running errands. No commuting, thank you. We have two vehicles and drive them a total of less than 5,000 miles per year. The vehicles consume far less than our per capita share energy and meet our personal safety and comfort needs.

Cluster:

When I first saw Menlough, years before we purchased the house on Derby Way, my first impression was that it was too low in density and too far from Main Street. We have found living here has given us the opportunity to help solve some horticultural problems for the cluster and test governance concepts at the cluster scale.

A Three Cluster Neighborhood:

What is not apparent from first glance is that Menlough is one of three clusters making up one of the only Planned Unit Developments in Greater Warrenton-Fauquier. These clusters contain most of the dwellings in the Neighborhood. The other clusters are small single family dwellings primarily on one level marketed to empty nesters and single family attached dwellings.

The primary amenity of the Planned Unit Development is the pathway system. Right across from our driveway is a pathway that leads to a number of attractive walking opportunities and provides access to the community hospital (which has a very nice restaurant - Bistro On The Hill - open to the public), the town police station where cluster and other public meetings are held, a hardware store / lumber yard, laundry, pizza shop, 2 convenience stores, a veterinarian, dentist, orthopedic practice, an optometrist, auto repair / inspection, tattoo shop, a floor covering store, an office building, etc. Over the past five years we have had occasion to use many of these services including the tattoo shop. Main street is a hike of half a mile but not beyond question on foot.

The Village:

The Town of Warrenton, Greater Warrenton and Greater Warrenton-Fauquier provide a great laboratory for considering the role of urban enclaves in the evolution of Balanced But Disaggregated Communities. They provide opportunities for innovation as our current column "The Conservation Imperative" suggests.

At this point in my life - approaching 70 - the most important thing is have a pleasant place to complete our work. When we complete TRILO-G we may move to a single family attached dwelling, having learned about as much as we can from single family detached dwellings.

ONE LAST POINT

Anon 8:46 said: "I am a preservationist, and I live and put my wallet there, albeit I do not sell books about it."

I count myself a preservationist as well. We co-founded and served as professional staff for a ground breaking regional preservation effort, authored a regional historic architecture guide, authored the first state historic preservation plan drafted under the National Historic Preservation Act, contributed to the rescue of several historic buildings including a sugar mill on a small Caribbean island, etc, . I do not happened to have been married to a person who wanted to take on the challenge of living in and restoring a historic structure (aside from the sugar mill) when that opportunity arose. Does this mean I could not write a book about preservation?

"One can write a book advocating no alcohol but still drink. The reader may never know; does it matter?"

This snide remark implies our work is not based on experience and is taking money under false pretenses.

AN APOLOGY IS IN ORDER, ANON 8:46.

You might want to buy a few copies of TRILO-G and distribute them to your preservationist friends. Without a sustainable future, preservation is a futile effort.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Energy](#), [Environment](#), [Governance](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Local Governance](#), [Politics](#), [Transportation/land use](#)

Thursday, June 21, 2007

## GRAPHIC PROOF

The front page of today's *WaPo* Business section has a graphic that should become the screen saver for every politician and every advocate for Fundamental Change.

The graphic portrays federal spending as a percentage of GNP -- history and projections to 2050.

The article has the "positions" of six of the 37 people who has declared an interest in being the next president.

Read it and weep.

Then figure out how much new spending will be needed in Virginia to fix the mental health system to avoid more VaTechs.

In the Metro section there is an article on how much paying low wages to teachers costs in recruiting and retraining.

Then there is the Mobility and Access Crisis and the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and the Energy Crisis and the Food Security Crisis and the...

If anyone thinks that in 2007 or 2008 the "do not raise taxes" crowd will get a word in edgewise with all these "needs" ...

The only answer is Fundamental Change.

Sorry, you are going to have to come to understand the meaning, scope and path to implementation of Fundamental Change of human settlement patterns and Fundamental Change in governance structure.

There is no other exit.

EMR

Sunday, June 24, 2007

## INSIGHTS AND SILLINESS

Deep in the comments on the post "THOSE LIVING IN OLD GLASS HOUSES...", Jim Bacon makes an important point - as he frequently does.

"As I see it, localities (or Regions *and the organic components of Regions* , if we had governance reform) would not have any more power to create Balanced Communities than they do today. Indeed, they might well have less. But they would apply a different conceptual framework to their planning of where and how to invest public resources. And they would be more proactive in creating Communities that provided for a Balance of activities within close proximity rather than a landscape of residential and commercial monocultures." [Capitalization and *italics* added for clarity.]

It is not the scope or array of governance powers that is lacking, the problem is the level at which they are exercised - or the level they are now allocated but not intelligently exercised.

The evolution of functional and sustainable settlement patterns does not require more "powers." The U.S. and state constitutions grant plenty of powers to governments - and reserve appropriate rights to individuals.

The problem is establishing a Balance between community (public) responsibilities and private rights (privileges).

With respect to land use controls, the issue is the level of application: The Level of Control must be at the Level of Impact.

"Well." you say, "most important actions have many levels of impact." Very true, so citizens need a sophisticated system that shares key decisions with appropriate weight for each level of impact.

At this point there is no governance structure at most of the levels of impact. The organic structure of human settlement pattern, and thus of contemporary society, is not reflected by the governance structure.

"Oh!" you say, "that would be too cumbersome."

Give me a break! If the existing system worked, then for starters, citizens would not face the:

Mobility and Access Crisis

Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis

Helter Skelter Crisis

Wealth Gap Crisis

Energy Crisis

Balance of Payments Crisis

Retirement and Health Benefits Crisis

Food Security Crisis

Communicable Disease Crisis

Species Diversity Crisis

Personal and Community Security Crisis requiring a War on Terrorism

And the slide toward entropy.

Did we leave any out?

The three levels of governance was not enough for an agrarian society in 1789 and it is surely not enough now.

Existing land use controls are based on a 1926 conception of reality that included a cloudy understanding of the impact of the Industrial Revolution

as well as a Roaring 20s conception of the evolution from an agrarian society and the emergence of the Automobile in a process overseen by Herbert Hoover.

The 1926 land use control concept is based on an ideal of separation, not Balance. The locus of overt land use controls is at the municipal level but many other laws, regulations, policies and programs are scattered at all three levels. (Four levels with counties, and five with scattered special district authorities that vary from state to state.)

In the 1960s when we drafted an alternative conception of the state enabling legislation [See 21 *Syracuse Law Review* 375 (1969)] we did not add new powers. We just reallocated them and established systems to share responsibility and move the level of decision to the level of impact.

The one tangible product that grew from this work was our Adirondack land use control system. This system is still working today. It is not perfect by a long shot, but the Adirondacks do not look like West Virginia or the Ozarks or even most of the Rockies. It was a step in the right direction but few further steps have been taken.

The simple guideline is: Level of Control at the Level of Impact

In his comment, Jim Bacon was responding to a comment by a regular commentor on *Bacon's Rebellion* Blog. In a later comment on the post "GRAPHIC PROOF" this same individual demonstrates why it is so difficult to achieve fundamental change when there are so many smart folks that live in human settlement patterns and who believe themselves to be experts.

In framing a hypothetical, he states: "Now the land is sub-divided into 20 one acre lots. The reason that these lots are one acre is because THAT'S WHAT THE MARKET IS BUYING." (Emphasis in the original post.)

The emphasis in the post is intended to dispute the view that, if given a choice, buyers ("the market") favor by a wide margin Balanced, diverse dwelling options.

I am sure a lot of developers and builders got a chuckle from the "WHAT THE MARKET IS BUYING" declaration. Those who I heard from did.

Developers supply sites and builders build houses because of the outcome of running a complex (but often informal) calculation. The base equation balances of greatest return in the shortest time frame with lowest risk.

This calculation includes, sometimes fuzzy and sometimes incorrect understandings of:

Complex land use control environments noted above

Complex municipal governance and political dynamics

Land assembly and transfer practices skewed by amateur and professional speculators

Loan conditions established by badly informed capital markets

Complex labor, subcontractor, supplier and material availability relationships

Uninformed and misled buyers

Other factors too numerous to mention

To cover their mistakes and minimize their risk developers and builders spend billions on advertising to reinforce myths and misconceptions of buyers.

What is the reality of the market?

For 40 years Same Builder / Same House / Different Location (SB / SH / DL) studies have shown a strong market preference for dwellings in

locations with balance, diversity and close proximity to jobs, services, recreation and amenity, as provided by the best of the Planned New Communities.

The failure of Planned New Community developers has had almost nothing to do with the market acceptance of the product except where the project location is very bad - in other words, locations where there was no near term prospect of achieving a J / H / S / R / A Balance.

The SB / SH / DL reality is why many builders are shifting to "New Urbanist" projects and to "Traditional Neighborhood Developments" or at least advertising them as such. The primary problems with these developments is not the ideals, it is the location, scale and mix of uses that preclude achieving Balance. (Reminder for Larry: "New Urbanist" has almost nothing to do with New Urban Region.)

For 25 year S/PI has been using SB / SH / DL studies in the context of Regional Metrics and radial analysis to show the market reality of location, scale and mix imperatives.

One last point:

The supposed "American Dream" of scattered monocultures of the single family detached dwellings on large lots makes up a small percentage of total dwellings but is a major contributor to settlement pattern dysfunction.

As we recall, a study in Maryland found that 12 percent of the new houses over a 20-year period caused 80 percent of "sprawl." At S/PI, we do not use that word and thus developed the 87 ½ Percent Rule, the fifth of the Five Natural Laws of Human Settlement Patterns.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Local Governance](#)



Sunday, October 07, 2007

## SUNDAY READING

News from *WaPo*:

Finally a Front Page headline that gets one of the Core Confusing Words right!

"In the World's Rural Outposts, A Shortwave Channel to God."

This is a story about listening to sermons broadcast over shortwave radio filed from Homoine in southern Mozambique. There are some "rural" outposts in some parts of Africa such as Mozambique and in South America, Central Asia, New Guinea and other isolated places.

When we first traveled in the remote corners of the Caribbean there were rural places there too, but not any more. There are a lot of low density urban places and some nonurban places where human live and work but there are no "rural" places in the US of A and few (yes, Larry some close to the Arctic Circle but nowhere near where tourists go) in North America.

For a full discussion of "rural" and other Core Confusing Words see **GLOSSARY**.

For those who have not read Bjorn Lomborg's perceptions of Climate Change the front page of **Outlook** has a nice photo of two Polar Bears and a short item by Lomborg. Interesting perspectives but he, and most others, miss the settlement pattern issue. The only way for humans to protect themselves from future Climate Change - up or down - and other impacts of natural reality is to shrink the ecological footprint of human activity.

That means, over time, fewer people each consuming less. Even more important is that humans need to consume less in all their joint economic,

social and physical activities that are carried out at the Household through the Inter Continental scales - that includes all six of scales in between the Household and the Inter Continental scales. Transport, heating and cooling - and most other forms of resource consumption vary by settlement patterns. More on this in our next column.

By the way, it seems pretty warm today.

Finally for those who think the US of A is doing just fine compared to our primary economic competition, Steven Hill has a nice item "5 Myths About Sick Old Europe" on page 5 of Outlook.

Happy reading and thinking.

EMR

Saturday, November 10, 2007

## THE PENDULUM SWINGS

Our next Backgrounder will examine why MainStream Media is doing such a bad job of providing the information citizens need to make intelligent decisions in the marketplace and in the voting booth.

From time to time MainStream Media does do a very good job of documenting the results of citizens making bad decisions in the marketplace and in the voting booth.

A case in point is the series *WaPo* is running on "Harvesting Cash" - details of federal farm subsidy pork barrel / fraud. In another good example, *WaPo* recently ran a series on the disasters generated by federal pork barrel water projects about which the veto override made the news this week. Both are available in the archives at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

Of interest today is the Page One coverage by Steven Mufson: "Oil Price Rise Causes Global Shift in Wealth." The wealth transfer is stupendous, the graphic on the jump page with respect to the impact on the US of A is frightening.

The US of A is a wounded whale with a lame duck president and such dysfunctional settlement patterns that there is little hope of changing course without massive economic, social and physical pain.

Fundamental Change in human settlement patterns is the only possible course of action that will significantly reduce foreign oil dependency. It is the only way to substantially reduce the demand for Automobile use other transport waste that consumes 70 percent of the oil imports.

Fundamental Change in settlement patterns is the only way citizens can be

happy and safe, and not be hostage to rising oil prices.

*WaPo* tells us where citizens are going due to past errors in the marketplace and in the voting booth. They did not tell citizens that there were alternatives nor did they articulate the result of the current trajectory when the resources were available to make Fundamental Change without massive pain.

Enjoy to game.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Efficiency in government](#), [Energy Conservation](#), [Politics As Usual](#), [Transportation/land use](#)

Saturday, December 22, 2007

## A SECOND TEST FOR INSANITY, SMOKING OUT HUMPTY DUMPTY

Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result - for example, building more roadways and expecting traffic congestion to go away - is often cited as a threshold test for insanity.

There is a second test that is useful to apply in the Blogosphere. This test is:

Attempting to describe, discuss or arrive at a well-considered public judgement on complex topics in cases where:

1. Key words / phrases are known to have different meanings to different people, or
2. A person or group of persons uses the same word / phrase to describe different places, actions or conditions

According to Lewis Carroll, Humpty Dumpty, when challenged on the confusing use of Vocabulary stated: "That word means exactly what I want it to mean, nothing more, nothing less." In fact, Alice's Wonderland is the only place such use of Vocabulary is appropriate.

Failure of the Vocabulary test of mental capacity is especially prevalent in discussion of human settlement patterns. Why is this failure to understand the need for a functional Vocabulary so prevalent in the realm of human settlement patterns?

First, and most obvious, the offending participants do not want to "understand." Often this is because they fear an understanding will require abandonment of ideas and theories with which they have organized their lives.

The unfounded actions were often thought to have been taken in pursuit of the actors best interest. No one likes to find out that they have been acting in ways which turns out to harm their long-term self-interest and those of their Household.

Adherents of The Big Yard Myth and The Private Vehicle Mobility Myth are often in this category. Believers defend their pet Myths with religious tenacity.

Second, most of the commentators deem themselves to be experts "because they live there." They apply their observations and experience in the context of the Myths they so want to believe.

Third, there are those who do not want to understand because they profit (or hope to profit) directly or indirectly from continuing confusion, debate and failure to reach a consensus on the most intelligent course of action for the majority.

This class of Humpty Dumpty adherents often know their statements are at best uninformed opinion and at worst deceptive.

Finally there are those who are offended that someone - anyone - would suggest they need to change their Vocabulary in the consideration of topics that they believe they understand as well as anyone.

Doctrinaire defense of "simple" language with respect to human settlement pattern discussion is a sure-fire way to identify Humpty Dumpties.

A great Holiday pastime is to see how many Humpty Dumpties you can identify at the gatherings you attend.

Happy Holidays.

EMR



## RIGHT ON CUE

Jim Bacon did a fine job of pointing out some of the problems with innovation in shared-vehicle systems in his lead column this week. "[The Innovation Gap](#)."

Right on cue, METRO demonstrated how right he is.

In today's *WaPo* it is reported that METRO is considering running some Blue Line trains through the underutilized Yellow Line Potomac tunnel. We will not bother with the details, except to say it is a good idea.

It is such a good idea that over 25 years ago, while working to increase the capacity of the Orange line we suggested this very same move.

Most of the ideas that became the Backgrounder "It is Time to Fundamentally Rethink METRO and Mobility in the National Capital Subregion" <http://www.baconsrebellion.com/> surfaced in white papers by EMR and reports by the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. (FCC of C Trans Comm was one of the seven large Enterprise-backed Organizations EMR chaired / served on from the mid 70s to the late 80s.)

The initial feedback from staff at METRO was positive on the ideas including the Turquoise Line. Later we learned that they were vetoed by senior staff. "We are going to complete the 101 mile system before we make any changes," and "it would cost too much to reprint all the maps" were the only specifics that we ever heard.

So Jim is right. To understand why he is right read *Supercapitalism* by Robert Reich.

The problem is now that the settlement pattern in most of the urbanized area within R=23 to R= 25 is not suitable for METRO-like shared-vehicle

systems (aka, Heavy Rail). That means citizens must morph the settlement patterns and come up with new technology.

We focus on these critical issues in column after column on Rail to Dulles. See "[Who Killed Rail-to-Dulles?](#)" and "[Why METRO-to-Tysons Is a Mess.](#)"

In a comment yesterday, Larry Gross noted interest in Personal Rapid Transit. For years the advocates of PRT including our friends who started the Advanced Transit Organization have said that PRT can better serve dispersed origins and destinations.

We have reservations. Those interested in PRT search "PRT" in the back columns at <http://www.baconsrebellion.com/>

Vocabulary is also an issue here as it is everywhere in the real world. As long as shared-vehicle systems are called "mass transit" few will be interested in the topic.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economic development](#), [Efficiency in government](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Transportation/land use](#)

Wednesday, February 27, 2008

## WaPo ADS

One of the responses we received from readers of THE ESTATES MATRIX was that we were a bit hard on the role of advertising in MainStream.

Please tell us why it is not a conflict of interest to publish on page A-1 of the 24 February *WaPo* a He Said / She Said story on the Dominion Power transmission line along the Rappahannock River and then run a full page color image ad for Dominion Power on page A 20 with the opening text: Every Day Dominion Biologist George Birdsong helps Hundreds of fly fishermen enjoy Virginia's Catch."

Back on 8 February Jim Bacon noted the arrival of a new Publisher / Media Chief at the Washington Post Co. Jim's post "Who Will Report the News? WaPo Gets New Publisher" raised the right issues but received no comments.

The new publisher, Katharine Weymouth, was - before her promotion - the Vice President of Advertising.

A strange place from which to select a new "publisher?"

Today's WaPo Section A is 18 pages and four of those pages are full color image ads for energy Enterprises and energy Enterprise supported Institutions. Each one includes material or suggests interpretations that those concerned with shrinking human's ecological footprint would question.

MainStream Media is now the mouthpiece of Second Estate Enterprises. They no longer have a way to play an honest role in the Fourth Estate.

EMR

Labels: [Blogs and Media](#)

Thursday, March 06, 2008

## WHY "SUPERCAPITALISM" WILL NOT BE A POPULAR BOOK

Robert Reich, currently professor of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley has written another book. This one is titled *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business Democracy and Everyday Life*.

*Supercapitalism* is an important book and should be widely read. In particular, it should be read by Bacon's Rebellion columnists and those who post and comment on Bacons Rebellion Blog. Why? Because the book addresses an issue central to any discussion of economic, social and physical ramifications of the road ahead.

*Supercapitalism* will not a 'best seller' or a favorite of the Bacon's Rebellion Corps for reasons we outline below.

Reich has a simple message:

Consumers and investors in the US of A - and the First World in general - are far better off than individuals and Households have been in any society in history. Most have done especially well consuming and some have done exceedingly well financially over the last 3-plus decades.

On the other hand, individuals in their role as citizens have had a very difficult time over this same time period. Further, the quality and effectiveness of the democratic governance structure under which they live has eroded badly.

Reich has the data to back up these assertions. As it turns out, when one strips away the self-serving puffery and pandering rhetoric these realities

are broadly agreed to across academic, political and economic spectra.

Reich does a splendid job of providing an economic overview of the US of A since the Civil War as he outlines how citizens got to the post WW II era which he calls "The Almost Golden Age." Reich then describes how and why that era morphed after 1973 into what he calls "supercapitalism."

Reich dismantles a number of illusions concerning why some individuals and some ideologies are credited with "economic miracles" along the way. These changes were underway long before the hero jumped on the bandwagon. He also put in their place a number of ogres like "greed."

[We will be adding three new columns to THE ESTATES MATRIX (V 2.0) - for the years 1870, 1920 and 1973 - that reflect some of his important insights. Yes, one of the reasons we like Supercapitalism is that it tracks so well with THE ESTATES MATRIX.]

To his credit, beyond documenting reality, Reich offers a simple "solution" to a key driver of economic and democracy dysfunction. His suggestion makes eminent good sense. Reich also provides a number of ideas which may make it into the platform of a presidential candidate. This is a startling accomplishment for a book dealing with a topic as complex as the future of democracy and market economies.

With this much going for it, why is Supercapitalism not on the way up the 'best seller' list?

One reason that a book that explores a subject of this nature may be unpopular is that it is long and hard to understand. That is not the problem with Reich's book. It is only 223 pages plus end notes and index, even with large print and generous line spacing. What is more, if succinctly written, Reich's core ideas could be well expressed in 50 pages or less. Of course, writing an essay / working paper would not meet the criteria for a "book" and would not make the publisher or the author as

much money. This fact presents an ironic twist of Reich's basic thesis on what is wrong with capitalism and democracy.

Reich makes simple, straight forward points and expresses them well. He then goes on to cite example after example that pound home the lesson from each of six chapters. Having this wealth of supporting data is a luxury afforded to those who dwell in ivy towers and have grad students and post docs to gather material and research budgets for processing, digesting and editing that material.

So what are the problems with Supercapitalism if it is not that it is long or hard to understand?

Best selling books either make readers feel good or they identify bad guys.

There is not much to feel good about from a clear eyed review of the economic, social and physical trajectory of contemporary society.

Villains sell books because they provide some thing or some one to get mad at.

There being no basis for a feel-good story line, the primary problem with the *Supercapitalism* becomes the fact that Reich identifies no villain.

In *Supercapitalism* there are no villains - unless one looks in the mirror. Pogo's Epiphany applied to the state of the economy and democracy will not sell books.

Reich points out with chilling clarity the conflict within individuals between their roles as consumers and investors and their role as citizens. He calls this conflict "being of two minds."

The villain vacuum compounds a reality that Tony Downs - the denizen of Real Estate Research and later The Brookings Institution - liked to spotlight in the context of Mobility and Access. Tony pointed out that:

In a democracy, it is very hard to get those who benefit individually from a course of action to support changes which will benefit society-as-a-whole but will limit or eliminate their own individual advantage or benefit.

We explore this issue in depth in *The Shape of the Future* in the context of "What is good for one is not good for all." An urban dwelling on a five or 10 acre lot is the human settlement pattern poster child of this axiom. In the book this reality is termed "The Fallacy of Composition." That is the term Robert Samuelson used to describe this core problem with capitalism and democracy.

[Those who want to use the "find" utility of the Adobe Reader to search The Shape of the Future for the relevant passages, key in "The Fallacy of Composition."]

The second problem with *Supercapitalism's* lack of popularity is that there will be those who find this book distasteful, not because of what the book actually says but, because of who wrote it. Zealots knowing that Reich is a self-declared "liberal" who taught at Harvard, served as Labor Secretary in the Clinton administration and is a backer of Barack Obama are likely to believe they must reject out of hand whatever Reich might have to say.

It would appear however, if those who occupy any station along the many and varied political / ideological continua that intersect the Economic Sphere are honest with themselves they would agree with almost everything that Reich says in this book.

OK, "some" can find "problems" with any statement as the Blogisphere and this Blog document. Let us just say contrarians would find it hard to locate evidence that refutes Reich's key observations.

The confounding reality for the ideologues - and this is the same issue that arises with 12 ½ Percenters vis a vis strategies to evolve functional human

settlement patterns - if they agree with Reich, they undermine many of the positions they have taken in the past with respect to economic, social and physical activities.

If *Supercapitalism* starts to move up the best seller lists, it will be attacked in MainStream Media by editors and talking heads because the book challenges the fundamental idea of Mass OverConsumption. Never mind that if democracies with market economies are to be preserved, the trajectory of the Mass OverConsumption-driven economy and society must be changed.

[See APPENDIX ONE: "Disorienting 'News' On Citizen Well Being" APPENDIX ONE in "GOOD NEWS: What MainStream Media Is, and Is Not, Telling Us." [Link in 5 March 2008 Jim Bacon post "Good News, Bad Reporting" on this Blog.]

Are there shortcomings in Reich's book?

Yes, three stand out.

First there is the core malady of Geographic Illiteracy. This is especially problematic in Reich's discussion of large public corporations that have direct impact on creating dysfunctional human settlement patterns - Wal\*Mart for example. See "Learning From Big Boxes, PART III of THE PROBLEM WITH CARS. [Forthcoming]

Reich makes no reference to, or connection between, Wal\*Mart actions and dysfunctional human settlement patterns. What Reich's ideas desperately need is a New Urban Region Conceptual Framework - or some other comprehensive distribution-of-human-activity conceptual framework - that will facilitate an understanding of the economic and social impacts of the actions that he portrays and the solutions that he outlines.

The second short coming with the Reich book also makes it harder than it

needs to be to get across the importance of the core message of Supercapitalism. Reich does not have an overarching conceptual framework for the major organizing forces of society.

Chapter Six ("A Citizen's Guide to Supercapitalism") cries out for a clear way to distinguish the differences between the interests of Enterprises (the Second Estate) and citizens (the Fourth Estate).

Reich may or may not agree with the context established for Agencies, Enterprises, Institutions and Citizens / Households in THE ESTATE MATRIX. However, if he does not, then he needs to come up with an alternative because without a conceptual framework for discussing these issues it is easy to fall into a wasteland of babble with every reader applying their own definition in the best tradition of Humpty Dumpty.

The third and final shortcoming is that Reich suggests that a comprehensive "solution" to evolving a functional democracy in the 21st century is possible without a Fundamental Change in governance structure. His one simple idea about the nature of corporations is a great start, but it is just a start.

Were the book rewritten it could be easily absorbed in an hour. But the need for a conceptual framework with consistent vocabulary to spotlight the importance of human settlement patterns and the need for something like THE ESTATES MATRIX to illustrate the difference between the interests of citizens from the interests / driving forces of Enterprises (and in interests / driving forces of Agencies and Institutions) would be critical to making his arguments so powerful that they could not be ignored, even if unpopular.

Readers of this brief review will note that we did not go into detail on the conflict between individuals as consumers and investors and individuals as citizens. We also did not divulge the clear, elegant threshold solution

Reich presents for a key driver of dysfunction or the specific ideas that may end up in Barack Obama's platform.

Why?

It would be a good idea for you to read Supercapitalism yourself.

EMR

posted by E M Risse @ 1:28 PM [19 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

## 19 Comments:

 At [3:02 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

Ed,

I have been reading the guy for years, including this book.

With all due respect, please don't give us BR columnists reading "assignments." No one made you the dean of columnists. We are all equals here.

Thanks.

Peter Galuszka

 At [5:07 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

Peter Galuszka:

You might give consideration to lightening up a bit.

If you have already read the book, it is not an assignment that you have to worry about.

You seem to be under a lot of pressure and are having a hard time adjusting to reality.

Some time ago you claimed that you did not write a column that blasted passenger rail service but in fact you did. It was titled "Forget

Passenger Rail” and ended with this sentence “As for passenger rail, forget it.” Published in December.

Today on this blog you blasted Larry Gross because you apparently misread what he had written. He was not commenting on your vast experience, he was throwing rocks at EMR.

You do not seem to have a good word for anyone anymore.

In fact, you do not seem to be enjoying life at all.

Here is a suggestion, since you take suggestions to well:

Go out and get a nice, well paying job in “Journalism.” You know the kind that were available in 1974 with junior high-school summer school training in the craft (a quote from you) and an Ivy League education.

OR

You can start reading with more care and try to come to understand why, in spite of all your “experience,” you still do not “get it.”

“So, why do I need a GLOSSARY to understand all of this?”

Because you do not understand what is going on around you and your ignorance is not making you happy.

A former friend

 At [6:14 PM](#),  [Jim Bacon](#) said...

Guys, This dialogue is getting a bit too personal for my taste. I'm not pointing fingers at anyone or taking sides, I'm just getting uncomfortable with the tenor of some remarks -- not just in this instance but remarks in other posts involving other people. Remember, the cardinal rule of Bacon's Rebellion is to criticize the argument, not the person.

If bloggers can't abide by that rule, I will start deleting their comments.

 At [7:42 PM](#),  [James Atticus Bowden](#) said...

I'll order the book and read it. I've set some higher reading goals this year - and am meeting them. But, I'll get this and move it up in the que.

Have a great vacation. I hope to see that place some day.

 At [10:59 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

Why "supercapitalism" won't be a popular book.

EMR recommended it.

RH

 At [8:19 AM](#),  [Larry Gross](#) said...

I plan on buying and reading but I've seen him interviewed on TV (CNBC) about his book...

.. and my impression (which may change after reading the book)...

.. is that the "market economy" is no longer an American Market

Economy and instead is a World Market Economy run by capitalists who have more allegiance to Capitalism than to particular countries

.. and that workers are workers... wherever you can find them in the desired quantity with the required knowledge and skills.

But as usual.. I don't see some of the same things that EMR sees.

WalMart IS the perfect model of Supercapitalism.

It has a wide array of products produced around the world - and it has stores around the world selling those products as inexpensively as they can and because of the way they run their operation - at a pretty

competitive prices even against local competition.

So - as a local, you can go the 9 different stores each one having some item that you need - or you can go to a WalMart - to get your prescription, your motor oil and your celery - as well as fresh bread and LCD TVs.

How much of this we buy or do not buy does not in and of itself indicate over-consumption.

People can go to Walmart and get stuff and NOT overconsume just by virtue of the fact that they shop at Walmart.

Can they get more for their money?

Yes - but that's not overconsumption at all.

and make no mistake - when you buy lobster at WalMart or at a local seafood store.

You are NOT buying local food and you ARE buying something that would not be available to you without a fairly extensive mobility to move those products fast AND at a reasonable price.

Unless I misunderstand Mr. Reich, he is NOT advocating a return to a world where folks live in self-contained communities.. at all.

It's true the world runs on fossil fuels right now.. but it's also true that from a technology point of view that BIG ships CAN and do run on small nuke reactors AND coal so we could (and will some day) run out of oil... but I just don't ever see us returning to a world where people and goods mobility is shrunk back to levels we saw prior to modern - supercapitalistic economies.

I see the essence as - fossil fuels have spawned our modern economies.

The eventual exhaustion of fossil fuels will not lead to an exhaustion of

energy or technologies to use energy in different forms than fossil fuels.

and as long as that is the case, I just cannot conceive of voluntary or mandatory shrinkage of mobility or economies that depend on mobility.

At 1:24 PM,  E M Risse said...

James Atticus Bowden:

Hope Supercapitalism meets your higher reading goals!

Since you and I look at some things (but NOT old growth forests) differently, I will look forward to your observations.

Larry Gross:

"I plan on buying and reading but I've seen him interviewed on TV (CNBC) about his book..."

Since CNBC is part of MainStream Media I can only imagine the spin they gave it.

".. and my impression (which may change after reading the book)..."

".. is that the "market economy" is no longer an American Market Economy and instead is a World Market Economy run by capitalists who have more allegiance to Capitalism than to particular countries."

True

".. and that workers are workers... wherever you can find them in the desired quantity with the required knowledge and skills."

You will recall that we pointed out three shortcomings and one is Geographic Illiteracy. In this case the need to understand the impact of full fair allocation of the cost...

"But as usual.. I don't see some of the same things that EMR sees."

"WalMart IS the perfect model of Supercapitalism."

Yes and Reich and I agree too, no difference there.

"It has a wide array of products produced around the world - and it has stores around the world selling those products as inexpensively as they can and because of the way they run their operation - at a pretty competitive prices even against local competition."

Our review was intended to run with PART III of THE PROBLEM WITH CARS but you will have to wait until Jim Bacon get back to see why this may not be true.

"So - as a local, you can go the 9 different stores each one having some item that you need - or you can go to a WalMart - to get your prescription, your motor oil and your celery - as well as fresh bread and LCD TVs."

See above note.

"How much of this we buy or do not buy does not in and of itself indicate over-consumption."

True, it is where you buy it that makes the difference as we point out in PART III "Learning from the Big Box."

"People can go to Walmart and get stuff and NOT overconsume just by virtue of the fact that they shop at Walmart."

True.

"Can they get more for their money?"

Ah, that is the question as we point out in "Learning from the Big Box."

"Yes - but that's not overconsumption at all."

The answer is actually No - but it is still not Mass OverConsumption per

se as you point out.

"and make no mistake - when you buy lobster at WalMart or at a local seafood store."

"You are NOT buying local food and you ARE buying something that would not be available to you without a fairly extensive mobility to move those products fast AND at a reasonable price."

Agreed, and your point is?

"Unless I misunderstand Mr. Reich, he is NOT advocating a return to a world where folks live in self-contained" communities.. at all."

I think if you read our review with more care you will find Reich does not address settlement pattern issues at all. That is a problem with his book, not a statement about the relevance of Balanced Communities in sustainable New Urban Regions.

"It's true the world runs on fossil fuels right now.. but it's also true that from a technology point of view that BIG ships CAN and do run on small nuke reactors AND coal so we could (and will some day) run out of oil... but I just don't ever see us returning to a world where people and goods mobility is shrunk back to levels we saw prior to modern - supercapitalistic economies."

All depends on cost and the allocation of costs.

"I see the essence as - fossil fuels have spawned our modern economies."

True.

"The eventual exhaustion of fossil fuels will not lead to an exhaustion of energy or technologies to use energy in different forms than fossil fuels."

Depends on cost AND on the other half of what Reich and I are talking

about: democracy.

Recall the Sao Paulo Mobility and Access equation. How long before Brazil has a leader like Chavez if the wealth gap continues to grow?

"and as long as that is the case, I just cannot conceive of voluntary or mandatory shrinkage of mobility or economies that depend on mobility."

Just what Hoover said about the Roaring 20s.

See "Good News, Bad Reporting."

EMR

 At [7:20 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

EMR,

Just to remind you, we are ALL equals here and personal insults really don't bring much to the party.

As far as my rail column last year, please let me try to explain it to you again. I back passenger out the wha zoo. I really do. Love it. But when I heard the NS CEO, I realized that he was right that there is not the public will to back the massive expenditures it would take to build the infrastructure that a lot of land use planners and assorted visionaries want. That was the point I was trying to make: great idea, bad political climate.

If Virginia can't even fund its road needs and comes up with unconstitutional tax authorities (which anyone could have foreseen), then how, pray tell, are they going to back funding massive rail infrastructure? You keep coming back with your admittedly interesting but still politically questionable theories about moving settlement patterns closer to the core of cities. Sounds great, but given the libertarian and conservative nature of Virginia politics, how the hell are you going to do that without imposing some kind of state-sanctioned

~~decree dictating the kinds of restrictions and policies you advocate?~~

Hate to say it, EMR, but when it comes to this stuff, I actually start liking the ideas of James Atticus Bowden and Lord help me for that!

Peter Galuszka

PS: Love passenger rail, really do.

At 8:51 AM,  Anonymous said...

Wait a minute, EMR,

I'm not done with you yet. You really need to watch the assumptions you make in your columns such as this one: "If Supercapitalism starts to move up the best seller lists, it will be attacked in MainStream Media by editors and talking heads because the book challenges the fundamental idea of Mass OverConsumption."

Consider this book review by the New York Times, the dean of the MSM:

" A grand debunking of the conventional wisdom . . . the main thrust of Reich's argument is right on target . . . Reich documents in lurid detail the explosive growth of corporate lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions since the 1970s."

-The New York Times Book Review

Also, the book came out more than six months ago. That's a life time ago in commercial publishing.

Peter Galuszka

At 11:20 AM,  E M Risse said...

At 8:51 AM Peter Galuszka said:

"Wait a minute, EMR,

I'm not done with you yet."

OK, shoot.

"You really need to watch the assumptions you make in your columns such as this one: "If Supercapitalism starts to move up the best seller lists, it will be attacked in MainStream Media by editors and talking heads because the book challenges the fundamental idea of Mass OverConsumption."

Yes, that is what I said.

"Consider this book review by the New York Times, the dean of the MSM: " A grand debunking of the conventional wisdom . . . the main thrust of Reich's argument is right on target . . Reich documents in lurid detail the explosive growth of corporate lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions since the 1970s.

-The New York Time Book Review"

Yes, So?

Please reread what I said. I did not say there would be no favorable reviews in MainStream Media, I said "If it starts to move up the best seller list..."

Book reviewers are paid to favorably review books, if they knock everything they lose their jobs.

But if a book starts to get popular, then other factors kick in.

"Also, the book came out more than six months ago. That's a life time ago in commercial publishing."

In general that is true but "Guns Germs and Steel" came out in 1997 and "The Tipping Point" in 2000 and both were back on the Best Seller lists in the last 6 months.

I stand by my statement.

Further, perhaps if you read what I write with more care, you would

find you agree with much more of what I say.

EMR

Peter Galuszka

At 11:24 AM,  E M Risse said...

Oops fogot one sentence:

I would put "Supercapitalism" on the same level as "Guns, Germs ...",  
"Collapse," "The Tipping Point" and "Blink" on citizens must read list.

EMR

At 11:52 AM,  E M Risse said...

Peter G:

OK, since you brought it up:

A while back you said:

"EMR,

...

"As far as my rail column last year, please let me try to explain it to you  
again."

If you check, I did not raise your rail column again, an Anon did that.

The column is there for all to read and come to their own conclusion.

...

"I back passenger out the wha zoo. I really do. Love it."

...

"PS: Love passnger rail, really do."

If you really love rail then take the Richard Register pledge:

"This is the last car I will ever buy"

Then start taking actions to create a satisfying life style without a car.

If you and others do not do that, then there will never be ...

"... the public will to back the massive expenditures it would take to build the infrastructure that a lot of land use planners and assorted visionaries want."

My roll is to point out that these expenditures (massive or not) will be far less than the alternative. No matter how much is spent, Mobility and Access via the Automobile is not possible.

"That was the point I was trying to make: great idea, bad political climate."

Forgive me, this is the first time I understood that was your point. Perhaps it should have been in your "Forget Passenger Rail" Column.

Hacking at those who are trying to change the political climate is not a good way to get what you say you love.

"If Virginia can't even fund its road needs and comes up with unconstitutional tax authorities (which anyone could have foreseen), then how, pray tell, are they going to back funding massive rail infrastructure?"

As noted above, "the road needs" are a bottomless pit given a Mass OverConsumptive society and reliance on Automobiles.

"You keep coming back with your admittedly interesting but still politically questionable theories about moving settlement patterns closer to the core of cities."

Show me one place I have talked about "the core of cities."

"Sounds great, but given the libertarian and conservative nature of Virginia politics, how the hell are you going to do that without imposing some kind of state-sanctioned decree dictating the kinds of restrictions and policies you advocate?"

By fairly allocating costs and enhancing democracy, the later of which Reich has made quite clear in his book.

Virginian's are not dumb, they have just had self-serving leaders who have perfected a system to keep themselves in power.

Join the movement to support Fundamental Change.

EMR

 At [1:01 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

EMR,

No way in hell am I going to take the Richard Register pledge.

If I did, my teenaged daughters would tie my upside down on the nearest tree limb and disembowel me.

Peter Galuszka

 At [1:01 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

EMR,

No way in hell am I going to take the Richard Register pledge.

If I did, my teenaged daughters would tie my upside down on the nearest tree limb and disembowel me.

Peter Galuszka

 At [3:32 PM](#),  E M Risse said...

At 1:01 Peter G said -- twice for emphasis:

"EMR,

"No way in hell am I going to take the Richard Register pledge.

"If I did, my teenaged daughters would tie my upside down on the nearest tree limb and disembowel me."

Ah Ha! So it is not just the Libertarians and the Conservatives that are the problem.

Now you see why I say it may take 40 years and has to start in the elementary schools.

Actually as the Cubans and the Hatians have shown, you can keep old cars on the road for decades.

May not be a bad pledge to take.

But even if you do not take the pledge, lets work together for Fundamental Change, not bash those who are trying to get the percentage of those who think it would be a good idea from 5% to 10%.

EMR

 At [11:18 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

" but it's also true that from a technology point of view that BIG ships CAN and do run on small nuke reactors AND coal so we could (and will some day) run out of oil.."

At one time in my past, I created an economic computer model that would predict when a return to sail powered ships was possible.

Last month a major ship mad its first passage assited by a kite like sail.

The sail cut fuel consumption by an estimated 15%.

RH

 At [11:21 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

"Actually as the Cubans and the Hatians have shown, you can keep old cars on the road for decades."

What do you mean the Haitians and Cubans?

My oldest farm truck was built in 1980. My newest in 1990.

RH

 At [11:24 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

"EMR,

Just to remind you, we are ALL equals here and personal insults really don't bring much to the party."

Agreed.

EMR seems to think he has free license in this regard. I think a little peer pressure is in order.

RH

 At [11:34 PM](#),  Anonymous said...

"You keep coming back with your admittedly interesting but still politically questionable theories about moving settlement patterns closer to the core of cities."

Show me one place I have talked about "the core of cities."

If this is a mistake, Peter isn't the only one to make it.

You should make your ideas more clear, and a lot less obtuse.

Then you might get from 1% to 2%. It's not 5% to 10%, but then,

humility is a great start.

RH

Sunday, March 09, 2008

## AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING -- FROM BAD TO WORSE

We have not addressed the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis in some time, however, the last few days headlines suggest it is going from bad to worse.

The front page feature in Sunday's WaPo spotlighted the convergence of bad Agency policies, programs and controls that have created a crisis in the Federal District. ("Forced Out: The Cost of D. C.'s Condo Boom.")

The news is no better in Fairfax: "Some Homes Once Crowded Now Vacant: Fairfax Crackdown (on "over-crowded" dwellings) Has Unintended Consequences. An Hispanic immigrant was carrying a \$550,000 mortgage on a house that sold at foreclosure auction for \$120,600?"

And the chickens are coming home to roost for Agencies as well. "Damage From Downturn May Be Worse Than Expected: Officials Say Rising Foreclosures and Drop in Spending May Force Revision of Feb. 25 (Fairfax County) Budget Proposal."

On Friday the business news was headlined by "Investors Dump Securities From Fannie, Freddie: Mortgage Sector Strongholds Falter." We have said for years the crime at Fannie and Freddie was not the huge salaries and coverups but rather the loan bundling was location-blind thus leveraging support for building the wrong size houses in the wrong locations.

Speaking of crimes, CNN reports that the FBI is looking into fraud at Countrywide Mortgage. Citibank is reported to be in trouble with subprimes...

And the ads keep rolling in; on paper; on Television; and on banners

running over Google searches and under AOL e-mails for refinancing...

Financial Enterprise deregulation has really worked well. For lawyers and criminal investigators.

It is not just homeowners that are hurting from a drop in dwelling values and wild lending practices. The whole economy is on weak grounds.

You may have missed it but the Federal Reserve on Thursday announced that for the first time since 1945, owners equity in homes in the US of A dropped under 50 percent. Since 1945! Recall how many new houses were built and sold with very low down payments after World War II. But then this: The only reason that the 1945 date was in the press release is that 1945 was the first year they kept this record.

See "Good News, Bad Reporting" at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com)

Note for Larry Gross:

I just saw your note to us under the Atlantic Reality Falls Church post by Jim Bacon.

You are right "RuralZED" housing is not a useful term. I will check out the links you provided when I get back to the Housing Chapter of TRILO-G.

In the meantime, just because a dwelling has no connection to the grid for energy, water or sewer does not mean it does not have location-variable costs. There are 35 + / - other goods and services to be concerned about.

And speaking of eco-footprints, Larry, check out "Eat Locally, Ease Climate Change Globally" an op ed in WaPo Sunday. A farmer from Abingdon provides some numbers on the cost of food transport.

I know, I know you worry about mangos and papayas when you cannot eat them right off the tree. Do not get me wrong. We love mangos and papayas. Mangos are called "winter peaches" in our Household.

The answer is the same, price them for what they really cost to grow and ship and then let the market decide if they are a four times a week item or a once a month item.

Of course if you do not have a house and no refrigerator you may have to wait until Global Climate Change allows them to be grown in Appalachia. But maybe they can be now in that big green house... Does not look very wind proof...

EMR

Thursday, March 13, 2008

## SERENEDIPITY

When someone has been working for nearly 50 years to answer a set of questions it is splendid to come across another person who has arrived at many of the same answers to those questions via a much different route.

In 1961 while standing in what we now call a Cluster (Lewisburg Square) in a place of the scale we now call a Village (Beacon Hill) in the Boston New Urban Region we were finally able to articulate questions that had bounced around in our head while growing up on a farm, in the desert and in what we now call the Northern Rocky Mountain Urban Support Region.

The complexity of the questions was magnified by studying forestry, physics, mathematics, architecture and philosophy in Montana and Hawaii and by military service and travel in most of states of the US of A.

It took until 2000, aided by more studies, teaching at three universities, extensive travel in Europe, the Carribean and North America as well as working for some very smart clients to be in a position to set down a comprehensive Conceptual Framework and the Vocabulary necessary to address these questions in *The Shape of the Future*.

Imagine our delight at encountering the work of Richard Register! We have not met Register and do not agree with everything he writes but we do agree on a lot. The areas of agreement range from the problems with settlement patterns that require extensive or exclusive use of Automobiles, to the level of energy and resource efficiency one can expect from functional human settlement patterns, to what is happening to put citizens back in jeopardy in the New Orleans New Urban Region, to what Bill Gates and Warren Buffett could better be doing with their

money.

Register's base of operation and his current hands-on projects are focused in the Community and Subregion where we went to law school so we have an appreciation for the places he is trying to make better. His work takes him around the world and his observations about the places we have also experienced are on target. His insights into those we have not yet seen are enlightening.

Where does serendipity come in? We found out about Register when we contacted a college roommate to congratulate him on being named a Professor Emeritus at the University of Montana. His daughter, Kristin Miller, works with Register in Oakland, a Zentrum in the San Francisco Bay New Urban Region. We quoted Kristin in PART I of THE PROBLEM WITH CARS. We have not met Kristin either but heard about her years ago when her father was a struggling grad student at the University of Texas. Miller and Register are hard at work getting ready to host the seventh International Ecocity Conference ([www.ecocityworldsummit.org](http://www.ecocityworldsummit.org))

We will be quoting Register in PART IV of THE PROBLEM WITH CARS and will be reviewing his book "*Ecocities: Rebuilding Cities in Balance with Nature.*" in Chapter 16 of TRILO-G. (Back in 1973 we started planning, building and managing what became the Village scale enclave of Burke Centre with the logo "Community in Harmony with Nature." Burke Centre is home to around 20,000 citizens living in as much harmony with nature as is possible in National Capital Subregion and stay within the regulations of Fairfax County, VDOT, et. al.)

Register's main web site is [www.ecocitybuilder.org](http://www.ecocitybuilder.org) He maintains a Blog on that site where he post his current thinking. You can learn about the Denis Hayes Paradox - "Why are environmental Organizations winning so many battles and losing the war?" and the Richard Register Pledge: "This is the last new car I will every buy."

Ecocity Builders publishes an enewsletter. It was a “perspective” in the March - April 2008 edition titled “Enduring Civilization” that cemented my respect for Register’s thinking. He outlines four parameters and two guidelines for future action. They have the heft of Fundamental Change.

Unfortunately the enewsletter is not accessible from the web site. If you would like a copy, send me an email and I will forward it.

We are calling attention to Registers work not so much for the Denizens who post comments on Bacons Rebellion Blog but for those who follow our columns and posts and communicate with us directly. We are chagrined to say some who find our work useful refuse to post or comment on a web site that is listed in some sources as being a “right” site and has contributors who are identified as being “right of center,” libertarian or conservative.

Our view is that if those who believe that it is imperative that civilization achieve a sustainable trajectory do not stop tossing rocks at one another then an evolution toward sustainability will never happen. See “Good News: Bad Reporting” 5 March 2008.

Alas, we will probably never be friends with Register because he has centered his work around developing “Ecocities.” We have found that the word “city” is a Core Confusing Word. But then he is working on “urban Villages” so there may be hope.

OK, we will not mention Core Confusing Words when we meet Richard Register.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Blogs and bloggers](#), [Environment](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Friday, March 14, 2008

## C'VILLE / ALBE SHARED-VEHICLE SYSTEMS

At the request of several readers from Greater Charlottesville / Albemarle, we are posting this clarification:

Back on 18 February Jim Bacons posted "Bus Rapid Transit Studied for Charlottesville."

We agree with Jim's comments about the need for an authoritative analysis and who should pay for any shared-vehicle system.

Given our experience with shared-vehicle systems and our past work in the Charlottesville / Albemarle Subregion, we do not have high hopes for BRT penciling out.

At 6:30 PM we made the following comment on the original post (edited for clarification):

OK, no one seems interested in this topic so here are some thoughts:

BRT is primarily an "in-the-median" shared vehicle system.

In US of A, applications of BRT would work for a "two or three big stops" subsystem. For example Air and Space Annex / Dulles South Terminal, Dulles North Terminal and an Intermodal terminal in Tysons Corner.

(We should have noted a potential station at Reston Town Center. There would be vastly more demand and an existing limited access roadway with exclusive Airport Access lanes in this application as compared to a C'ville Zentrum to C'ville airport along US Route 29.)

In smaller agglomerations -- e.g. Ottawa -- BRT does not live up to its potential because there is not the nodal intensity to generate trip demand.

Unless there are Core stations underground as in Seattle, (very expensive) the system works best with when the station is under a big platform over the 'expressway' of which the BRT occupies the median.

Platforms such as employed in the U-Bahn service to Nordvest Zentrum in Frankfort AM would work well.

South American applications -- e.g. Curitiba -- have broad 'Boulevards' that separate Village-scale Superblocks.

C'VILLE does not have the Critical Mass to support any of these spacial distribution strategies.

What happened to the Street Car / Trolley idea for C'VILLE?

(Sean Tubbs of Charlottesville Tomorrow provided information on the Trolley proposal and provided other resource links in the original string which are very helpful.)

Following a post concerning the need for a "compelling vision"

EMR noted (again with editing for clarification):

The "compelling vision" must be a vision of future, functional settlement pattern, not of this or that Mobility and Access system. The Mobility and Access System comes after there is a decision on the desired settlement pattern.

This comment was misinterpreted by a commentor as being a suggestion that: "unless the plan is to Nuke C'VILLE and start all over"

There is a pervasive misunderstanding that it is hard to evolve functional settlement patterns from those that exist now.

Human settlement patterns are organic systems and they are continually evolving. The problem is that current Agency and Enterprise projects,

programs, incentives and controls are not geared to evolving functional settlement patterns because alternatives make more money and / or gain more benefit for some in the short term.

“how does C’VILLE or any area that already exists and cannot be torn down and recreated - evolve to more optimal settlement pattern?”

(See above)

“If I understand EMR correctly, it is futile to be thinking in terms of different ways of accomplishing access and mobility if the settlement pattern itself is dysfunctional.”

(No, it means that the first step is to create a plan for functional settlement patterns.)

(It also means that it is futile to try to spend money on a shared-vehicle system in hopes that a functional settlement pattern will just evolve due to the new system. The settlement pattern and the Mobility and Access system must be planned and evolve together.)

There are many individuals and several groups that would like to see a clear rendition of what the shape of the future should be in Greater Charlottesville / Albemarle

Once those images are clearly articulated, a number of shared vehicle systems should be examined to see which (one or more) systems best serve these settlement patterns.

One of the many weaknesses of the Blog format is that posters, commentors and readers must be ever vigilant lest intentional or unintentional attempts to misinterpret comments mislead those who are seeking an understanding of complex issues related to human settlement patterns.

Comments on the original C’ville post by Jim Bacon and especially on the

proceeding post by Jim titled "Heavy Rail and Flying Pigs" are prime examples of comments by those who have an agenda to (and/or are paid to) confuse and confound useful dialogue.

Our thanks to those who were confused by the comments and contacted us directly for clarification.

We hope this clarification is of use to those who are trying to bring functional settlement patterns in the Charlottesville - Albemarle Subregion.

EMR

Friday, March 07, 2008

## A NOTE ON GROVETON'S OBSERVATION

Groveton travels a lot, observes a lot and offers a number of good perspectives.

On 6:09 PM 6 March in a comment on Jim Bacon's post "Virginia's Nuclear Power Cluster Just got Bigger, Groveton noted:

"4. In the early part of America's history Virginia was the most populous colony / state. It was an economic, political and intellectual center in the US. However, after peaking in about 1790, Virginia started a steady decline in power and importance. None of that decline had anything to do with the location of Washington, DC. It was simple sloth and neglect combined with Jefferson's misbelief that cities were evil places that should be avoided and discouraged. He didn't get many wrong - but he sure got that one wrong."

Some may not understand how important this reality is to Virginia's chance of achieving a sustainable economic, social and physical trajectory.

One manifestation of the historical context Groveton articulates is that Virginia has always ended up favoring individual freedom over community responsibilities. Sustainability requires a Balance between the two in an urban, much less Global, society. The last nonurban society disappeared in New Guinea years ago - or was the last one in Brazil?

The second manifestation of Groveton's observation is that there has been and continues to be an anti-urban bias build into the Commonwealth's Constitution, governance structure, legislation and especially the infrastructure.

I recall a dinner in Richmond where members of several of Main Street's

leading families - and thus Richmond's leading families as this was 25 years ago - each identified themselves by the plantation / hamlet in the Countryside with which their family (or their spouse) was associated before the Civil War.

In an urban society a nonurban orientation is not springboard for success.

Something to think about on a rainy weekend.

EMR

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

## ON THE ECONOMY

As we point out in PART IV of THE PROBLEM WITH CARS, 15 May 2007 may be thought of decades from now as the 'Ides of March' of the Automobile - Large, Private Vehicles.

The week that proceeded and the week that followed the 15 th of March in 2008 may be thought of as the 'Ides of March' for the leveraged, securitized, subsidized Global Economy, as we knew it.

The last few days there has been a "too-numerous-to.." count, cite or link-to flood of MainStream Media coverage but there is no examination of the bottom line:

Two items get no press.

First the real cause of the current crisis. Behind (or perhaps underneath?) the current financial Enterprise meltdown is the very same problem that was the root cause of the Savings and Loan Crisis (mid-80s), the Banking Crisis / Commercial Real Estate Meltdown (late-80s to mid-90s). The problem?

Dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

We had dogs in all these fights. We also had friends who we had warned five years before they went under in every downturn since Boise Cascade was wiped out by raw land speculation in the mid 70s. Our personal, inside experience includes not just national poster children like Boise Cascade and Continental Illinois Bank but a lot of Regional ones as well.

The lesson for citizens is simple: Evolve functional settlement patterns or suffer the economic consequences.

Sure, the “cause” of the current crisis is said to be the securitized sub-prime loans and securitized credit card debt that kicked over the house of cards. There were many other sub-problems too.

However, those most who were convinced by MainStream Media ads and low initial mortgage payments to buy a \$300,000 to \$900,000 dollar house in the R = 25 Miles to R = 60 Miles Radius Band could have afforded a \$120,000 to \$500,000 dwelling in R = 2 to R = 20 Radius Band.

The cause of the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis is this: Agency regulation and Enterprise short term profit objectives resulted in the building the wrong size house in the wrong location. The cause of the Mobility and Access Crisis is the need to rely on Automobiles to get from where citizens are to where they need to be.

The second overlooked issue: The headlong rush to solve the wrong problem.

Some - the Lame Duck White House and the lame candidates who want to next occupy the White House - are pretending there is no Recession.

Recent polls indicate that around 75 percent of the citizens think, and are acting as if, there is a Recession at hand With about the same percentage of the economy dependent on consumer spending, citizens and not Wall Street Titans or Federal regulators, are the ones who will make the decisions.

For most citizens, the past 10 years have been much like a recession as we point out in “Good News, Bad Reporting,” 5 March 2008.

At the same time as some some are in denial, others are focused on bailing out the leveraged, securitized, subsidized fools who got us here.

Steven Pearlstein quotes Nouriel Roubini: The current system has perfected a system of “socialized risk and privatizing gain.” E. J Dionne Jr

says the Wall Street Titans have turned into “a bunch of welfare clients.”

Yes, there is a lot to be said for Groveton’s point that now that everyone in the boat is where they are, Agencies have to bail out the fat cats that caused the problem because if not far more citizens will suffer.

The point we make in “Good News, Bad Reporting” is that trying in vain to prevent a needed Recession may throw us all into a Depression.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Transportation/land use](#)

Friday, March 21, 2008

## BY DEFINITION

In a comment following the 18 March post "ON THE ECONOMY" Anon 12:00 PM said...

"Functional human settlement patterns will solve all our problems - by definition."

He / she was, perhaps, doing a funny but they have a point.

We are painfully aware that many - ranging from advocates of remineralization; to vegetarians; to enforcers of family values; to those who advocate the right to carry concealed weapons into PTA meetings - suggest if everyone would just do as they suggest "all our problems will be solved."

That is why we spent over a decade writing *The Shape of the Future* and why PART TWO (Chapters 5 thru 14) spells out in detail the economic, social and physical impacts of dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

So far no one has disputed the reality of these impacts. They have disputed the collective will of citizens to do anything about them.

It is silly to say functional human settlement patterns will solve "all our problems." It is accurate to say that functional settlement patterns will facilitate solving many problems like the Mobility and Access Crisis and the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis that underlie the current financial market turmoil.

What is more, as documented by Chapter 23 of *The Shape of the Future*, evolving functional human settlement patterns is the first step on the road to creating a sustainable trajectory for civilization.

Even with functional human settlement patterns there are some complicating factors such as human genetic proclivities and the question:

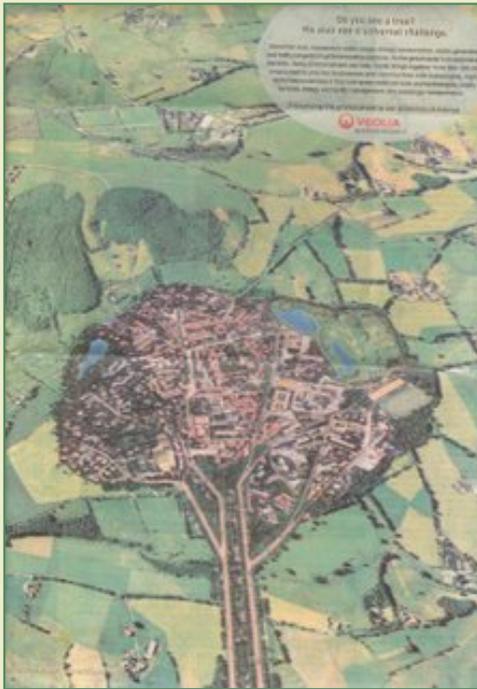
Will the genetic proclivities that got humans to this point keep them from going farther?

And, what IS “farther?”

EMR

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

## VEOLIA AD IN AN EVER SMALLER WORLD



Those who are accustomed to our complaining about WaPo ads - and MainStream Media ads in general - may be surprised but today's WaPo on page A-7 has an ad that is worth a careful look.

After you have looked at the "Do you see a Tree?, We also see a universal challenge." ad, check out the [Veolia web site](#) to find out about this Enterprise that provides

"water, waste, energy and transport services" for urban areas.

Here is the story:

The ad has for a background a high-oblique air photo of what appears to be a swatch of French Countryside. It may be Tuscany or Bavaria or ?. It may even be New Zealand or South Africa but it 'looks like' the countryside in Europa. In this swatch of Countryside the farmsteads are not centered on hamlets because the artist did not want to distract from the 'Tree.'

The 'Tree' is an Alpha Village scale urban place with a divided parkway serving as the "trunk." It could be a large Lewenz ('Parallel') Village but does not have the Automobile Free Core. In the graphic one can identify a number of land uses that 'could' represent a Balance of J / H / S / R / A.

What is very apparent is the Clear Edge and the relationship between

Openspace inside the Clear Edge with Open Land outside the Clear Edge.

Could it just be that Veolia, an Enterprise that provides water, waste, energy and transport services, knows a thing or two about the settlement patterns the result from the fair allocation of location-variable cost?

OK, perhaps it is just a nice graphic that happens to be useful to illustrate those realities.

We will never know.

On a related topic, NPR did a two part series on 31 March and 1 April on the climate and lifestyle impact of dysfunctional and functional human settlement patterns. The Atlanta New Urban Region is the venue. The functional example - Atlantic Station - was designed based on the Richard Thornton graphic we included and described in our "All Aboard" column of 16 April 2007.

It is a small world and getting smaller with fewer places to hide for the 12 ½ Percenters.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## LEARNING FROM FLIGHT

Two weeks ago the last PART of THE PROBLEM WITH CARS went on line at Bacon's Rebellion.

Our mail is running 60-40.

60 Percent say: "Right-on! Cars ARE the problem..."

40 Percent say: "No way! You will have to pry my cold dead hands off the steering wheel..."

I will not do that, but someone will.

With food and energy prices rising in the First World and food riots spreading in the "Developing World" where can citizens turn for answers?

The MainStream Media - as noted in THE ESTATES MATRIX - does provide some information. MainStream Media coverage of airline Enterprises - "restructuring" or "demise"? - presents the opportunity to learn from the most consumptive form of vehicle travel. Air travel also has the most unfair allocation of location-variable costs - pollution, noise, subsidies to encourage Mass OverConsumption...

Understanding the condition of aircraft Enterprises provides a good place to consider the question:

Can humans change settlement patterns, mobility options and governance structure fast enough to avoid Collapse?

Check out "The End of Flight as We Know It" in today's Bacon's Rebellion.

In answer to one question we have received today: Yes *TRILO-G* will have a chapter on "I told you so back when there was time to change.

EMR



## A NOTE FOR TOOMANYTAXES:

TooManyTaxes (aka, TMT) posted a number of comments on the Jim Bacons "The Transportation Debate and the Unreported Land Use Revolution" submission below.

TMT is right about the Dillon Rule, wrong about Greater-Warrenton Fauquier and the future of the 9 Beta Communities that fall all or partly in Fairfax County.

Greater-Warrenton Fauquier already has planned urban enclaves with more space than there is a foreseeable market in the next 50 years.

Citizens and the leadership of Greater-Warrenton Fauquier, when presented with the options in an intelligent manner, would like to have Jobs and Services to Balance the population now living in the Beta Community.

Moreover, they would love to have new Jobs and Services to create a real Balance within the Clear Edges around the urban enclaves aka "Service Districts" that are planned.

What they have been getting over the past 50 years is an increasing flood of scattered urban dwellings and orphan subdivisions. Most of these new urban residents with jobs in the Core are here because of the programs, projects, policies and controls of federal and Commonwealth Agencies and especially the municipal Agencies inside the logical location of the Clear Edge around the Core of the Subregion. Fairfax County is a poster child for the causes of Community, Subregional and Regional dysfunction.

In recent times the wrong sized houses in the wrong locations of Greater Warrenton-Fauquier have been joined by a tide of Business-As-Usual chain stores with more on the way. Not to worry. Some of those under

construction in the US Route 29 Corridor will never open and / or soon close. They were “planned” based on a continuing flow of “commuting” residents. That will stop for the reasons we spell out in today’s column. “Three Little Words.”

What has happened in Greater Warrenton-Fauquier has happened across the National Capital Subregion. Especially in the Virginia part of the Subregion there are grossly dysfunctional settlement patterns. These patterns and densities of land use are exacerbated by the least-common-denominator actions TMT points out vis a vis The Rule in Dillon’s Case.

If TMT wants to help he could organize his friends to push for the evolution of a Balance of J / H / S / R / A in each METRO station area and most VRE station areas.

He and his friends could push for much higher parking fees for METRO parking lots. They could support the movement from flat rates and general taxes to fee for services.

What most citizens of Fairfax County call “Quality of Life” is based on an inequitable distribution of the costs of location variable goods and services and reflect the policies, programs, projects and controls noted above.

Not to worry, life as TMT and his cohorts have known it is going away for the reasons noted in “Three Little words.”

Instead of suggesting the further spread of dysfunctional human settlement patterns, TMT needs to lead the charge for a Fundamental Transformation in Fairfax County settlement patterns before it is too late.

We will be happy to send along the 11 Strategies for shaping a functional and sustainable future in Greater Warrenton-Fauquier. They are not that much different from the ones needed in Fairfax County and the rest of the

~~Washington Baltimore New Urban Region.~~

Good luck.

EMR

PS: Getting rid of the Rule in Dillon's Case will do no more to improve human settlement patterns in Virginia than doing that has done in other states. It takes Fundamental Transformation in governace structure to achieve Fundamental Transformation in human settlement patterns.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

## HEADLINES, HEADLINES

There has been a lot of loose talk on this Blog about Fundamental Transformation not being an urgent need, especially in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Our friends the Tiger Riders may have not been reading the headlines.

Last Saturday the Business section of WaPo was headlined by: "Flying Is Going to Get Even Less Fun." You may recall our column 21 April column "The End of Flight as We Knew It."

Early this week AOL Money featured an analysis of recent stock trends and suggested 17 large Enterprises that, based on stock market performance, may not be with us for long. Number one on the list and four of the top 5 were airline Enterprises - American, United, Northwest and Delta. Five of the top 8 were airline Enterprises.

Add the cost of aircraft impact on the upper atmosphere to the price of a ticket and the US of A will be back to one flag carrier, airport overcapacity and very few who can afford to travel. Deregulation and cheap fuel sure did improve air travel.

Think of all those Households (formerly known as "families") who believed it was fine to disaggregate and scatter across the globe because they could always fly "home" for the holidays and when there was an emergency...

On the AOL list were three were major financial institutions and the two biggest Automobile manufactures - Chrysler already having been towed away after a fire sale. They also believed their own ads and the chant that demand for Large, Private Vehicles was inelastic.

On 13 June WaPo had a headline "Medical Fraud a Growing Problem" and in the same issue the Business section headlined "The Economy's Steady Pulse: Health-Care Sector Is Poised to Keep Growing, But so Are Its Costs."

Not likely any Tiger Riders are going to try to track down fraud or cut costs if medical services is the only sector of the economy - other than flood damage repair and ad revenue from the Internet - that are expanding. The health and welfare of other nation-states is better with a different system but this one makes some more profit in the short term.

On Monday the 16th WaPo had a full page ad by HybridTechnologies touting the value of lithium battery powered vehicles. The ad was not there to sell cars, it was selling stock in a company that will sell the cars. Small, efficient vehicles are good, but are not a good investment without fundamental change in settlement patterns. See "Aptera and the Tiger Riders."

On the 17th one of the above-the-fold front page stories was headlined "McCain Seeks to End Offshore Drilling Ban." WaPo commentators had a field day with the flip-flop from prior positions but the real story was that the flip side of the jump page was that overexposed crying baby ad paid for by 'The people of America's Oil and Natural Gas Industry' that asks "who really pays when congress taxes oil companies?" The children of well paid energy CEOs?

A society that has seven parking places for every Automobile and five bed places for every body needs to reconsider where the current trajectory is taking everyone, including those at the top of the Ziggurat.

Perhaps citizenS need to come up with a new metric for well being.

It is enough to make one want to add some paragraphs to THE ESTATES MATRIX.

EMR

Tuesday, August 05, 2008

## GAS PRICES AND RELATED

The *WaPo* series “Oil Shock” continued today. All in all a good series that has been running since 27 July. How can you not like a series that profiles your past life?

The oil field profiled in the 29 July story looks EXACTLY like the oil lease North and West of Bakersfield where our family lived during the late 40s. That house in the background in the page A-8 photo with a few scraggly athel trees could our house. My father and mother were farmers. He also worked in the oil fields during World War II - too old for military service. The job in Central Valley “old field production” was a way station after being forced out of farming in the Santa Inez Valley. While living in Coalinga they decided to move to Montana where hunting, fishing and sub-irrigated meadows beckoned.

But back to the series: Today’s story: “Gas Prices Applying Brakes To Suburban Migration; Reality Check on the American Dream” repeats much of what you have heard from Bacon and Risse for over 20 years. All the usual suspects say the usual things including the mouth pieces for Business-As-Usual and the Automobile. See the note on funding of transportation “experts” in THE PROBLEM WITH CARS.

Ironically *WaPo* chose to feature a home in South Riding. South Riding started as a quasi New Urbanist Planned New Village. Of all the places in the eastern part of Loudoun County, South Riding still has the best shot at Balance and “community” at the Village scale. There is a range of building types, a plan with the original intent of becoming an “English Village” and a core of First Families that believe in creating something better than more dysfunctional human settlement patterns. Full disclosure: The South

Riding governance structure is a former client of SYNERGY/Planning.

In the end, the story is more He Said, She Said journalism -- with a small "j" -- but at least it mentions the problems even if it papers over most of them with Geographically Illiterate foolishness such as we will not "all decide to live in apartment houses." Who in the world said "everyone" would or should? Only the strawperson spinners of the Automobile crowd. A Balanced (Alpha) Community could have fewer apartments that Single Household Detached dwellings and no "high-rises" but that does not keep the Automobile crowd from throwing up red herrings and strawpersons to scare the uninformed and ride the tiger a little longer. See "Tiger Riders" 2 June 2008.

For those who continue to obfuscate an understanding of human settlement patterns by railing against S/P's campaign for the use of precise language, take a look at the graphic sidebar on page A14. You will note Radial Analysis (truncated by the lack of data below the County scale) and the use of terms like "Core." We suspect the editors never looked at the side bar. It makes too much sense and if you read it with care you understand how much of *WaPo* coverage is misleading at best and often intentional obfuscation.

An aside: Check out *The Shape of the Future* page at Amazon.Com. Look at the "Inside the Book" feature and at "Statistically Improbable Phrases." This is a feature that Amazon added not long after our book was published in 2000. The same sort of software now produces those "word balloons" that are popular on "style" pages. A lot of what were "statistically improbable phrases" in the early years of the decade are not any longer.

Back to gasoline, CNN Money.Com reprinted a *Fortune* story yesterday "Falling oil prices: The Downside" that is a MUST READ. The reason oil prices (and gas prices) are down is lower demand - here, not in China or India. That is bad news for the economy and the need to establish a

rational strategy to reduce consumption and energy waste without causing a long, hard depression. See our column of yesterday - "Beyond the Headlines" - for further discussion of the missed opportunities.

Apparently the mavens of Gambling Venue New York (aka, the New York Stock Market) did not get to their MUST READ pile. They will in a day or two and the market will drop 200 points. That is what gambling venues do to keep the game interesting.

And on the politics-as-usual front: candidates are falling all over themselves to find ways to lower the price of gasoline and energy. They should be suggesting ways to lower the consumption of gasoline, energy and non-renewable resources, not just lowering the price.

Let the market work, stop bailing out the greedy and punishing the thrifty.

At least WaPo gets that right in the Oil Shock series.

EMR

Friday, August 22, 2008

## FANNIE AND FREDDIE

The front page of today's *WaPo* Business section has a nice clear diagram on how the Fannie and Freddie balloon is deflating - by reversing the process that created the bubble in the first place.

On the same page Columnist Steven Pearlstein, who recently did a fine job of nailing Sir Alan (Greenspan) to the wall for his role in the current unpleasantness, has some sound advice for Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson on Fannie and Freddie as well - get out the bazooka.

Strange as it may seem there is STILL no mention in *WaPo* coverage of the REAL problem with Fannie and Freddie - financing dysfunctional settlement patterns by failing to create any guidelines on the LOCATION of the dwellings covered by the mortgages they bought and packaged.

Perhaps the editors should reread the story by Juliet Eilperin datelined Seattle from 4 May 2008 in, of all places *WaPo*. The May story has a climate change focus but she presents a nice simple explanation of why LOCATION, PATTERN AND DENSITY - in a phrase 'human settlement patterns' are so important. Eiplerin underestimates the level of impact settlement patterns by a factor of 5 (the is 500%) but it is a start and should be enough to make clear what the REAL problem is with Fannie and Freddie.

The Eilperin story also reinforces the point Jim Bacon makes in Peter G's post on Obama / Virginia: "When are we going to start making transport investments based on supporting functional and sustainable human settlement patterns?" More in Monday's column.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#),  
[Transportation/land use](#)

## HIGH NOON FOR ENTERPRISE SOCIALISM

The bail out of Fannie and Freddie confirms how far the US of A has drifted from a democracy with a market economy.

No one is yet even talking about the real problem with Freddie and Fannie - putting billions into a dysfunctional Agency backed system to put the wrong size house in the wrong location (aka, the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis).

Agency programs demonstrate a bipolar oscillation between IRRATIONAL EXUBERANCE and pandering populism on the road to Collapse.

P.S. Why is the Freddie Foundation logo on ads for a charity basketball game?

P.S.S. No wonder he is in the Hall of Fame:

“Another thing Riley would have done differently would have been actually living in New York (the Core of the New York / New Jersey / Connecticut New Urban Region) instead of maintaining a home in (a relatively remote part of or the Region) Connecticut. That may have contributed to some of the burnout.”

The only help that can be offered to commuters is to help them become non-commuters.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [stupid government tricks](#)

# Bacon's Rebellion

Building more prosperous, livable and sustainable regions in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Monday, September 15, 2008

## IT IS THE NEW URBAN REGION, PLEASE

Jim Bacon has been into the numbers again. See “States, Taxes and Laffer Curve” below. (This is a new post since some may not make it past Anon 5:31's post.)

Good post Jim: Glad you noted the importance of human settlement patterns. That leads to the one concern we have with the post: The problem is not just using “state” data instead of “metropolitan region” data. One has to go much deeper into the data issue before any analysis is of real value.

For example:

Larry G. (is that you Larry Gross?) cites a report by Milken / Greenstreet that makes this case crystal clear.

First on Vocabulary: I am sure everyone who looked up the study noted the authors called this the “best performing ‘CITIES’” but the entries are the top 200 “MSAs” or parts there of (e.g. “MDs”) not a “city” on the list.

If you do not know what you are talking about, you do not know what you are talking about.

Even more important of the top 25 places on the list - what ever you call them - 20 are in New Urban Regions. These are not small, out of the way places, they are parts of New Urban Regions, just as you would expect.

What is more 11 of the top 25 places fall into just 4 New Urban Regions.

## About This Blog

Bacon's Rebellion covers public policy issues in Virginia with an emphasis on taxes, infrastructure, land use, transportation, energy and the environment.

We request, though we don't require, readers to use their real names when they comment. For those unwilling to reveal their real name, we ask that they use a consistent pseudonym so others can more easily track who is saying what.

We have managed, so far, to avoid posting elaborate rules for participating in this blog. We simply urge contributors and commenters to maintain a collegial atmosphere.

Direct all the fire and fury you want at another person's argument, but do not engage in ad hominem attacks. The publisher reserves the right to delete any comments that violate this basic rule.

In other words there is no reason to spend much time looking at this or other badly aggregated information.

Using "state" data makes any analysis less meaningful than "metropolitan region" data, but not much.

We explore the newly in-vogue term "megaregion" in *TRILO-G*.

There are problems with going too big as well as too small with data aggregation. Think organic, in the food market and in the data.

charlie: Why "New Urban Region" not "state"? The reason is simple, the New Urban Region is the fundamental building block of contemporary economic, social and physical civilization.

Yes, there are some things that vary by state (or by county or nation-state) but not as many as vary by the organic components of society.

TMT: Think New Urban Region, not "nova," where ever that may be.

Darrell - Chesapeake: Right on except it is Fundamental Transformation, not fundamental change, that phrase has been hijacked by the Business-As-Usual political spinners.

EMR

Posted by E M at 11:04 

Risse AM

Labels: [Economy](#), [Human Settlement](#)  
[Patterns](#)

### 11 comments:

 Anonymous said...

"In other words there is no reason to spend much time looking at this or other badly aggregated information."

### Glossary

Much of the discussion on Bacon's Rebellion uses a number of unfamiliar phrases and words with precise meanings to advance the understanding of human settlement patterns. For clarification and edification, you can access a glossary of those terms [here](#).

### Editorial Guidelines

Bacon's Rebellion strives to provide the highest quality news and commentary. We make our editorial policies available to the public. You can read them [here](#). We invite our readers to hold us accountable. Don't hesitate to point out violations or inconsistencies to the publisher [here](#).

### Contributors

 [Gooze Views](#)

 [E M Risse](#)

 [James A. Bacon](#)

### Blog Archive

• ▼ 2009 (85)

◦ ▼ 06/07 - 06/14 (2)

▪ [Can Bailouts](#)

Are you saying that because the information is not aggregated according to your favored definitions, no data has value?

If I give you the weight of a car, is the answer wrong because you wanted the answer by component? If I give you the weight by component, is my answer wrong just because you define chassis, or drivetrain differently?

RH

9/15/08 11:34 AM

 Anonymous said...

Here is an example of better data in action. EMR would no doubt say it is still flawed, because it isn't aggregated properly.

Notice that this new data brings New York and Chicago into the top five most congested lists, along with DC. All of these cities have excellent public transportation. Regardless of how it is aggregated, truth is truth.

"INRIX's data collection is unique in that it combines Department of Transportation road sensor information with GPS and toll tag data from commercial vehicle fleets like taxis and trucks. In addition, the company can incorporate factors like weather, construction, school schedules, and sports events into its traffic predictions.

This type of hard data seems imminently more valuable than the modeling that has traditionally tried to define congestion, such as the work by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), and it is little surprise that TTI's ranking of the most congested areas differs from INRIX's. INRIX ranks the top five congested areas as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Washington DC, and Dallas. TTI ranks them (based on 2005 data) as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC, Atlanta, and Dallas. TTI bases its estimates primarily on survey data of travel habits

[Actually Work?](#)

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○ ▶ 05/31 - 06/07 (5)

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○ ▶ 03/01 - 03/08 (2)

○ ▶ 02/22 - 03/01 (6)

○ ▶ 02/15 - 02/22 (6)

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○ ▶ 02/01 - 02/08 (7)

○ ▶ 01/25 - 02/01 (4)

○ ▶ 01/18 - 01/25 (6)

○ ▶ 01/11 - 01/18 (3)

○ ▶ 01/04 - 01/11 (3)

• ▶ 2008 (592)

• ▶ 2007 (846)

• ▶ 2006 (826)

and broad statistics such as traffic volumes and highway lane-miles. The flaws in this type of methodology have long been apparant, but no better alternatives existed."

RH

9/15/08 1:24 PM

 Anonymous said...

Here is another example of real data supplanting previously supposed "facts":

"As we learn to monitor and analyse what really happens out there, some complex and quite fascinating relationships are beginning to come to light. An example of this came when the latest Trafficmaster/RAC Foundation Journey Time Index was published in the U.K. It seems that high fuel prices, the credit crunch and the economic slowdown have resulted in decreasing traffic congestion, with jams down 12 per cent compared to 2007. It also found that the average speed on Britain's motorways has slowed from 63.3 mph to 62.2 mph as motorists aim to conserve fuel, and despite slowing speeds, journey times have improved by 0.3%.

The data for the survey is actually a by-product resulting from Trafficmaster's other services in the UK which include an intelligent satellite navigation system, which uses live traffic information [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/traffic\\_reporting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/traffic_reporting) and real-time road speeds to calculate optimum routes and avoid traffic congestion, stolen vehicle tracking [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vehicle\\_tracking\\_system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vehicle_tracking_system), and the provision of live traffic information to other aftermarket and factory-fit satellite navigation systems.

• ▶ 2005 (961)

Followers

.....

This change in traffic trends is down to a general drop in the number of vehicles, particularly heavy goods vehicles, travelling at peak times.

This could in part be due to the downturn in the retail and construction industries that predominately make up the commercial vehicle segment. The completion of a number of major road works also plays a major part in the dramatic decrease in congestion."

Imagine that: build roads, reduce congestion.

Imagine that: economic slowdown, less congestion.

RH

9/15/08 1:50 PM

 Anonymous said...

Or try this data on for size.

"Housing remains relatively unaffordable in rural areas, the Bank of Scotland has said.

A new report from the mortgage lender, the Scottish Rural Housing Review, shows that the cost of the average countryside home in Scotland is 21 percent above its equivalent in other areas in the UK. Moreover, first time buyers were found to be largely shut out of the rural market: just one in five people moving into these homes have not owned property before, down from 31 percent in urban areas.

Moreover, the average price of a rural home was revealed to be 13 percent higher than elsewhere. A disparity in provision of social housing was also noted: with the cheap homes making up five percent more of total urban stock (15 percent to ten percent)."

Not only are rural homes more expensive (more demand according to EMR's argument) but most people buying them have previously owned homes - in urban areas.

RH

9/15/08 1:59 PM

 Anonymous said...

OK, I give up.

Rural places are A) more expensive to buy in  
or B) less expensive to actually live in?

"According to ACCRA cost-of-living data on BestPlaces.net, the standard of living you can enjoy in red Wasilla, Alaska for \$93,000 would cost you \$159,000 in blue San Francisco. Due to its remoteness and fridity, Alaska isn't a cheap place to live, but housing costs in exurban Wasilla are only 35 percent of what they are in San Francisco."

RH

9/15/08 2:09 PM

 Anonymous said...

Again "RH," in his attempt to make a fool of Dr. Risse, has demonstrated that those afflicted with Geographic Illiteracy who rely on simple analogies end up documenting that they are simpletons.

Let's take "RH's" car analogy and demonstrate the point Dr. Risse was made:

The boundaries and the components of a "car" are easy to determine.

If all the components of the car are weighted using common units of measure, then they will weigh the same as the car.

The boundaries and content of a "region" are not easy to determine as demonstrated by how few get it right. Some use the outline of a jurisdictions created 100 years before the Model T was invented to determine the boundaries of the region; some consider only one or more irregular sections cut through the territory. A quick analysis of the Milken numbers demonstrate that.

The weight of a car and the weight of its components are simple to determine. But the composition, conductivity and interrelationships of the components of a region are not.

Dr. Risse put it correctly: "If you do not know what you are talking about, you do not know what you are talking about."

9/15/08 2:15 PM

 Anonymous said...

I'm not attempting to portray anyone as anything. I have no need to try to make a fool out of Dr. Risse.

I'm merely pointing out that there are many pieces of data, many points of view, and many regimes where they apply and where they don't. Some of these seem to refute EMR's contentions.

The boundaries of a car and its components are easy to determine only if we all agree. The chassis might be considered the frame, suspension, and wheels, and I suspect that would be generally acknowledged. The point of the analogy was that if EMR "defined" the chassis without the wheels, then by EMR's logic the data would be wrong because it was aggregated "imprecisely".

Or, if you have a monocoque car, where does the frame stop and the body begin? Do you count wiring as a separate component, or just include it with electronics? The total weight is the same to be sure, but you could haggle endlessly over how it is defined into subregions.

But as you correctly caught on, it doesn't mean the total is wrong. That being the case I see no point in simply throwing out all the data: rather, you use what you have as best you can.

Conceptually, it is no harder to define areas than it is to define auto or marine or aerospace components, so it comes down to whether you want to actually make progress, or just haggle over points. Rather than accepting data as it is and incorporating it in his model of the World According to Dr Risse, EMR would prefer to dismiss it as wrong or the messenger as a fool.

I don't feel any need to be offended by that: it isn't my data and it isn't my message. As a student, I'm free to ask questions. If my professor won't or can't answer them, then I'll probably hire another professor, or just discount his credibility.

Anyone can reach the right conclusion if they wait infinitely long for perfect data. Anyone can defend their position as unassailable because no "proper" data exists to refute it. How many people and researchers regularly use EMR's classification of regions? If so many others are wrong in their classifications, why would I believe he is any more right?

Apparently it is "cheaper" to live in Wasilla than San Francisco, but more expensive to live in Alness than Inverness, and more expensive to live in Queens than in Houston. Maybe that's because we have not defined all the externalities, and the true locational costs, as EMR claims. Whatever, the facts are what they are.

The hard part is making good decisions under uncertainty, with the data

you have. All EMR says is that there is no reason to look at this or any other badly aggregated information: the only correct way to look at things is his way.

Sorry, I'm not sold yet. Put a price on the externalities and give everyone a share of ownership. Then let them buy and sell at will, and we will eventually find out what things are worth.

We will find out the costs of public policy variables that affect any regions long-term economic growth when we find out what the sum of all the individual costs are. If you do that, you can choose any boundaries you like for your "region". If someone else chooses different boundaries, they will have different answers and both will still be right. But if you count some costs and ignore others, as EMR does, then every answer will be wrong.

"If you do not know what you are talking about, you do not know what you are talking about." simply strikes me as the perfect example of the self-prefacing circular proof that EMR is so fond of. With logic like that, it's hard to be wrong.

RH

9/15/08 5:14 PM



Anonymous said...

"If we are going to talk about "change" it needs to be Fundamental Change."

EMR, 2007

"...it is Fundamental Transformation, not fundamental change, that phrase has been hijacked by the Business-As-Usual political spinners."

EMR, 2008

?????

RH

9/15/08 5:20 PM

 Anonymous said...

EMR - I still believe that NoVA is quite material to reality -- for political reasons. I work with a number of people who, in turn, work to influence elected and appointed officials in Fairfax County and surrounding areas.

While it is challenging to compete with campaign contributions, there still are some elected officials in Fairfax County (Foust, Herrity, Frey, McKay) who are interested in the views of ordinary people on development. Of course, to have any influence with Fairfax officials, it helps to be a county resident. It is more challenging to try to influence other Virginia local officials and simply impossible to have an impact in D.C. or Maryland.

Political boundaries are and will continue to be key.

TMT

9/16/08 7:32 AM

 E M Risse said...

TMT said:

"EMR - I still believe that NoVA is quite material to reality -- for political reasons."

Of course you are right, but...

Where is "NOVA"?

We define the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region, the National Capital Subregion and of course the Virginia portion of the National Capital Subregion.

These are all organic components.

But where is "Nova" See our 11 August 2003 for a laundry list of "official" versions of what Nova is.

This is one of the frustrations of discussing human settlement patterns. The topic is too complex to bring into every conversation, every relevant point.

When conditions change, we change, until then, what we said in 1965, 1985, 1990, 2000, 2003 or early 2008 still stands.

Also note you used the word "political."

That is the primary reason for the confusion and why there is a need for Fundamental Transformation in governance structure.

More on that later.

EMR

9/16/08 10:13 AM



Anonymous said...

"The topic is too complex to bring into every conversation, every relevant point."

No more so than any other big topic. The point is to make good decisions under uncertainty, make good decisions with the data you have, within the boundaries you can reach.

I once had a chemistry professor who sent his whole career synthesizing

all the members of one family of compounds, searching for one with anti carcinogenic properties. After 43 years he concluded he had been barking up the wrong tree.

Sometimes you make your own frustrations.

RH

9/16/08 9:42 PM

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## ANTIDOTE FOR ENTERPRISE SOCIALISM

Looks like AIG, like Freddie and Fannie, should have spent some of the money they wasted on advertising to improve corporate management and risk analysis.

On 8 Sept we posted a note on this Blog titled "HIGH NOON FOR ENTERPRISE SOCIALISM." Turns out it was only a little past 8 AM. The lesson from AIG is that if you are big enough to hurt a lot of folks and endanger the political party in power, you are big enough for the feds to bail out. So much for a market economy and a "conservative" administration.

Back in March we wrote a column at [www.baconsrebellion.com](http://www.baconsrebellion.com) titled "Good New, Bad Reporting." The column did more that beat on MainStream Media for putting the wrong spin on the "news" and failing to provide the background citizens must have to understand the need for Fundamental Transformation in not just human settlement patterns but in governance including management of the economy.

Citizens need to move in the direction of a human scale, not just in settlement patterns but in every aspect of economic, social and physical activity. No one in any Agency, Enterprise or Institution is larger than human scale, although there are far too many with appetites, egos, hubris and greed that is Global.

One of the few Institutions in the Commonwealth that is considering the right set of questions is ASAP ([www.ASAPnow.org](http://www.ASAPnow.org)) in Cville. On Monday 20 October they are hosting the president of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy (CASSE at [www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org)).

The end of Mass OverConsumption is near. What is the alternative in addition to functional human settlement patterns? Small is Beautiful. A

steady state economy is an imperative.

EMR

Labels: [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION

Citizens face a financial crisis triggered by:

- Federal Agencies creating an over supply of cheap money, and
- Failure of federal Agencies to carry out their responsibility to protect citizens - and the market economy - from wild, irrational exuberance - specifically the creation of speculative “investment opportunities”

What is the proposed solution?

Create a new federal Agency and spend another \$700-Billion dollars primarily to bail out those who caused the problem by making bad decisions.

This solution will not build rational scaled dwellings in functional and sustainable locations.

This solution will not create durable and sustainable infrastructure.

This solution will only put off for a short while the day when citizens must face the need for Fundamental Transformation is human settlement patterns and Fundamental Transformation in governance structure. These Transformations are necessary if civilization is to achieve a sustainable trajectory.

The current crisis has been in the making for 60 years. Nearly everyone has “benefitted” in some way from the profligate squandering of natural capital, degrading the environment, putting the balance of nature at risk and creating dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

However, just a few have really profited from what we term the orgy of Mass OverConsumption that exceeds the wildest dreams of any prior society. Now they will get bailed out while all suffer, none more than

those at the bottom of the economic Ziggurat.

The core responsibility of governance is the manage society and the current management strategy is not working. There must be Fundamental Transformation.

Recently a colleague who reads our work said: "You say 'There must be Fundamental Transformation of governance structure' but I am not sure what you mean." It turns out we needed just such a summary statement for a chapter in *TRILO-G* and so here it is:

(Sunday is a slow day on the Blog and so I am putting it all here. Jim Bacon can move it to a separate jump page if that seems like a better idea to him.)

#### FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The key to understanding the need for Fundamental Transformation in governance structure is to recognize that:

A contemporary democracy with a market economy relies on educated citizens. A contemporary democracy cannot function long with quasi-citizens who are "Running As Hard As They Can" and are "represented" by a few who occupy positions of power in political Institutions.

These governance practitioners have worked themselves up in the political party duopoly and in practitioner elites to the point that they claim - and really believe - that they know what is best for their constituents, in spite of that citizens may believe. These governance practitioners have also perfected strategies to line their own pockets, cover their own tails / trails and - most importantly - how to blame someone from the other party if something goes wrong - which it always does.

Three key principles for the evolution of functional governance are:

- **The level of authority / control / action must be at the level of impact.** That is true for land use and land management, and it is also for education, public health, public safety, infrastructure - including transport, communications - and everything else that Agencies do to insure the health, safety and welfare of citizens.

- **There must be a functional level of governance for each of the organic components of human settlement.** If there are impacts of Agency actions at multiple levels - and there almost always is multi-scale impact - then there must be shared responsibility. Functional governance does not occur in a system where the “highest” - and the most remote - level of governance always controls. Currently, there is no governance structure at most of the levels - or scales - of impact with whom to share responsibility. For example, there is not yet a single New Urban Region-scale governance structure in the US of A.

- **The basic building block of contemporary civilization is the New Urban Region.** For this reason, Regions - New Urban Regions (NUR) and Urban Support Regions (USR) - are the most important components in the evolution of functional governance structures. At the same time the evolution of the primary components of Regions - Alpha Communities - are also critical. In most cases, the existing municipalities (and counties) are not coterminous with any organic component of human settlement - especially Alpha Communities. In addition, the organic components of Alpha Communities are very important. This is true not just because of the need for functional governance at those scales of human activity. It is critical because citizens will not allow / tolerate functional Regional Agencies to evolve until they are very comfortable with the role and function of Cluster-, Neighborhood- and Village-scale governance structures.

The current system of governance was created before contemporary

economic, social and physical structures were even imagined. From the perspective of human settlement pattern the most important components of the existing governance structure are the Declaration of Independence (1775), The Northwest Ordinance (1787) and the Constitution (1789). The 1775 / 1787 / 1789 structure of governance was crafted for an emerging nation-state where five percent of the population was urban and ninety-five percent of the population was agrarian. It was also a society with slaves, no women's suffrage and the vast majority of the citizens were illiterate. Add to this the fact that the Industrial Revolution was in its infancy and the importance of trade, technology and communication taken for granted today would have been incomprehensible to citizens and their leaders in 1790.

The 1775 / 1787 / 1789 governance structure, as amended to date, is in many ways irrelevant to a society where:

- Nine-five percent of the population is urban and only five percent is agrarian
- Communication is instantaneous
- Universal education and universal suffrage are overarching goals

The federal constitution provides for protection of critical, overarching rights and responsibilities. However, the powers reserved to the states allows state governance structures to play an ever more damaging dog-in-the-manger role in governance structure.

Even though the state as a level of governance grows less relevant with each passing day, states continue to avoid the absolute necessity of Fundamental Transformation of governance structure. This is especially true for those states that straddle one or more Regional (NUR or USR) boundaries. Almost all of the "Lower 48" states straddle Regional boundaries. Seven states include parts of Regions that fall in more than one nation-state.

Caught between:

- Municipal (including county) governance practitioners who believe it is in their best interest to thwart the evolution of functional governance at and below the Alpha Community scale; and
- State governance practitioners who believe it is in their best interest to thwart the evolution of functional governance at and above the Alpha Community scale - especially at the New Urban Region scale; and
- Federal governance practitioners who believe it is in their best interest to thwart the evolution of functional governance at all scales;

Citizens have no current voice or leverage to secure Fundamental Transformation of governance structure.

Inspired by the impact of two World Wars fought over resources and territory, the citizens of the EU are SLOWLY evolving a more functional governance structure both “UP” from the nation-state level and “DOWN” from the nation-state level. They have a long way to go, but at least they have started.

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Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Governance](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE TRAJECTORY

Today's events suggest the existing governance structure is skating ever closer to the abyss. On Sunday, 21 September we posted a note titled "Fundamental Transformation" that focused on Fundamental Transformation of governance structure.

As of 28 September there were 37 comments following the post but only one addressed the issue of Fundamental Transformation of governance structure. That one (Anon 7:21) discussed a change that would abrogate a major tenant of the Constitution.

In our view, Fundamental Transformation of governance structure requires NO change in the Constitution.

The Constitution is fine, the problem is that implementation of the intent of the Constitution is thwarted by a failure of governance structure to evolve. This failure to evolve reflects a complete lack of understanding about the economic, social and physical changes that have taken place over the past 220 years.

There has been a failure to respond to changes with a contemporary version of the governance structure that is framed by the Constitution because those in control benefit from Business-As-Usual. For this reason they deny the need for change providing only lame excuses such as "traditional values."

Groveton made a very important point in the comments:

"America has overspent and/or under-taxed for too long."

He is absolutely right. Whether by taxes, fees or sweat equity, citizens individually and collectively must contribute more to the good of society and less to the greed and aggrandizement of a few at the top of the

Ziggurat. If there is to be a sustainable trajectory for civilization there must be a new metric of citizen well being, a commitment to Balance and less focus on competition. There must also be a fair allocation of costs, especially location-variable costs.

As we note in the post "FROM CNN:"

"Citizens of the US of A cannot continue to expect to live off of natural capital, imported energy and loans from foreign investors."

We argue that the economy must be restructured so that citizens do not have to rely on Mass OverConsumption - specifically buying more Large, Private Vehicles and buying more Wrong-Size Dwellings in the wrong location as the way to end recessions and create a prosperous, sustainable society.

A sustainable trajectory for civilization requires a steady state economy, not a consumption driven "growth" economy.

In this regard:

Small IS beautiful and Speed does kill.

With respect to Small IS beautiful: The Winner-Take-All / Consumption-Uber-Allies / Supercapitalism trajectory is based on the assumption that big is better and biggest is most competitive. Global organizations may be super-competitive from a price perspective but not from a value / sustainability perspective. There are finite limits to competition.

As we document in "The Shape of the Future," the first step toward a sustainable trajectory is to evolve functional human settlement patterns. That means a recognition that the New Urban Region is the Fundamental Building Block of contemporary society and that sustainable Regions are made up of Balanced Communities.

Organizations - Enterprises, Agencies and Institutions - that are larger than Region in scope must become the focus of intelligent Transformation. That is impossible to do within the existing governance structure.

At some point in the near future citizens will look at Global / Multi-National and dominate nation-state Enterprises, Agencies and Institutions the way tourists not look at the Pyramids:

“Why did they do that?”

“How did they get all those people to work so hard for the aggrandizement of a few?”

Some have considered mega-Agencies with suspicion for a long time. More and more view mega-Enterprises as a problem, not a solution. Next up are mega-Institutions and MegaRegions.

Credit where credit due: MainStream media is now raising a caution flag: The current bailout proposals will create more mega financial Enterprises, ones that are too big to fail e.g. Enterprise socialism. So far it is only a yellow flag. Why only a yellow flag when it should be obvious? For this answer see THE ESTATES MATRIX.

With respect to Speed kills: The complexity of society and the rate of churn increases the befuddlement of the RHTCs and paralyzes the aging population. Research shows marketers that Forest Gump spends more when he is befuddled. We now have \$700 million of befuddlement according to some Agency heads. Without Fundamental Transformation there will be a lot more and nothing with which to cover the debt.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Governance](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## OBSTACLES ON THE PATH TO A SUSTAINABLE TRAJECTORY

Over the past six years EMR used the 131 columns published at Bacons Rebellion to explore the ramifications of the theses, principles, Laws and overarching strategies concerning human settlement patterns that are presented in “The Shape of the Future” which was published in 2000.

Over the past five years EMR used the posts on Bacons Rebellion Blog to explore alternative approaches and strategies to inform and educate citizens about the imperative of Fundamental Transformation of human settlement patterns and the Fundamental Transformation of governance structure.

From the first 102 comments on the 1 October post “Toward a Sustainable Trajectory” it is very clear that the informing and educating is not going well. With a few notable exceptions, the comments are misleading, wrong or irrelevant. That is because they are not based on a well founded Conceptual Framework with which to consider issue related to human settlement patterns.

Based on evidence to date, the best education strategy appears to be re-energizing the education program developed in 2004 / 2005. This program is called “PROPERTY DYNAMICS” and subtitled “Real Property Value, a Path to Understanding Human Settlement Patterns.” The modus operandi of PROPERTY DYNAMICS is to empower RHTCs (Running as Hard as They Cans). RHTCs are citizens consumed by the frenzy of “trying to keep up” who have not yet embraced unfounded opinions on how to evolve functional human settlement patterns.

The comments on “Toward a Sustainable Trajectory,” - and the Blog comments on human settlement patterns in general - consist of a heart

felt mix of interesting observations and painful examples of Geographic Illiteracy and locational obliviousness.

An interesting question: What is driving those who post about human settlement patterns on Bacons Rebellion Blog? Most have been posting comment after comment on human settlement pattern issues without any coherent basis or context. Some are protecting and / or serving short-term economic interests, others appear to be justifying past actions and some are just expressing deeply held beliefs.

Most recite random personal experiences and the results of Internet searches of narrow points unrelated to the overarching issues of settlement pattern and the cumulative impact of settlement pattern dysfunction. They parry back and forth on an imaginary gaming field over minor points - some of which are correct, many of which are incorrect - while the trajectory of civilization continues to deflect downward.

The causes of these failures to communicate - misunderstandings - on the basics of human settlement patterns appear to run deep. Some misunderstandings are rooted in shortcomings of current preschool, elementary, secondary and college curricula. Some misunderstandings stem from what Jared Diamond calls "traditional values." These traditional values must be reexamined due to the fact that human society has rapidly transitioned from an agrarian society (5 percent urban, 95 percent nonurban in 1800) to an urban society (95 percent urban, five percent nonurban in 2000). Some misunderstandings reflect hard wired genetic proclivities.

Some of the traditional values and some of the genetic proclivities served humans well in hunter / gatherer societies and in agrarian societies. However, once urban society trumped (suspended) most sorting of genetic proclivities, they have led to Mass OverConsumption and hyper partisan two party politics. This is in large part due to the fact that emotion laden

advertising that prays on those beholden to traditional values and genetic proclivities.

One key reason that human settlement patterns are so dysfunctional is because many of causes of dysfunction have short-term benefits for those at the top of the economic and physical Ziggurat. Another is that the solutions to the problems are counterintuitive as demonstrated by the posts on Bacons Rebellion Blog.

In the comments section of "Toward a Sustainable Trajectory" EMR tried to point out simple errors of fact which lead to fatal flaws in understanding. These were obvious elementary arithmetic word problem errors that would get deserve an "F" in a fifth grade exam.

No matter, the commentors found a way to respond in ways that avoid taking steps toward understanding and by making another leap into fantasy land. Here is part of one such post explored:

"I think what you are proposing is having a sea (sic) of Reston/Columbia type communities within a circular radius of around 25 miles from DC ... cramming everyone inside an area less than 25 miles from DC."

We will take the "cramming" issue first.

The first Natural Law of Human Settlement Pattern is  $A = \pi R^2$  (Blogspot does not translate equations well, here is what that formula looks like via Blogspot  $A = BR^2$  )

There are 1.26 million acres within a 25 mile radius. (Note that there would be an additional half million acres if one were to base the radius on the border of the Federal District. We will use a radius of 25 miles from the Centroid of the Subregion.) Let us assume that:

1) Half that land within the Clear Edge is Blue and Green - water and Openspace, and

2) The existing METRO station-areas were redeveloped so each has at least the minimum, Sweetspot density - a few some already have more density but very little Balance, and

3) The rest of the .63 million acres that is not Blue and Green area is developed at the green, leafy (with an additional 40% Community-scale Openspace) density of 10 persons per acre at the Alpha Community Scale - this is the pre \$100 a barrel oil Sweetspot - with a Balance of J / H / S / R / A.

This is not “cramming” and is the patterns and density that the market has judged to be the most desirable lower intensity urban space. (NB: Those who want to live in the Countryside live outside the Clear Edge and pay the full location-variable costs including all externalities.)

Under these conditions the Holding Capacity of the area within a 25 Mile radius Clear Edge would be over twice the projected 2050 population of the National Capital Subregion.

The issue is not “cramming,” the issue is settlement pattern. There are not “too many people” who would need housing near jobs nor is the problem too little land developed for urban land uses or too few places developed for urban uses.

Now the “Reston and Columbia” issue:

Reston and Columbia were designed in the early and mid 60s. They were not developed as originally planned and both - along with all the other well-intended projects including those EMR planned and managed - suffer from many of the same problems that infect the rest of the National Capital Region’s settlement patterns.

Reston and Columbia were designed to be served by Automobiles with minimum shared-vehicle service and some walking. That is not sustainable

under current and future conditions. Reston and Columbia are not “models” to be replicated. However, they do provide insight into a path to more sustainable patterns and densities.

EMR has repeatedly said that Planned New Communities from the 60s and 70s - as well as parts of many urban agglomerations in the EU - provide lessons on how to evolve functional human settlement patterns.

Here is an analogy:

Let us say you know there is a lost gold mine somewhere in Upper North Fork of the Flathead - there is oil and coal there too but that is another story. You have a map that shows the location of the mine and a compass. The compass is a tool you can use to find the mine. The compass is not the mine.

Planned New Communities that exist are not examples of sustainable functional human settlement patterns, they are tools to help one understand what these patterns would be “if one knows what that are looking at and what they are looking for.”

The plan for a “Real Downtown” for Columbia in the 2 October WaPo has all the flaws of the new plan for Tysons Corner explored in our most recent column on Tysons Corner “A Picture is Worth a Thousand Lies.”

One other point: Both Reston and Columbia will be much easier to retrofit than most parts of the National Capital Subregion. In fact our old neighborhood in Columbia is mentioned in a recent profile of how to achieve a car-free lifestyle at [www.carfreeamerica.org](http://www.carfreeamerica.org)

The discussion in “Toward A Sustainable Trajectory” reminds one of the problems of pseudo-partisanship profiled in “My Team vs. Your Team: The Political Arena” by Shankar Vedantam in WaPo on 29 September. This is the politics that results in 50.5 percent “victories.” Also see the recent

columns by Kathleen Parker and Glenn Beck at [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) on 2 October.

It is very informative that the views of “lefty” Russ Feingold (D-WI) and “righty” Jim DeMint (R-SC) are the same. It is those in the middle that are working for Business-As-Usual and Enterprise Socialism.

Human settlement patterns are science, not politics and every refusal to understand based on Geographic Illiteracy is another stumbling block on the path to a sustainable trajectory for civilization.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## WORTH NOTING AGAIN

It is worth noting on the first Friday in October when:

The front page of WaPo's Business Section has stories on persistent economic worries (employment, factory orders), risky trading practices, Pearlstein's column is titled "Greed is Fine. It's Stupidity That Hurts" and the big story is "Pinched and Watching Pennies: Long a Bulwark of the Economy, Consumer Spending Stalls" that:

The only systematic, overarching strategy to achieve to sustainable economic prosperity - as well as social stability and physical (ecological) sustainability - is to evolve functional human settlement patterns.

Dysfunctional human settlement patterns are the driver of the Mobility and Access Crisis. The Chevron ad on page A-5 of WaPo says: "I will leave the car home more." How can the smiling model do that when Large, Private Vehicles are the only way to get to Jobs / Services / Recreation / Amenity?

Dysfunctional human settlement patterns are the driver of the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis. The right size house in the right location would allow citizens to work for Regionally competitive wages, achieve competitive levels of productivity and enjoy a quality life.

Dysfunctional human settlement patterns ARE the Helter Skelter crisis in the Countryside. They have driven up the speculative price (not value) of land for urban land uses to the point that those who want to farm cannot afford to do it. That is especially true in the R=20 to R=100 Radius Band where fresh, secure food could be produced for the urban population.

A sustainable Countryside outside the Clear Edge provides the air, water, food, fiber and biological diversity necessary to support urban life and an

urban civilization. An attractive Countryside also provides Recreation / Amenity that supports those who choose to live in the Countryside and pay all their location-variable costs.

AOL, shooting themselves in the foot with advertisers by the way, today profiles 43 Top Ways to Waste money. The list includes a lot of good ideas - do not buy new cars, do not buy big houses, do not spend money creating mown grass pollution (aka, lawns), do not buy things you do not need, do not fight wars on false pretenses, etc.

Taken together all 43 are the "good" ideas - if they had been implemented in 1973. However, Business-As-Usual has resulted in a nation-state economy dependent on wasting natural capital, importing energy and cheap labor and begging for loans from foreign investors.

In 2008 the 43 good ideas - and all the Green Greed one can pile on the roof - will make some feel better. These ideas may keep a few from falling over the edge but the overall trajectory is still down.

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Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Transportation](#)

## IT IS ELEMENTARY

With respect to the current economic pain it is elementary that:

A. If a nation-state with a democratic governance structure is going to create an economy based on consumer consumption (much less claim to lead the world in creating democracies with market economies) then:

1) Agencies of that nation-state must insure that the market benefits the vast majority who are expected to consume. The market cannot be tilted in favor of a tiny minority who have an appetite for luxury goods but consume only an insignificant fraction of the total goods and services no matter how much they waste.

2) When the economy depends on consumer consumption, Agencies cannot ask those at the top of the Ziggurat what they want, they must determine what those who are expected to consume need to be prosperous, happy and safe.

3) Agencies cannot create a system of governance that privatizes profit and socializes risk, and above all,

4) Agencies must make sure that the rate of consumption is sustainable and that consumer expectations are rational and that the vast majority benefit.

Any alternative to these Elementary Rules are unsustainable for a democracy with a market economy. The last 60 years of consumer-driven economic "growth" in the US of A has not been sustainable as evidenced by the current "meltdown." Both political parties have violated all four Elementary Rules of governance sustainability.

Right wing nuts are harping on the transgressions of ACORN and similar groups. Illegal and fraudulent actions are wrong. However, with an

obscene and widening Wealth Gap, ACORN- like groups are exactly what citizens can expect to happen. The next step is radical populism as documented by nearly a century of experience in South and Central American, Caribbean and African attempts at democracies with market economies.

No nation-state can:

- 1) Import energy and cheaper labor
- 2) Burn up natural capital, and
- 3) Subsist on loans from those who sell Citizens, Enterprises and Agencies the energy, goods and services they need to survive.

B. If a nation-state is going to create an economy that depends on trust, enterprise, intelligence, saving and investment then Agencies must manage the money supply such that the cost of money (interest) allows savers to can make a reasonable return from investing and are not forced into:

- 1) Speculating on the true value of land
- 2) Gambling on stock and commodity markets, or
- 3) Swapping valueless definitives of tangible assets.

If financial Enterprises are to have money to loan, Agencies must ensure that interest rates encourage savings not tax breaks that encourage Global short-term profit seeking, aka Supercapitalism.

C. If a nation-state desires to evolve a stable economic system it must create a system that:

- 1) Does not rely on unsustainable "growth", and
- 2) Reflects the organic structure of human economic, social and physical

activity, the first step is a Fundamental Transformation in governance structure.

There is a need for several strong, competitive Regional banks in every New Urban Region, not MegaBanks and MegaSpeculators - Enron, WorldCom, Lehman, AIG, Citi and all the rest - that have lost touch with the role of banking and investment in a society.

D. If a nation-state wants to expand dwelling ownership then:

- 1) The dwellings must be near Jobs and Services rather than encouraging the Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location.
- 2) Agencies must discourage speculation on home value.

Over the last 60 years owner occupied dwellings have increased in value at about the rate of inflation. When the current wave a write downs is complete the values will be below inflation. This means that the internal rates of return on many investment strategies are much higher than on real estate, especially owner occupied dwellings.

To paraphrase the current VW ad ("Have a baby for love, not for German engineering), "Buy a house for living, do not buy a house for speculation." You hear about the bonanzas is house speculation hyped by real estate agents that is not what you learn from careful analysis of regional data.

While dwelling speculation is bad, far more money is lost than is made in raw land speculation. Raw land speculation loses were the major component of the REIT recession and the Savings and Loan recession.

Loans on badly located and inefficient sized dwellings are the lynchpin of the mortgage meltdown. In the end citizens pay for the bail outs of speculators.

Both D 1) and 2) are directly related to that fact that there is too much land held for urban land uses and that which is developed is dysfunctional

because the total location variable costs are not fairly allocated.

This is the first of four posts on Elementary Rules and Realities, the others will focus on “The Role of the Media,” “Swift Boating the Mortgage Crisis” and “The Bottom Line.”

As you can guess, all Elementary Rules and Realities relate to Agency, Enterprise and Institutional actions that generate dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

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Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## SWIFT BOATING THE MORTGAGE CRISIS

There are both Donkey Clan and Elephant Clan partisans who try to make every problem that citizens face into something that is the fault of the other Clan. Most despicable are those who fain intellectual and academic objectivity in determining blame.

Blaming the Donkey Clan for causing the mortgage crisis and triggering the financial meltdown because they connived to loan mortgage money to unqualified home buyers is a prime example.

The rhetoric makes for superficially alarming partisan arm waving but has no substance. The core reasons for the financial meltdown are the responsibility of those in both Clans. The basic rules to achieve a sustainable economic trajectory are spelled out in IT IS ELEMENTARY.

First to clear the air:

Yes, lowering the loan standards for home buyers to qualify was done for political purposes. It was done by both parties and has grown worse in recent years with no Agency oversight

Yes, governance practitioners were trying to beef up home ownership on the assumption it was good for those at the bottom of the Ziggurat and was good politics.

Yes, ACORN and others may have undertaken illegal activities (See note on this topic in IT IS ELEMENTARY)

But get real:

If a prospective buyer got a loan that they could not afford and the dwelling is sound when it is foreclosed is a personal / Household tragedy.

But what happens? The bank / Fannie / Freddie resells the dwelling to

someone else. If the dwelling and its Dooryard, Cluster, Neighborhood, Village and Community have real value the financial system takes a hit for administrative costs and moves on. This happens all the time.

If there are a lot of those foreclosures in any one component of a Community it can pose a significant problem because there is a problem with the Dooryard, Cluster, Neighborhood or Village.

What is a nation-state tragedy is that from the start Fannie and Freddie did not set standards -- as FHA (and later VA) have done since the 30s -- for the quality of the dwelling and its location, design, context and services.

There has been much that was not good about the cumulative, Regional impact of those old FHA standards but there were standards. By the time Fannie and Freddie came along there should have been real standards that supported functional human settlement patterns at the Unit, Dooryard, Cluster, Neighborhood, Village and Community scales.

Standards were imperative because of the amount of money pumped into the housing market. Without standards, those billions of dollars leveraged dysfunctional settlement patterns. The lack of standards and intelligent regulation resulted in massive "Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location" problems.

Call it subsidy, call it bad investment, call it what you please, this vast oversupply of money distorted the market and resulted in dysfunction at the Community, Subregional and Regional scales.

Now add bundling, derivatives, no oversight, greed, and global trading - the result is an InterNational disaster.

Since 1973 Agency and Enterprise leadership in the US of A - aided and abetted by both political parties - has been moving toward an economy

based on burning up natural capital, importing energy and cheap labor and borrowing from foreign lenders.

In "IT IS ELEMENTARY," we noted that if a nation-state wants to expand dwelling ownership then:

1) The Houses need to be near Jobs and Services and sized for those who need shelter rather than encouraging the Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location.

2) Agencies, Enterprises and Institutions must discourage speculation on home value.

Both 1) and 2) are directly related to that fact that there is too much land held for urban land uses and that which has been developed is dysfunctional.

Over the last 60 years owner occupied dwellings have increased in value at about the rate of inflation. When the current wave a write downs is complete the values will be below inflation.

It is worth repeating that the internal rates of return on many investment strategies are much higher than on real estate, especially owner occupied dwellings. Depending on ones Household circumstance it may be wise to buy a dwelling for living.

From a financial perspective, it is almost never wise to buy an owner occupied dwelling as a speculative investment. Speculating on ones dwelling degrades the living experience, encourages Abandonment (See Wild Abandonment" 8 Sept 2003) and most speculators end up losing money. One hears about the bonanzas in house speculation hyped by real estate agents not from careful analysis of regional data.

It is important to note that the excuse that impudent loans were created as a way to break "red lining" is a red herring. Almost every upscale

component of urban fabric was at one time a place that could be “red lined” -- Georgetown, College Hill, Society Hill, Old Town, Vieux Carrie, the list is endless.

What is needed to enhance residential settings is a Regional strategy to improve settlement patterns Region-wide.

Implementation of this strategy may entail making loans to some who would not normally qualify for a mortgage but the loan decision must be made within the context of a strategy to ensure that the Unit, Dooryard, Cluster, Village, Community is a good investment.

The mortgage crisis did not arise because of loans made to prospective home owners with a high risk of defaulting. A foreclosure of someone who had poor credit may be a risk worth taking and if they default it can be a Household tragedy, it is not a banking Enterprise tragedy. If the dwelling is in a functional location, is well built and not too big there are many of potential buyers who desire shelter.

We have pointed out for years that the real problem with Fannie and Freddie is not the bad accounting or insane compensation but rather that they pumped billions into dwellings that were held to no settlement pattern standards beyond municipal controls.

The first stage of the mortgage problem is tens of thousands of bad loans on dwellings that cannot be resold for anywhere near the loan amount.

This is compounded by fraud induced by front line lenders who do not have to worry about the loan going bad because Fannie and Freddie would buy it and roll it into a package to sell to gamblers. Add to that the fabrication of definitives to ‘spread the risk’ and you have the first leg of the financial ‘meltdown.’

EMR

Note to Jim Bacon: Swift Boating the Mortgage Crisis is a Commonwealth of Virginia issue because:

- 1) This is a prime example of a case where the logical Community and Regional responsibility has been overwhelmed by federal action
- 2) Part of the Commonwealth is in the National Capital Subregion where these policies are made
- 3) A lot of the Swift Boating is coming from partisan Institutions with addresses in the Commonwealth.
- 4) The governance of the Commonwealth has done nothing to help citizens address reality.

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Citizens are concerned about the future, and not just the future of the stock market or their retirement funds. Citizens are expressing alarm about food security, energy supplies, terrorism and atomization of the social structure. Some are in a panic over the current economy, job security and high gas prices but many more are concerned with the quality and cost of health care, the quality and cost of education, Papier-mache infrastructure, crime rates and dysfunctional governance. Then there are those who have been concerned about air/water/land pollution, the deterioration of the natural environment and climate change for the past 40 years.

As documented by *The Shape of the Future* and reinforced by *TRILO-G* all those indicators of economic, social and physical distress are related to dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

**Dysfunctional human settlement patterns are directly or indirectly responsible for almost all the reasons citizens are concerned about the future.**

If you do NOT believe dysfunctional human settlement patterns are directly or indirectly responsible for almost all the reasons citizens are concerned about the future, you need to read Volume I of *The Shape of the Future*, especially PART TWO (Chapters 5 through 14) - “The Economic, Social and Physical Importance of the Human Settlement Pattern.”

A major difference between 1929 and 2008 is that citizens are far more “globally aware” at the end of the Roaring 00s than at the end of the Roaring 20s. Citizens are not as well educated as they need to be to make intelligent decisions in the voting booth and in the market place given a

high octane, technology-driven society but they are far more aware of the world and the perils that contemporary civilization faces than they were in the 1930.

“The only thing to fear is fear itself.” Yes, but today they have a lot more information - much of it bad, thanks to broken politics, advertising and MainStream Media - upon which to base fears.

Pandering politicians and advertising to drive Mass OverConsumption has convinced individuals that they “deserve” and they want as much as the can get, as cheaply as they can get it. This has led to Papier-mache infrastructure and dysfunctional settlement patterns.

**Quality is fine for me but for the common good, cheap or nothing is fine.**

The myth that less government - weak Agencies - is good government has convinced citizens that they can have a functional governance structure on the cheap. It is never good to waste money but contemporary civilization costs a vast amount to maintain.

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It turns out those vapor are toxic fumes that have eroded the economy.

According the WaPo, on 10 October (“IMF Economist Expects Acute, Painful U.S. Slowdown) Olivier Blanchard, chief economist of the IMF said:

“We are not heading toward a depression.”

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How do you “scare governments” without scaring citizens?

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IMF has supported an unsustainable settlement pattern in First World. Settlement patterns and governance structures must reflect organic composition of society not exotic Global derivatives.

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patterns in the “developing world.”

IMF has not shown any recognition of the importance of functional human settlement patterns at the Regional scale.

Back to the US of A and the Commonwealth: Both have violated the four rules in IT IS ELEMENTARY, especially the last one concerning housing.

The mix of housing configurations funded over the past 40 years does not match - is not in Balance with - the spectrum of housing affordability given the current distribution of wages and benefits.

The Wealth Gap is so large that trickle down is a sick joke. Even with a less obscene Wealth Gap, for trickle down to operate the value of dwellings must go down, not up and the units must be the right size and in the right location.

Loan leveraging from Fannie and Freddie exacerbated the shortcoming of municipal land use controls yielding grossly unsustainable Regional settlement patterns.

There are two choices:

- Massive redistribution of wealth, or
- A fundamentally different mix of dwelling types and settlement pattern.

Citizens and their leaders have failed to evolve a Regional governance.

States and the feds “let them eat cake” but turning the use and management of land over to self-serving municipal governments. The result is:

- Far too much land devoted to and planned for urban land uses. A factor of ten, nation-wide is a conservative estimate.
- Far too much to the land planned for urban land uses was and is designated for “employment,” “commercial” aka, tax base uses land uses.

In the 90s eastern Loudoun County had the non-residential capacity of two Mid-Town Manhattans and West Prince William had the non-residential capacity of four Mid-Town Manhattans. Fauquier County has land designated for employment / tax base uses to support around 10 times the current population and Fauquier is a “leader” in land use controls from some perspectives.

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Unless there is a massive redistribution of wealth those who need housing cannot afford it.

Then there is the issue of access. The only way to access the dysfunctional human settlement patterns that result from the intersection of bad land use controls and an uninformed market is *Large, Private Vehicles*.

According to WaPo, 1 in 13 jobs depend on *Large, Private Vehicles* and the Automobile industry, like the housing industry runs on OPIuM - Other Peoples Money.

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IT IS THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN, STUPID

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## GROVETON'S BALLOON TALE

Groveton spins an illuminating tale about setting a hot air balloon flight record from Miami to Seattle in the comments on “THE ROLE OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA.” This tale speaks volumes about almost every comments in response to the four IT’S THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN STUPID posts. Groveton may have heard the original version of this tale from a DotCommer who thinks that Seattle is the center of the Universe but it has some holes.

It is not clear that it is even theoretically possible to fly any balloon, much less a hot air balloon, from Miami to Seattle. If it is possible, the flight would take one North and East over the Atlantic and the approach to Seattle would be from the West, thus if the balloon were over land and the balloonists had determined they were on course they would have set the record wherever they landed.

There are, however, two more important lessons from this tale:

If one does not understand the overarching Conceptual Framework - either the direction of prevailing high altitude winds or New Urban Region Settlement Patterns - they are lost before they start.

So far not one negative commenter has demonstrated they understand - or are interested in trying to understand - human settlement patterns. It one does not know what they are talking about...

Second, had the balloonists in Groveton’s story read the work of Bacon and Risse before they left Miami, they would know that wherever they found them, they would be in the right place. Get out of the balloon and start helping to evolve functional human settlement patterns.

Next THE OBLIVIOUSNESS OF BLOGGER BOB AND THE PREGNANT MOTHER

OF TWO.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

posted by E M Risse @ 4:35 PM [10 comments](#) [links to this post](#) 

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[Patterns](#)

## OBSESSED WITH ONE IDEA?

Ugo Betti is right. 'Mad' IS a term used to describe a person who is obsessed with one idea and nothing else.

We believe strongly in the economic, social and physical imperative of evolving functional human settlement patterns.

On the other hand, we also believe strongly in the need to avoid large falling objects and toxic substances, the need to Balance nutrition and exercise, that the Earth is not flat and revolves around the Sun as well as the Periodic Table of Elements, the Electromagnetic Spectrum, the dynamics of complex organic structures. We believe these and most of the other science based theories and facts humans have articulated over the past 2.8 million years.

The difference between these things and the exploration of functional and dysfunctional human settlement patterns is that there are many advocates and supporters of those facts, theories and realities.

Many agree with EMR. The reason that it appears that many disagree is not the validity of attacks by those that disagree, it is the failure of those who agree to make that point, especially in the Blog context. Among other things they say:

“EMR is (or may be) right about functional and dysfunctional human settlement patterns. However,

- His ideas upset some of our key donors;
- I could not get reelected if I took forceful stands on human settlement pattern issues;
- My employer would fire me if I supported these ideas;

- He is years ahead of us and we need short-term fixes;
- We do not have to go as far as Fundamental Transformation, just implement this idea of mine and we will be fine, for now.
- He said negative things about New Urbanists or \_\_\_\_\_ so we cannot support him;
- He is holding his own, why risk having to catch spears aimed at him?
- We will not make as much money if we change from Business-As-Usual so just ignore him.
- If we endorse what he says, that means we have been wrong for years.

EMR

## RESCUE

The WaPo headline says “U.S. to Invest in Country’s Banks In Effort to Revive Credit Markets.”

We are not experts on how to rescue dysfunctional banking systems. Paul Krugman who just won the Nobel Prize in economics for his work 30 years ago says that the beefing up banks strategy - first outlined by Prime Minister Brown a month ago (a Euro weenie in Bacon lingo) - is the right strategy. So for now we will go with that and see how it works.

What we can tell you is:

If this credit is used to invest in the wrong things - Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location, Large, Private Cars, Papier-mache Infrastructure and other drivers of settlement pattern dysfunction - the next crash will be worse and the next time Agencies will not have any money left to bail out anyone.

In the short term the goal must be to create several strong, competitive banks in every New Urban Region.

In the longer term? See the four Elementary Rules to save the US of A’s democracy and our market economy in IT IS ELEMENTARY.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

## GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMATION

*WaPo* is the Subregional print medium of record serving the Subregion that is the location of the capital of the US of A. Fulfilling its role, *WaPo* serves up a regular diet of federal Agency misdeeds.

Today it is SBA on the front page - billions in contracts awarded to the wrong size Enterprises. Name a federal Agency that has not violated laws and regulations in the past few years - EPA, Interior, Defense, FERC, FEMA, DHS, ICE, the legislature, the court system - the list is exhaustive and exhausting.

These violations of law and regulations are not problems of BIG government, they are problems of BAD government and dysfunctional governance structure.

These violations of law and regulations are not violations of some abstract philosophical ideology of governance, they are violations of the laws establishing the Agencies and the regulations they promulgate and are responsible to implement.

Neither the Elephant Clan nor the Donkey Clan have shown they can govern under the current structure. Polls indicate that citizens believe the current administration is the worst in since modern communications made widespread knowledge of "national events" accessible to the majority in the Ziggurat.

Nothing will change until there is a Fundamental Transformation in governance structure and that requires citizen understanding of the organic structure of human settlement patterns so that governance structure can reflect economic, social and physical reality.

Without Fundamental Transformation the future of democracy with a market economy is bleak. The current trajectory is unsustainable.

Did someone say that banks were going to use the bailout money to expand rather than unfreeze credit?

EMR

## MARKET GAMBLING

Congratulations to “darrell...Chesapeake” on a 15 percent profit in 30 minutes. And thank you for documenting EMR’s point. You make all those who say the stock market is not a gambling venue look like duffuses.

James Atticus Bowden says one could made 7 percent (compounded?) from the stock market over the period 1790 to 2008. Well sure, if you want to take the short term view :>)

The James Atticus Bowden’s time frame is just about the 1800 to 2000 period EMR uses to bracket the Agrarian to Urban Fundamental Transformation. A 7 percent return is to be expected given the continent of nonrenewable resources that have been consumed. Did someone say there is a limit to nonrenewable resources? Can you say “Punctuated Equilibrium?”

Lets take a shorter period, say since 1973 when every citizen should have know that Fundamental Transformation from Mass OverConsumption to sustainability was imperative.

The same or perhaps even greater “growth” of the stock market might be calculated but that demonstrates why data that is not aggregated intelligently is more misleading than no data. This reality concerning data is critical to achieving an understanding of human settlement patterns but it is also important in this context.

Some stocks (or baskets of stocks) did a lot better than 7 percent compounded after inflation since 1973. These are the ones that brokers like to cite.

Then there are stocks (or baskets of stocks) that did a lot worse. One never hears about them.

One could have chosen what seemed like a great basket of stocks in 1972 and now find that none of them even exist now.

An “average” is fine but the investor must trade to keep the basket fresh and there in lies the gamble.

Who does one rely on for advice? A broker who makes profit every time you trade? Just hope she does not recommend Centennial Illinois, Lincoln S&L, Enron, WorldCom, Fannie or Freddie, AIG, ...

You might invest in risk-minimizing mutual funds or other vehicles. Who do you rely on to rate these financial “products”? How about Moody’s, Standard and Poor’s or Fitch? See today’s coverage of yesterdays hearing on The Hill.

A favorite investing joke is about a car load of rotten sardines. The punch line is “What difference does it make if those sardines are rotten? They are not for eating, they are for buying and selling.”

Then there is Blogger Bob who champions that bellwether of functional settlement patterns, the pregnant-mother-of-two:

“A technologically driven society is more productive, and therefore costs are reduced.”

The crown prince of non sequiturs speaks.

The issue in not “productivity” it is consumption vs. capacity of a closed system. It is ecological footprint, it is the trajectory of consumption. By current measures of “productivity” driving a bus load of pregnant-mothers-of-two into a moving train adds to the GDP.

(More on pregnant-mothers-of-two soon.)

There needs to be an alternative to the negative trajectory of Business-As-Usual. How about Regional investing?

Garmeen Bank / mini-investing has won a Nobel prize. Why not Household investing, friend investing, Cluster investing, Neighborhood investing, Community investing, Regional investing - How about a diversified portfolio being an array of Regional investments in things that will make your life better.

Global speculation drives Supercapitalism.

Citizens should have the ability to investment in goods and services that they understand and the location of which creates functional and sustainable settlement patterns. A lot smarter than sardines for buying and selling.

Here is a specific: A Regional network of Community Enterprises that recycle / rebuild small batteries. As the Global supply chain atrophies one of the first things to come into short supply might be small batteries. The ones without which, hearing aids, hand held instruments, cameras, cell phones, alarm systems and millions of other devices will be useless, toxic junk.

“Rechargeable” is fine but rechargeables wear out and eventually do not hold a charge. An investment is a Regional system to redesign batteries so they can be rebuild and traded for spent ones might be a winner. There are thousands of battery sizes besides AAA, AA, A, C and D but one might start with “standard” sizes first. Right now all the big money is going to improve big batteries to propel Large, Private Vehicles. How do you market these new batteries? Well to the investors and their Households.

Billions of small batteries end up in the land fill every year. Well meaning “environmental services” try to keep car batteries out of the land fills but many of them still go there. A bigger problem is the small batteries.

In a primitive lab it is possible build a big 12 volt battery. Or get a jump

start and use the generator. Try that with you cell phone. Standardize and redesign of batteries so they can be renewed. Not in China, but right in your Region.

Bill “Green Dean” McDonough could think of a thousand other “investments” but that will do to illustrate the concept of Regional investment.

EMR

Labels: [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## HOT, FLAT AND CROWDED -- A MATTER OF VOCABULARY

Last week Thomas L. Friedman's most recent book was at the top of WaPo's nonfiction best sellers list. This week it is number four.

Footnote: EMR got his hands on a nonsanctioned lite book -a LARGE PRINT version - so he went to the Greater Warrenton Borders for one that is easier to read. In these times of financial crisis when citizens really need to understand how the world works, two copies of Friedman's book were on a shelf in the way-way-back. What was in front piled in great stacks? Fiction, political hack screeds and in-depth reporting on the same insights found in tabloids and Parade: "Daniel Craig is more than a tough guy."

Friedman's title, *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, is provocative, but there are several problems of Vocabulary.

HOT

"HOT" refers to Global Climate Change. It plays to his subtitle " *Why We Need a Green Revolution - And How it Can Renew America.* "

There is some debate about whether the earth is really getting hotter - most of the negative assessments come from proponents of Business-As-Usual and from "principled-conservatives" which makes this perspective suspect from the start.

There is even more heated discussion about whether human action is a driver / accelerator of Global Climate Change but Friedman seems to have no doubts.

As EMR has said over and over both the existence of a warming trend and the causes are fine to debate but the larger reality is that does not make any difference.

What ever the trend and whatever the cause, the “alarmists” who have a problem with Global Warming and decry the human impact on Climate Change are calling for actions that for the most part are needed for other very sound economic, social and physical reasons. Jim Bacon and EMR agree on this since he is more of a skeptic on the issue of causation.

Two other thoughts on HOT:

EMR has been carefully watching the well documented melting of glaciers for the past 60-plus years in his home Community - a disaggregated and very Beta Community in the Northern Rocky Mountain Urban Support Region.

Second, one of the biggest non-economic and non-mysterious health problems is that people go to the hospital for a well known cause and come out with an gratuitous infection. Peyton and Kellen had infections in the last few weeks.

EMR spent some time in the Greater Warrenton-Fauquier Community Hospital last week. (“If you want to do great things in your world, spend some time in ours,” US Navy)

It became obvious - while waiting for the medical staff to assembly to carry out a routine exploratory procedure, and while covered with a sheet and pre-warmed double blanket - the special-ops area of the hospital was COLD. The doctors and nurses were wearing two and three (visible) layers. The Hispanic lady who was scrubbing equipment looked like what was once called an “Eskimo” but is now call an “Inuit,” (aka, Aemai - An Earlier North American Immigrant.)

Why so cold in the Hospital? Do infections spread more easily in warmer temperatures? Having spent a month or more in the subtropics for over 30 years - and some time in hospitals on

Tortola and St. Vincent - EMR suspects the answer is “yes.”

Based on direct experience, EMR sees no reason to question the predominance of scientific evidence on both warming and cause but as noted above, that is not the real issue.

So HOT is problematic, However, HOTTER or not, what is important is that what is recommended to stop accelerating Global Warming makes sense to achieve a sustainable trajectory for society. Do we really need to fuss over “HOT” to make better decisions about locations and the allocation of resources?

FLAT

Friedman has ended the lives of thousands of acres of forest in order to tell readers of serial editions an earlier book about FLAT. By FLAT he means “*Globality: Competing with Everyone From Everywhere for Everything.*” - to use Sirkin, et. al.’s title and explanation - is making the world seem “flat.” As *Supercapitalism* makes very clear *Globality* and FLAT is not a good thing from many perspectives.

The fact is, the most important thing is NOT the price of tea in China.

The most important thing for any citizen is the safety, happiness and well being of the other citizens in ones Cluster, the Clusters that make up their Neighborhood, the Neighborhoods that make up their Village...

The complexity of Globality is an excuse for avoiding what is really important. For this reason FLAT is confusing and the analogy is way over-used.

CROWDED

It is with “Crowded” that Friedman goes off the rail.

He fails to understand that “Crowded” is an variable that is dependent

upon human settlement patterns. What seems to be “Crowded” is due to a dysfunctional distribution of human activity and the failure to allocate resources equitably.

Six and a half billion people is not beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth.

Six and a half billion citizens is beyond the carrying capacity of Earth if they all were to consume as much per capita as those in the US of A believe to be their birthright.

The primary driver of unsustainable per capita consumption is dysfunctional settlement pattern.

Of course with fewer citizens on Earth, everyone could enjoy more per capita consumption but that is a different issue.

Freedman sees the problem of CROWDED as being due to the expansion of the “middle class.” Never mind that the Middle Class disappeared over the past six decades.

What he means is that there has been an expansion of expectations and consumption of some at the upper levels of the Ziggurat in all the richest nation-states.

It is now quite clear that this level of consumption cannot be sustained even by a super fortunate minority. The cheap resources - natural capital - is becoming more dear and fewer and fewer can afford it.

The critical problem is that a lot of those who are not yet Mass OverConsuming have been told by pandering politicians that they deserve to achieve levels of consumption that they see in ads and in more-real-than-life streaming and screaming images spread around the Globe.

The Business-As-Usual advocates confuse the comfort and consumption of “me and my friends” at the top of the Ziggurat with the welfare and

sustainability of an “advanced” technological society.

A green revolution will not solve this problem. It will take a gray-matter revolution.

To make matters worse, driven by Business-As-Usual and MainStream Media, the only interest in “green” that has been discovered outside small, intentional communities has been Green Greed - Buy our product and feel good about consumption.

In a rational world, ads for a “full-size, luxury SUV Hybrid” would be considered pornography.

Energy, technology and meat along with Large, Private Vehicles and Scattered McMansions will never again be cheap.

That is especially true if there is a delusion that it is possible to fuel, inform, over-feed, provide Mobility, Access and Shelter for six and a half billion citizens with democratic governance and market economies.

EMR

Labels: [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Monday, October 27, 2008

## WALL STREET VILLAGE GETS BALANCE

Readers of EMR's columns and posts will recall that one of the themes harped on by those who do not try to understand the New Urban Region Conceptual Framework is that it will take forever to Transform human settlement pattern and to achieve Balance, especially in New Urban Region Core Beta Villages and Communities.

EMR cites the Core of Toronto responding to office overbuild and to the square foot value of more Balanced vs. less Balanced components of urban fabric.

Yesterday's Wapo carries a story: "Wall St. Looking More Like Main St.: Though It Still Draws Tourists, Storied Financial Hub is Increasingly Residential."

Another favorite tactic of dedicated detractors (12.5 Percenters) is to claim that they cannot understand what EMR says or to intentionally misinterpret his positions. They then invent bogus positions and create strawpersons in an attempt to discredit his work. The comment on the last post re "Hot, Flat and Crowded" is a perfect example. Flail away, you are helping us compete TRILO-G in ways we will document in "Upon Further Review" forthcoming.

By the way in response to several e-mails, Friedman has a number of good observations in his book. We were commenting on the words in the title, and you are right about many of his views on the current state of economic, social and physical reality.

EMR

## WAPO AND IHT HOUSING AND MORTGAGE COVERAGE

WaPo has published two very useful items that document and reinforce what EMR has been saying in the for the past five years in 11 columns and in recent Blog posts about the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and the mortgage finance meltdown.

On Friday, 24 October there was “Treasury Considers Backing Mortgages: FDIC Proposal Aims to Help Homeowners” with a map of September 2008 foreclosures. The pattern of defaults is just what EMR has been predicting for two decades. See “Wild Abandonment,” (8 Sept 2003) and “Scatteration,” (25 Sept 2003) which are being updated with new data and references. The text needs little updating to reflect the current landscape. These columns become the first two chapters of ROOTS OF THE HELTER SKELTER CRISIS, PART ONE of TRILO-G. More on the role of Blog posts in updating TRILO-G in “Upon Further Review.”

Also important are the issues raised by David Leonhardt in “Rescue U.S. Homeowners? Wait a Minute.” in the 22 October International Herald Tribune. He explores the \$4 trillion dollar hole that “help” for homeowners may dig for federal, state and municipal Agencies.

Just who deserves help?

- 1) Those who were duped by fraud?
- 2) Those who knowingly participated in risky ventures and ignored decades of sound advice?
- 3) Those who were greedy or foolish - they believed the ads - and now cannot make their payments?
- 4) Those who decide to bail on an underwater mortgage so they can buy a

cheaper house in a better location even though they can afford to pay their bills?

On Saturday, 25 October WaPo was back with "Snapshots From a Slow Market" in the Real Estate section. Some will plot the R= locations of these "neighborhoods," add a Favored Corridor overlay and nod because they understand the New Urban Region Conceptual Framework.

If you do not understand the New Urban Region Conceptual Framework then you may be at sea on just what is happening where and what the impact may be. There is still time to catch up unless you purchased the wrong size house in the wrong location. If you are already underwater on your mortgage, perhaps you should have been paying more attention in years past.

The longer that Fundamental Transformation of settlement patterns (and Fundamental Transformation of governance structures) is postponed, the more painful and less probable any "recovery" will be.

It looks like it will be a while before there is light at the end of the tunnel. Both presidential candidates and every Virginia candidate running for the Senate or the House are still talking about going back to "economic growth" rather than finding a sustainable path.

The "center, left" commentor, Anon 11:31 on HOT, FLAT AND CROWDED post is typical of those who are concerned with the real danger of 'overshooting' carrying capacity: They do not understand the magnitude of the impact that would result from Fundamental Transformations that replace dysfunctional human settlement patterns with functional human settlement patterns.

Note for Michael Ryan: EMR uses a 24 hour clock too. You might as well worry about that in addition to EMR's strategy to keep internet tracking and identity consistent. Try Googling "I." Turns out this technique work

very well for EMR. M\_R might want to try it.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## SPREADING AROUND DISASTER

Today's WaPo reports that federal Agencies are going ahead with homeowner bailouts without answering the questions raised in yesterday's "WaPo and IHT..." post.

It is clear that the intent is to spread around the bailout money to benefit:

Investment banks

Commercial banks

Credit card companies

Hedge fund managers and investors

Insurance Companies

Fannie and Freddie

Autonomobile manufacturers

Airlines

(no need to help Exxon / Mobile yet but in a few weeks...)

and all the others that took actions over the past 20 years that are the prime drivers of settlement pattern dysfunction (the Helter Skelter Crisis) and thus Mobility and Access Crisis and the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis, the Wealth Gap Crisis...

In the Short Run:

Over cappuccino, EMR's best friend said it clearly: "They are rewarding those who did stupid things and punishing those who did the right thing with respect to savings, investment and retirement planning.

Those who invested in the right size house in the right location and who crafted a lifestyle that does not depend on Large, Private Vehicles for their every need are still being protected by THE MARKET for now.

The location and details of mortgage foreclosures (on a Cluster by Cluster,

Neighborhood by Neighborhood and Village by Village basis and NOT on a municipal jurisdiction by municipal jurisdiction basis) document this fact.

But how long will this protection last with unsound Agency intervention to save Tiger Riders on a massive scale? Those who fear the Donkey Clan will socialize everything can be at ease, the Elephant Clan administration is already selling off the “means of production” AND consumption.

In the Long Run:

As we said in “WaPo and IHT ...”

The longer that Fundamental Transformation of settlement patterns (and Fundamental Transformation of governance structures) is postponed, the more painful and less probable any real “recovery” will be.

It looks like it will be a while before there is light at the end of the tunnel. Both presidential candidates and every Virginia candidate running for the Senate or the House are still talking about going back to “economic growth” rather than finding a sustainable path.

Note to Larry Gross: On the path understanding human settlement patterns one of the few things that is less useful than insisting on using Core Confusing Words is to intentionally misuse terms that are clearly defined. Case in point your intentional misuse of: Urban Support Regions. You intentionally misuse words, phrases and theses and then accuse EMR of being obscure, incorrect or stupid.

If you understood the New Urban Region Conceptual Framework you would know that the graphic you cite on “WaPo and IHT...” supports exactly what EMR has been saying for two decades and for six years at Bacons Rebellion.

EMR does not have time to go back and repeat it for you again. If you are genuinely interested in understanding - that becomes more and more

doubtful - you can check out EMR's repeated answers to your questions over the past - it seems like forever - years.

And for "charlie:" Sorry, "charlie" they only accept smart tuna who understand human settlement patterns. Leverage is really important as we note in "The Shape of the Future" and it gets speculators in trouble all the time but it is the settlement patterns agglomerated over the past 80 years - THE HELTER SKELTER CRISIS - that is the root cause of economic, social and physical dysfunction in contemporary society.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#), [The Helter-Skelter Crisis](#)

## ANTIPARTISAN - AN ADDITION TO THE VOCABULARY OF SUSTAINABILITY

Two years ago today, Jim Bacon wrote a column titled “Elections, Shmelections. Nothing has changed.”

That column deserves to be reread with care. From the perspective of the long term trajectory of civilization, NOTHING WAS CHANGED by yesterday’s election except the level of hype.

Barack Obama could be the best president the US of A has ever had and that would not change the current trajectory on contemporary society.

The future is not about what President Elect Obama - or any other President - can or will do. The future is about what citizens and their Organizations have already done, individually and collectively, and will do, especially collectively and primarily at the New Urban Region scale.

This is true whether or not Senator Obama is able to implement his agenda. Check out the Obama platform on taxes and spending, housing stimulus and the bailout, retirement security, trade, foreign policy, access to health care, offshore drilling, climate change, immigration, education and the culture war issues. They are great pre-1973 ideas but will they really result in “change” much less yield Fundamental Transformation to a sustainable trajectory?

To be fair with the Elephant Clan promising pre-1973 “growth and prosperity” had the Donkey Clan been more realistic, they would have been hammered by the voters. That is because the vast majority who went to the polls believe in Big Rock Candy Mountain.

And why do they believe in Big Rock Candy Mountain? That is what both Clans have been promising for 35 years.

In neither Clan's platform were there substantive proposals for Fundamental Transformation in governance structure to reflect economic, social and physical reality. There was not even the call for a Balance of individual rights with community responsibilities that was in both the Bush I and Clinton platforms of 1992.

There were no proposals that would result in a Fundamental Transformation in human settlement pattern.

Both Fundamental Transformations are necessary to preserve democracy with a market economy.

An 'historic' election? The only historic aspect is that finally citizens MAY have put aside prejudices that were contrary to the principles upon which the US of A was founded 233 years ago - slavery and racism.

On 5 November citizens and their Organizations are faced with the same human settlement pattern they had on 3 November - the Helter Skelter Crisis. That crisis has resulted in:

The Mobility and Access Crisis, and

The Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis

The later of which has triggered a Global financial meltdown.

Reversing the Helter Skelter Crisis is the only path to shrinking the ecological footprint of humans, reducing energy consumption and dependence on foreign petroleum as well as enhancing personal and food security along with other key elements of a sustainable trajectory for civilization.

Although they make important observations, there is something profoundly frustrating about the posts "A Few Pre-Election Thoughts," (3 Nov) and "Va, Welcome to the Real World," (5 Nov) by Peter Galuszka and

“Democracy in Action,” (4 Nov) Jim Bacon. These posts imply that who gets elected and which party they represent (note: “which PARTY they represent) makes a difference. Political party monopoly is bad, the current political party duopoly is worse.

In the ESTATES MATRIX we document why MainStream Media has abandoned the Fourth Estate. Watching the election coverage on the ‘major’ networks and cable channels last night and then reading the election coverage in today’s press makes it clear:

MainStream Media is dependent on political party duopoly is pseudo “competition” for revenue.

“Let’s you and him fight” political ‘coverage’ is a huge contributor to MainStream Media’s bottom line. According to WaPo the two parties spent over \$375 million dollars on “media and advertising” for the top of the ticket from June through election day.

Political candidate and party ads plus the ‘issue’ ads intended to generate bail-out proceeds, defense contracts and to obscure responsibility for the Global financial meltdown (and other hot air issues) make up the majority of ad revenue. The prime drivers of dysfunctional settlement patterns - Large, Private Vehicles and Dream Homes - ad revenue is in the tank along with the advertisers.

In a democracy there is no sustainable path to Elephant Clan recovery. That is because the Clan would have to convince 50.5 percent of the voters in key states that they are enjoying to fruits of “growth and prosperity.” That is not possible when the “growth and prosperity” they tout has been subsidized by burning thru natural capital that has been and / or is being exhausted.

This is not just the problem with oil but with all resources from blue crabs to top soil, to potable water. The natural capital is not completely gone

yet but it will be more inaccessible and much more expensive in the future. Resources will be affordable only by those at the top of the economic Ziggurat and they do not make up 1 percent of the voters, much less 50.5 percent.

Oh yes, there is a way to lower the cost - a recession. A depression works even better. But that does not make those voters at the bottom of the Ziggurat happy.

Culture War issues are no longer a viable refuge for the Elephant Clan. Concerning the Culture Wars the op ed "Last of the Culture Warriors" by Peter Beinart in the 3 Nov 2008 WaPo is a must read.

In a democracy with a market economy there is no sustainable path for the traditional platform of the Donkey Clan either. The only option is rabid populism because there are not enough resources to support continued Mass OverConsumption, especially with dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

The favorite weapons of the Clan wars and also not available. Derogatory labels are not only useless - as the results from yesterday's election show - hurling misleading epithets at the other party is ineffective and probably counter-productive. Calling someone a fascist, ultra conservative, right wingnut, center right, center, center left, liberal, ultra liberal, left wingnut, socialist, communist - and all the other labels - is meaningless.

Scaring citizens by suggesting that the other party wants to take away their 'freedom' or 'taxing the poor to support the rich' is will not work. Neither will using ill defined terms like "limited government," "free markets" or "rule of law" when those in public office violate their responsibility to protect community interests.

Party labels have been stretched and distorted to include at least 50.5% of those who come out to voter. (By the way, "Donkey Clan" and "Elephant

Clan” were not invented by EMR or Jim Bacon. EMR first heard about them from a political scientist who describes himself as a “recovering Republican.” The Clan designations have a useful ‘tribal’ ring and have been adopted into the SYNERGY Lexicon.)

Where to from here?

“Politics is broken.” Partisan two party competition is a dead end. Bipartisan ‘cooperation’ is worse and a nonpartisan agenda not much better. Bipartisan and nonpartisan catchalls mask the need for Fundamental Transformation. How about an Antipartisan strategy?

Drop the superficial political spectrum labels - call them all Core Confusing Words.

Spell out principles such as those in The Shape of the Future with respect to human settlement patterns or those dealing with managing the economy in the “IT IS ELEMENTARY” post of 10 October 2008 on this Blog.

Define objectives using clear, well defined terms within a comprehensive Conceptual Framework.

Spell out the strategy to achieve the objectives and seek broad agreement on the tactics to achieve the objectives. With respect to human settlement pattern, SYNERGY lays out a Three Step Process in HANDBOOK.

The Antipartisan approach is to create a broad consensus based on agreement of the vast majority of stake holders with the level of decision being the level of impact.

The biggest problem for some will be that an inclusive Antipartisan process will “slow things down.” Slowing things down in a society where speed has burned through natural capital and atomized society is a good thing, not a bad thing. Small is beautiful and Regional is the new Global.

Note on Vocabulary:

Google and Webster, Third Edition indicate that “Antipartisan” is a new word so we capitalized it. Antipartisan.com is an available domain name.

Jim Bacon’s “Elections, Shmelections, Nothing Has Changed” column drew a suggestion from Groveton concerning a new “third” party. Perhaps what is needed is an antiparty?

EMR

Labels: [Economy](#), [Governance](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## WRONG SIZE HOUSE, WRONG LOCATION

On 31 October CNNMoney.com reported that First American CoreLogic had found 7.5-million home mortgages already “underwater” and another 2.1-million that were on the brink. The International Herald Tribune story cited in EMR’s post “WaPo and IHT Housing and Mortgage Coverage,” 29 October on this Blog pegged the potential for underwater mortgages by 2010 at 19-million.

The CoreLogic report provides underwater numbers by state:

An astounding 49.8% of all mortgages in Nevada are underwater - talk about gambling...

An equally astounding 4.1 million underwater mortgages are in the top five states. These states include Florida and California, two jurisdictions that are often mentioned as leaders in the propagation of dysfunctional settlement patterns at Regional scale.

The two states with the lowest percentage of underwater mortgages were New York and Hawaii.

In New York State (4.4% of mortgages underwater) one factor may reflect Rockefeller administration concern for settlement patterns forty years ago - we did not call it that at the time but that is what was a primary concern as it had been in 1926. Modest rates of Regional growth over the past 40 years in most New Urban Regions that fall all or part with in New York State also helps. Hyper growth yields hyper dysfunction. (Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania which also have territory in the New York New Urban Region are also in the bottom 10 of underwater mortgages). Another factor is aggressive pursuit of mortgage, insurance and other venues for Enterprise fraud by New York State.

In the number two state, Hawaii (5.6% of mortgages underwater), the settlement patterns are nearly as useful as those of Western Europe for demonstrating the principles of intelligent settlement patterns. This is in spite of real estate churn and flux due to Asian investing. (If they could just get a robust shared-vehicle system up and running in the Oahu New Urban Region...)

EMR uses the terminology "Wrong Size House, Wrong Location" as shorthand for the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and the root cause of the mortgage meltdown. So far it has been 'Wrong Location' more than 'Wrong Size House' that has shown up in the foreclosure data.

The reason appears to be that a reluctance on the part of mortgagors to foreclose on Big houses in poor locations. The reason may be that in the current market they can not be resold. There are buyers for less expensive dwellings. Frequently the notice of foreclosure sale is followed by a notice of a resale for about the same price - some even higher than the foreclosure price.

That fact indicates special impacts on Households with low Institutional Capacity. Foreclosures of cheap houses in poor locations appear to have an especially big impact on minority homeowners. In the Subregional press, Hispanic surnames are much more frequent in foreclosure notices than in the population in general. Antidotal evidence suggests flight from the inhospitable environment created by Prince William County resulted in imprudent debts.

Prince William's target may have started out to be 'illegals' but the impact appears not to be confined to illegals by any stretch.

Of the 25 counties with the highest rates of increase in Hispanics from 2000 to 2007 in the entire US of A six are in the Virginia portion of the National Capital Subregion. Three are adjacent to Prince William County

and two others are not far away.

EMR has stated that those components of urban settlement where SYNERGY has identified high percentages of foreclosure are orphan subdivisions in dysfunctional locations vis a vis Jobs / Services / Amenity.

The pictures used to illustrate MainStream Media coverage of the mortgage meltdown look like poster children for settlement pattern dysfunction but that is not a statistically valid guide.

State-wide and municipal / Planning District data can misleadingly mask what is happening in the organic components of a New Urban Region.

Here is an exercise for those who have any doubt about the Wrong Location part of the Wrong Size House / Wrong Location paradigm:

Locate Cluster-scale, Neighborhood-scale and Village-scale urban agglomerations with high percentages of foreclosures. Then determine, based on Google Maps or other resources, if these places are in components of urban settlement that have any chance of becoming contributors to the evolution of Balanced Communities.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## BREAKTHROUGH!

*WaPo* has columnists who often see the world as it is: Warren Brown in one. Another is Steven Pearlstein who appears in the Business section. Today - 14 November - Pearlstein tosses a touchdown pass in overtime with "Toward a new International Capitalism."

For anyone interested in the 20 nation-state "summit" about to launch in the Federal District or the future of Virginia's economy needs to understand Pearlstein's perspective.

For EMR the most important thought is buried in the next to last paragraph:

"While product and labor markets work remarkably well when they are left open and lightly-regulated, experience has now demonstrate that a different approach needs to be taken toward financial markets, which suffer from imperfect information, and abundance of moral hazard and a tendency toward herd behavior and speculative excess."

Wait a minute!

While those comments are on target with respect to "financial" markets what about land markets, built environment markets and infrastructure markets? Taken together these three can be called "the settlement pattern market" because they shape human settlement patterns.

No one with hands on experience in these markets could claim they do not "suffer from imperfect information, and abundance of moral hazard and a tendency toward herd behavior and speculative excess."

Is the real estate market just a side light? Is it not the mortgage sector of this market that is driving the Global financial meltdown?

What about Automobiles? Are they just “products” or are they right behind “Wrong Size House in Wrong Location” as a driver of settlement pattern dysfunction?

What a huge blind spot Pearlstein has exposed! We explore this blind spot that is common among economist in *The Shape of the Future*.

Pearlstein provides a useful context with which come to understand the importance and topography of the complex market that most directly impacts human settlement patterns.

At the federal, state and municipal levels Agencies have done an terrible job of managing the settlement pattern market. See “The Role of Municipal Planning in the Creation of Dysfunctional Human Settlement Patterns,” 23 January 2002.

Housing and Automobiles have been subsidized by Agencies to jump start the economy with every recession since the Great Depression. And every time the settlement pattern has become more dysfunctional as documented by the Mobility and Access Crisis and the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis.

Why not evolve intelligent management of four markets: Labor, Goods and Services, Finance and Settlement Pattern? That will be important at the Global and continental scales but even more important at the Regional scale. The nation-state has a role to play but it is the Region where the rubber needs to meet the road. That has been the focus in the EU.

The folks governance practitioners that Jim Bacon calls Euro Weenies have been reluctant to harp on the dysfunctional settlement patterns in the US of A because the more sustainable patterns and densities of land use give the Euro's a competitive advantage.

Perhaps in the context that Pearlstein outlines they will speak up over the

weekend.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Governance](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#)

## FURTHER NOTE ON HOUSING

On 9 November we posted “WRONG SIZE HOUSE, WRONG LOCATION.

Subsequently, we promised to add a note in response to several comments. The original string is now 48 comments long, many of them not related to the core issue. So we will start over.

Groveton asked: “What makes a right location?” “Right location” is not determined by what any one person or Household does, it is determined by what everyone in the Community does to achieve Balance.

Groveton puts it this way: “... whether my house is in the right location seems to depend a lot on whether my job is in the right location.”

That is a start but it is not just the house and the job that matters.

It is Balance of J / H / S / R / A that matters. It is all the elements required to assemble a quality life. As many of the elements as possible that are needed to make you happy and safe should be “in the best locations.” As a backup there needs to be a shared vehicle system to get you to a few high value places that do not fit in the Village-scale station area or in the Community - say a job in the Zentrum, the Regional train station, stadium or concert hall.

Lets us assume one has a job and a home that are in convenient proximity. Next thing you know, children are on the horizon. The question that the partners must ask is not “where is the best school?”

The questionS are:

What can we do with those in my Dooryard and Cluster to crate the best environment for infants and toddlers?

What can we do with those in my Neighborhood to create the best

environment and education for our grade schoolers?

What can we do with those in my Village to create the best environment and education for our junior and senior high schoolers?

What can we do with those in my Community to create the best environment and community Agencies and Institutions - including a Community college for all of us?

Ask not where to go to find a \_\_\_\_\_, ask how can we can create great \_\_\_\_\_s in this Community.

You say you move too often and change living patterns too often to make this work?

You may think you are still living in the past when burning through Natural Capital paid for a much wider range of choice and the level of excess which is reflected in the widening wealth gap, the financial crisis, food insecurity, energy dependence, etc., and, of course, dysfunctional settlement patterns.

In fact there never was a time when this “go where and when I want” strategy worked for more than a few at the top of the Ziggurat. It seemed like it a few decades ago but that was a temporary illusion driven by advertising and living off of cheap energy and foreign debt.

The Large, Private Vehicle Mobility Myth is that a Household can live where they want, seek employment where they want and then Agencies can provide a Mobility and Access system that allows everyone to go wherever they what, whenever they want and arrive in a timely manner.

Larry Gross asks again about “data.” We will get to data (again) in a further note as promised in UPON FURTHER REVIEW.

TMT said “As I understand the rule, if you take a job on the Hill, you should sell your house...”

Well that is a problem. Some will be able to do that, not everyone.

TMT, let us be clear the “Rule” is “pay the full location variable cost and you can do what you want.”

However, given humans - especially in the US of A - have burned through so much of their Natural Capital they will find the choices going forward are constrained by the market and by democratic processes - if humans are fortunate enough to preserve democracy and a market economy in the face of declining resources and growing demand by those who have been left behind by past actions.

If you think there are too many taxes now, just wait until you finally get around to costing out the true location-variable tab for the life style you espouse as a right.

The choice is intelligent and Fundamental Transformation or Collapse.

Failure to prepare for the future and failure to reconsider traditional practices when conditions change is the prelude to Collapse.

As you may have noted, conditions HAVE changed.

It is depressing that Large, Private Vehicles and the Wrong Size Houses in the Wrong Location - places like Mountain Home - are the primary drivers of dysfunctional human settlement patterns. In spite of this reality, they have been used to “recover” from every recession since The Great Depression.

Now, when it should be clear to all that a new perspective is needed to achieve a sustainable trajectory for civilization, all the “leadership” is talking about is bailing out Detroit and propping up a flawed financial system exposed by the mortgage, derivative and default swap meltdown.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## MONDAY MORNING TEST

Google Map search for Mountain House, California and Waterloo, Iowa (Tks to Larry Gross for a great example)

Background: Mountain House is the new poster child of Wrong House, Wrong Location and underwater mortgages (90% or 95% depending on source.) Both Mountain House and Waterloo are in agricultural regions that are among the most productive on the planet.

If from these two maps do not make:

Clear Edge

Critical Mass

Balanced Community

New Urban Region

Mobility and Access Crisis

Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis

Helter Skelter Crisis

Sustainable human settlement patterns

very clear to you, please do not vote or invest until you have overcome Geographic Illiteracy.

Until a majority of US of A citizens can understand these eight concepts, political leaders will have no choice but to promise economic growth instead of sustainable trajectory for society.

EMR

## UPON FURTHER REVIEW

In late September and early October EMR posted four notes on the prospect of obtaining a sustainable trajectory for civilization. These posts generated an inordinate number of unfounded, negative comments. Since Jim Bacon has taken on new responsibilities, he no longer has time for comments such as "... I have been editing EMR's work for X years and never once have I seen him suggest ...". Without these admonitions, the attacks have become more pointed, more personal and farther from the topic of the post.

Based on the tone and content of the comments it appeared useful to more carefully analyze the responses to the four posts: "Fundamental Transformation" (21 September 2008), "Toward a Sustainable Trajectory" (29 September 2008), "Obstacles on the Path to a Sustainable Trajectory" (3 October 2008), and "Worth Noting Again" (3 October 2008).

For reasons noted previously on this Blog, EMR does not read all the comments so did not have a full grasp of how far comments had deteriorated. A comment by comment analysis found there was no basis for many of the attacks and no indication that most commentors had tried to understand or even read the material posted and cited.

The majority - but not all - of the comments had the sole intent on discounting, discrediting and belittling. They included inaccurate summaries of web searches, links to sparky and irrelevant material and gratuitous diagnosis of psychiatric disorders.

### A NEW APPROACH

SYNERGY is in the final stages of editing *TRILO-G* for publication. At this point there is a need for short sections and supplemental text to tie

current events to the larger context - the exploration of the economic, social and physical ramifications of functional and dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

After a review of the comments following the four posts noted above it was determined that it would speed up the pre-publication editing process if unedited first drafts of *TRILO-G* material was posted on the blog.

The trial posts included "It is Elementary," (10 October 2008), "The Role of the Media," (11 October 2008), "Swift Boating the Mortgage Crisis," (12 October 2008) and "The Bottom Line," 13 October 2008). Other drafts material has also been posted.

Why would someone post these drafts?

This is the free market at work. Posting these drafts is the cheapest and fastest way to sniff out passages and topics that could become targets of intentional misrepresentations and distortions.

*TRILO-G* is being published with staff support and half a dozen colleagues who read and comment on the material in draft form. None of these reviewers can identify sentences and paragraphs that need armoring against unfounded criticism as fast as Bacons Rebellion commentors.

Posting the draft material is far more efficient than paying additional staff or hiring focus group managers to help sniff out material that is subject to unfounded attack. Bacons Rebellion commentors possess a well honed ability to identify statements that can be maliciously misinterpreted.

The results of the experiment have been spectacular! Thank you.

The statements that have been shown to be vulnerable to intentional misinterpretations and distortions have been and will revised / restated before the Beta draft appears. The content of the four posts noted above will become part of Chapter 29, in a section titled "It Is the Settlement

Pattern, Stupid.” Other post will become parts of chapters throughout the text.

## THE LARGER QUESTIONS

Having turned lemons to lemonade several larger questions remain. These questions are important if one is to develop an educational program to help citizens understand human settlement patterns and obtaining a sustainable trajectory for society.

What is the motivation for these attacks?

Is this a problem with this Blog, with Blogging in general or with all media?

First, how can one be sure that many are intentional misinterpretations and distortions and not just statements of uninformed or misinformed personal opinion? A careful reading suggests that a few do not bother to address the subject of the post and almost no one addresses the core idea. Commentors most often pick a phrase or sentence and then attack. They appear to be sure anything EMR presents is wrong so any attack is justified.

EMR knows from direct feedback that many readers do understand but that is not what comes across in the comments. Some who understand say they do not want to be subject to slings and arrows of the flammers.

It is clear that Flammers desire a forum. There will always be 20 percent who claim the Earth is flat and they find a place to express their views in Blog comments.

In a larger context this "vocal minority" may be a root cause the He Said / She Said "journalism" of MainStream Media profiled in THE ESTATES MATRIX.

(Favorite quote of the weekend: "The public's frankly gotten frustrated

with the conventional of objectivity, the idea that you (journalists) have to present both side of the story, even if one side is completely bogus.” In WaPo Magazine “Onion Nation.”)

In response to the heap of negative comments there are a number of other observations that will be posted from time to time.

In the meantime, here is an example of a brief section of draft material that has been added to Chapter 3:

.....

#### STRAWPERSONS - RED HERRING EMPLOYED IN DEFENSE OF MYTHS

Beyond the three well articulated diversions noted above there is an avalanche of strawpersons; Red herring tossed up to divert attention from Myths.

One favorite from the realm of blogging is “The Pregnant Mother of Two” championed by Blogger Bob. This strawperson was put forth to justify Automobile dominated settlement patterns that would facilitate The Pregnant Mother of Two driving to a supermarket in a Large, Private Vehicle. If anything impedes the use of Large, Private Vehicles it would be a gross affront to civilized society in the view of Blogger Bob because it would make life miserable for The Pregnant Mother of Two.

Shall we consider the real world?

A far smaller percentage of citizens are pregnant at any given time than the percentage who are always isolated by near exclusive dependence on the automobile for Access and Mobility.

This reality becomes even more critical as the population ages. Even more important, the number who are isolated by Autocentric settlement patterns rises dramatically as the cost of Autonomobility rises.

Even the most rudimentary calculation of alternative settlement pattern costs demonstrate that it would be far cheaper to build a special environment for pregnant women to shop for necessities than to create millions of acres of dysfunctional settlement patterns.

One could design a Community-serving hyper\*mart with aisles wide enough to drive to car-window-accessible shelves. The subsidy to make this facility available to certified pregnant women would be paid for by the vast savings due to functional settlement patterns in the rest of the Community. The general public could shop in the Pregnant Woman Center if they paid the full cost. This would work just like the justification for HOT lanes. One can just imagine the opportunities for public private partnerships...

But wait, the Pregnant Mothers of Two can now shop by phone and have the goods delivered. And what is the responsibility to support the Household of the person who got her pregnant? Oh, right, he is so busy overcoming dysfunctional settlement patterns he has no time to help out.

The questions are endless but irrelevant when one understands that it would be far more effective and far more efficient to evolve functional settlement patterns Community-wide.

A functional environment would be better for all women - pregnant or not - and for all small children - with or without a pregnant mother. The bottom line it would be better for everyone. This better alternative of functional human settlement patterns is explored in the "social impact chapters" (8 and 9) of *The Shape of the Future* and specifically in the discussion of "It takes a Village" in Chapter 9, Box 3. Also see "A Yard Where Johnny Can Run and Play," 1 December 2003.

If Blogger Bob would bother to run the numbers, he would understand the need for functional human settlement patterns. Does he do that? No, he

parades out The Pregnant Mother of Two who in his mind must be given the opportunity drive a Large, Private Vehicle to a big parking lot outside a store to get provisions for her family regardless of the cumulative consequences.

This is typical of the strawperson tossed up to obfuscate attempts to eliminate settlement pattern Myths.

.....

By the way, if you did not pass the Monday Morning Test you may not understand.

More responses in due course.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## THANKSGIVING PERSPECTIVE

The economic and political 'news' via MainStream Media during the week before Thanksgiving 2008 provided a strong incentive to give fervent thanks. But perhaps not the thanks that some think.

First some context:

In the early 1970s EMR's and his Clustermates worked hard to elect a "reform / change" candidate for County Executive in Howard County, Maryland. Our candidate won. EMR received a plum political appointment (an unsalaried commission chairpersonship) and a broad range of very useful experiences.

The citizens of Howard County, however, did not fare as well. The new County Exec spent the next four years proving that he would NOT do what his opposition warned he would do if he was elected - and what those who voted for him hoped he would do if he was elected.

There was no Fundamental Transformation under the new Exec. He was not reelected to a second term because he had only partially satisfied those who voted against him in the first election and frustrated those who voted for him. He tried to satisfy all the voters instead of taking the actions that were necessary to achieve a sustainable trajectory for the Communities that are all or part in Howard County.

The time frame was a pivotal one in the evolution of the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region. The Planned New Community of Columbia, MD is located in Howard County. Due to county actions and inactions, many aspects of James Rouse's vision for Columbia were least-common-denominatored into oblivion and lost forever. Now Reston is cited as THE place in the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region which demonstrates that there is an alternative to dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

See superficial but accurate story "The Often-Imitated Reston Eyes Future With Trepidation," 28 November 2008 in WaPo. (We say "superficial" because to really address this issue would require the entire Section A 'news hole.' That is not possible. See THE ESTATES MATRIX.

EMR lived for nearly a decade in Columbia (1972-1980) and in Reston (1980-1988). Both have become less than their potential but the biggest lost opportunity occurred in Columbia while "our" candidate was County Exec. During that time there was an opportunity to use Community actions in the context of the 1973 OPEC Oil Embargo to provide examples that could have been springboards toward a sustainable future. The opportunities were squandered.

Fast forward to the last week of November in 2008. The handwriting is on the wall.

There is a palpable optimism in Greater Warrenton-Fauquier, in the Commonwealth of Virginia and in the US of A. Citizens believe they have reason to hope there will be "change we can believe in," change for the better. This optimism is evidenced by the celebration in Grant Park, the demand for tickets to Inauguration events and in animated conversations on Main Street.

There are signs of optimism are based on some of the President-Elects initial statements and promised nominations. The stock market was up before Thanksgiving on the speculation that there will be more bailouts.

It should be noted that not all the views are positive. There are those who fear real change and they are portraying the prospect of Obama led change with a negative spin. Politics-As-Usual advocates are filling partisan blogs with demeaning observations on every action, rumor or illusion that can be misinterpreted to generate fear. The most frightening head line? Karl Rove says Obama is doing a good job because he is picking

“experienced” political operatives.

But what is REALLY happening?

The optimism is based on the assumption that the next administration, lead by an economic team of retreads will return the economy to one driven by Mass OverConsumption driven and that these actions will ‘save’ and create jobs for the unmotivated and under-qualified consumers.

The problem is that every action to build consumer confidence and increase consumption will make it harder to achieve sustainable trajectory for First World civilization.

Buying new Automobiles will only reinforce dysfunctional human settlement patterns. Bailing out mortgages on Wrong Size Houses in the Wrong Locations will only encourage more unsecured lending and the development of even more dysfunctional settlement patterns.

While the recent ‘team’ announcements generate optimism about a bigger cornucopia of even more bailouts, citizens should have grave reservations about the appointments announced to date.

These are the same politics-as-usual ‘players’ who made the decisions that put the economy in meltdown.

They do not understand the importance of human settlement patterns.

They do not understand the roll of Automobiles in creating the Mobility and Access Crisis. Members of the transportation team (Downey, Garvey, Heminger, Oberstar and the rest) have spent their entire working life making the mistakes that have resulted in a failed and crumbling Mobility and Access System.

The US of A has grossly OVER INVESTED in and OVER-SUBSIDIZED Air Travel capacity on the assumption that demand will grow without regard to the total cost and environmental impact. Rising costs - including finally paying

for environmental impact - is putting air travel out of the reach of most. The inconvenience of anti-terrorism measures makes air travel a pain for all but those who fly in private planes. "See The End of Flight As We Knew It." (As an aside, there is painful irony in United Airlines betting on rising fuel costs in the short run. Why again are 'futures' not just another form of anti-Community gambling?)

The US of A has grossly UNDER INVESTED in functional IntraRegional and InterRegional shared-vehicle ground transport that would support functional and sustainable settlement patterns.

The US of A has grossly OVER INVESTED and OVER-SUBSIDIZED Automobility on the false assumption that Large, Private Vehicles could provide Mobility and Access in spite of a laundry list of obvious problems. See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS.

The vast majority of citizens live in a handful of MegaRegions - conterminous New Urban Regions - for which the Automobile and Large, Private Vehicle Roadway Systems is the problem, not the solution for Mobility and Access.

The transport infrastructure is failing - there is a Mobility and Access Crisis and the facilities are falling apart. Big construction projects to produce jobs will just mean more investment in the wrong systems and will not provide sustainable Mobility and Access and will not support unsustainable human settlement patterns.

The new economic 'team' still does not understand the impact of the housing market on the economy. Few admit the impact of the Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location in the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and the Mobility and Access Crisis.

Here is a quote from Chapter 22 of BRIDGES now in final draft:

"Out of all this, three clippings stand out.

1. "Bernake: There's No Housing Bubble to Go Bust" in WaPo Business Section 27 October 2005
2. "Housing Cool-Down Is 'Orderly,' Fed Chief (Bernake) Says" in WaPo Business Section, 19 May 2006
3. "Fed Chief (Bernake) Says Housing Problems Won't Spread to Rest of Economy" on Page C4 of the 29 March 2007 New York Times.

The first quote was from a few days before President Bush nominated Bernake to be Chairman of the Federal Reserve. The bottom line is that the "leaders" at the federal level did not have a clue what was happening."

They still do not know what happened or what will result from pumping more cheap money into shelter related Enterprises before everyone understand the importance of evolving functional human settlement patterns.

The economic rescue squad is burning through the \$700-billion bailout war chest but handing it out to whom so ever threatens to go under. Student loan sharks are the latest 'victims.'

Here is a great vignette: In the 30 November Wapo (Close to Home) a state senator from Maryland says: "Effective Stimulus? Think Local, Mr. Obama." Jim Bacon frequently rails about municipal Agency waste and here is a specific. Senator Rosapepe wants federal money to help pay for CROSSING GUARDS.

The reason crossing guards are needed is because children cannot walk safely to school. Why? Dysfunctional human settlement patterns. See note on Columbia and Reston above. Both these still Beta Communities demonstrated how to have safe pathways to schools, the library and the

store - including "eyes on the path" - forty years ago. Columbia's system

deteriorated because the School Board scrapped Neighborhood schools and build too many too large shopping venues as noted in The Shape of the Future. Wherever one turns it is THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN STUPID.

The head line reads "The Car of the Future - But at What Cost? Hybrid Vehicles Are Popular, but Making Them, Profitable Is a Challenge." What nonsense! There is a sure way to make any product profitable: Raise price to cover expenses plus profit. But for Large, Private Vehicles - regardless of the source of power - raising the price means far fewer will be able to afford Automobiles. That means the Automobile Enterprises will not be able to use most of their overbuilt capacity based on the false assumption that Automobiles would provide Mobility and Access.

And all that new technology? The more complex the vehicle, the more it costs. Most citizens would need nothing more than their feet, a bike, a Segway, a Vespa or a Golf Cart for all their travel IF THERE WERE FUNCTIONAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS.

EMR noted in a recent blog post:

"The cost of energy in all forms - and all goods and services that use energy - is going up.

"Burning thru easy-to-access Natural Capital and borrowing from foreign suppliers has kept the cost of energy and all that energy cost impact artificially low.

"Already the cost of energy has ended The Age of Accessible Air Travel (Terrorism has ended convenient Air Travel at any cost.) See "The End of Flight As We Have Known It."

"The end of The Age of Automobiles, The Age of Big, Scattered Dwellings and other examples of Mass OverConsumption is in sight.

"So is the end of a lot of other things."

The only question is can citizens come to understand the need for Fundamental Transformations fast enough to implement them before there are not enough resources left to make the Transformation.

The Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday headlines on the economy and the governance transition have been over-washed by the attacks in Mumbai, Bangkok and Wal\*Mart. No one will know for months if the stock market 'good news' and the cut rate 'doorbusters' stimulated the economy but if they did, that just makes things worse.

What does the administration do to "save jobs" in an dysfunctional economy? Stimulating consumption is not the answer.

What is really need are sustainable ways to use the US of A's greatest surplus resource. That resource is citizens who are not very bright and not very motivated. They:

- Slept through the important parts of high school
- Want to be entertained rather than create their own active, healthful recreation
- Almost all have made location and consumption decisions that they thought were in their best interest, but cumulatively these actions contribute to the growing economic, social and physical dysfunction

Because they happen to be born in US of A they believe "someone" owes them a comfortable life of consumption and entertainment. They are not willing to work at the jobs that those that are attractive to those who are bright, resourceful and were unfortunate enough to have been born in some other nation-state.

There is plenty of challenge and opportunity for the bright and the motivated, it is the vast majority of the Running As Hard As They Can and

most of the Losing Grounds in the bottom 90 percent of the Ziggurat that need reorientation and something productive to do.

Telling a large percentage of the population they are fat, under-educated and slothful is not a way to get elected or reelected. "Leading" the citizens out of their self-created wilderness of sloth, indulgence and dysfunctional ways may not be possible with dwindling resources.

It has taken EMR 40 years to develop the comprehensive Conceptual Framework and the Vocabulary to articulate what should have been obvious to all in 1973. Having those tools in Howard County in 1974 would have been useful. Now the entire nation-state is sliding to the edge and no one is interested in anything but getting back to Mass OverConsumption.

This post opened with a reference to the economic political news during the last week of November and suggested that this news provided reason to give thanks.

Some think a rebounding stock market, lower mortgage interest rates and lower gas prices to encourage more holiday travel were cause for optimism.

Wrong.

The reason for giving thanks this season is:

Most of us born before World War II will be gone before the full impact of sloth, indulgence, consumption and corruption that has led to Mass OverConsumption and settlement pattern dysfunction turns out most of the lights and humans are left with the challenge of making draconian Transformations and few, very expensive resources with which to make them.

EMR hopes you had a nice Thanksgiving too.

EMR

Labels: [Access and Mobility Crisis](#), [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#),  
[Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## STIMULATING DISASTER

The following is the headline, byline and the first four paragraphs of the story that was at the top, right of page A 1 in today's *WaPo*.

EMR has inserted in brackets [ ] comments in the text and following the quoted material added comments on the "massive" plan to create jobs.

We hope these notes make it clear why these ideas, though well intended, are 'stimulating disaster' (or perhaps compounding disaster) on the way to Collapse. Since the political leadership of the Commonwealth was an early supporter of the president-elect, one can expect Virginia to be a recipient of some of this job creation stimulus.

.....

*Obama Offers First Look at Massive Plan To Create Jobs*

*Project Would Be the Largest Since the Interstate System*

[In retrospect the negative impact the Interstate System on human settlement patterns inside the Clear Edges and outside the Clear Edges is crystal clear. It is also just as clear that a different design for an InterRegional Roadway System - for example one with key elements of the system laid out in 1924 would have had far more beneficial impacts and far fewer negative impacts and it would have created far more jobs.]

By Michael D. Shear

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, December 7, 2008; A01

On the heels of more grim unemployment news, President-elect Barack Obama yesterday offered the first glimpse of what would be the largest public works program since President Dwight D.

Eisenhower created the federal interstate system in the 1950s.

[Dwight did not “create” the Interstate System.]

Obama said the massive government spending program he proposes to lift the country out of economic recession will include a renewed effort to make public buildings energy-efficient, rebuild the nation's highways, renovate aging schools and install computers in classrooms, extend high-speed Internet to underserved areas and modernize hospitals by giving them access to electronic medical records.

[See notes below on each element that is listed.]

"We need to act with the urgency this moment demands to save or create at least 2 ½ million jobs so that the nearly 2 million Americans who've lost them know that they have a future," Obama said in his weekly address, broadcast on the radio and the Internet.

[See note revised from “Thanksgiving Perspective” below concerning the jobs that are really needed.]

Obama offered few details and no cost estimate for the investment in public infrastructure. But it is intended to be part of a broader effort to stimulate economic activity that will also include tax cuts for middle-class Americans and direct aid to state governments to forestall layoffs as programs shrink.

[The devil - and the path to disaster and Collapse - is in the details.]

.....

*Consider each of the listed elements:*

***“Make public buildings energy-efficient”***

There is nothing ‘wrong’ with trying to make public buildings more energy-efficient. However, what really needs to be made more energy-efficient and less energy-consumptive is the settlement pattern. It is the

arrangement of buildings and spaces that is the primary driver of dysfunction and waste, not just of energy but of time and all other resources.

The downside of a focus on public building efficiency is that Agencies have a disastrous record trying to make anything related to buildings and settlement patterns “efficient” due to the pervasive dysfunction in governance structure - Public Housing, Urban Renewal, Zoning and Subdivision Controls, Ag subsidies, roadway, waterway and airport subsidies come to mind.

Collectively, Agencies at the federal state and municipal level have created The Mobility and Access Crisis, The Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and The Helter Skelter Crisis.

***“Rebuild the nation's highways”***

Putting more resources into a system to support near exclusive reliance on Large, Private Vehicles (Automobiles) for Mobility and Access is an invitation to less Mobility and less Access. See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS

***“Renovate aging schools”***

Fine idea, most of the investment in schools over the past 30 years has been to support children of those who have been induced to (or had not choice but to) buy the Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location.

The problem with investing in the schools that really need renovation is that the Clusters and Neighborhoods where the children live need ‘renovation’ even more than the schools. Can you say “rebuild the Urban fabric inside the Clear Edges to create Balanced Communities?”

***“Install computers in classrooms”***

Great idea. But from the advertisements on MainStream Media is appears

that the NBA is already doing this.

Perhaps before computers are installed there needs to be a comprehensive strategy to address the results of over technological saturation that is driving Mass OverConsumption. See “The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future” by Mark Bauerlein.

Dumping more technology on students may be no better than dumping more asphalt on the landscape or putting every efficient lighting in dysfunctionally scattered buildings.

*“Extend high-speed Internet to underserved areas”*

Whoa! Here we go again. Unless there is an intelligent nation-state-wide Wright Plan, this program will be subsidizing those who have made bad location decisions with little benefit to any but those who are at the broadband subsidy trough.

*“Modernize hospitals by giving them access to electronic medical records.”*

This is a real whiz-bang idea. It is the system of delivering medical services that needs Transformation. Electronic medical records are not even a sty on the gnat eye.

### **The bigger Picture**

There is nothing here about bailing out Automobile Enterprises or the Shelter Enterprises. That seems strange given the magnitude of the “problem.” EMR will deal with the pitfalls with the current ideas in these areas in due course.

As we noted in Thanksgiving Perspectives what is really needed are sustainable ways to use the US of A’s greatest surplus resource.

That resource is citizens who are not very bright and not very motivated.

They:

- Slept through the important parts of high school
- Want to be entertained rather than create their own active, healthful recreation
- Almost all have made location and consumption decisions that they thought were in their best interest, but cumulatively these actions contribute to the growing economic, social and physical dysfunction

Because they happen to be born in US of A they believe “someone” owes them a comfortable life of consumption and entertainment.

They are not willing to work at the jobs that are attractive to those who are bright, resourceful but were unfortunate enough to have been born in some other nation-state.

There is plenty of challenge and opportunity for the bright and the motivated, it is the vast majority of the Running As Hard As They Can and most of the Losing Grounds in the bottom 90 percent of the Ziggurat that need reorientation and something productive to do.

Telling a large percentage of the population they are fat, under-educated and slothful is not a way to get elected or reelected. “Leading” the citizens out of their self-created wilderness of sloth, indulgence and dysfunctional ways may not be possible with dwindling resources. But this short laundry list of ideas to generate is a not starter.

Note: This post (and “Thanksgiving Perspectives:”) was not edited by Jim Bacon so it may not be as clear as it might otherwise be.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Governance](#), [Human](#)

[Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#)

## STIMULATING DISASTER -- PART TWO

In STIMULATING DISASTER posted 7 December 2008 - the date of posting is NOT a happenstance - EMR commented on a short list of specific proposals put forth by the president-elect, Barack Obama to “stimulate the economy.”

On that same day on a television talk show, the president-elect suggested that the economic problem “would get worse before it got better.” Few disagree with that assessment.

The gross mismanagement of US of A financial Enterprises and Agencies - selling speculative paper based on bad mortgages - destabilized an over-leverage global financial system that was already grossly over-dependent on unsustainable ‘growth.’ It will take more than creating public service jobs, cutting energy consumption in Agency buildings, tinkering with health records and other sideshows addressed in STIMULATING DISASTER to make any significant change, much less achieve Fundamental Transformation to a sustainable trajectory for society.

Fundamental Transformation will require addressing the BIG ENCHILADAS:

The Mobility and Access Crisis, and

The Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis

That means getting serious about the Helter Skelter Crisis, aka dysfunctional human settlement patterns and the unsustainable trajectory of contemporary civilization.

### MOBILITY AND ACCESS

The only things that are on the table with respect to The Mobility and Access Crisis are:

- “Fixing” the Interstate System and “rebuilding highways” addressed in STIMULATING DISASTER and the comments following the post, and
- Bailing out the three largest Automobile Enterprises.

With respect to the later, Congress and the White House are on the case. They turned down a request for a \$35 billion blank check and are tinkering with a smaller, short term blank check.

However, before they turn over the money, they want some assurance that there will be changes made. They want the head of General Motors to be fired.

They are absolutely right in getting to the core problem. What is GM doing with Mr. Wagoner in the lead? They need Mr. Hybrid.

It is not a joke that Congress is demanding Wagoner’s head. It is a joke if they think that will make any difference.

Wagoner has been on the job since 2000. The problem citizen now face has been growing since 1920. The unsustainable trajectory should have been clear to all since 1973.

In 1973 EMR lost a good client and a great project. Ford Motor Company, to handshake partner of the client, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, walked away from a proposal to build a prototype Planned New Community applying new Mobility and Access technology being developed by Ford’s Fairlane research program.

When the OPEC Oil Embargo hit, Ford abandoned the idea of innovation (and fired the whole Fairlane Research Center that was looking at vehicle / settlement pattern relationships) to focus on their “core business.” Ford and the other Automobile Enterprises continued to focus on their “core business” over the next 35 years. They now face bankruptcy because their “core business” is not sustainable for the reasons spelled out

in THE PROBLEM WITH CARS.

The problem is not some short-term, short-sightedness of a few CEOs, it is a problem of relying of Large, Private Vehicles to provide Mobility and Access to an Urban society. Automobiles have grown more complex and more costly to build, operate and maintain and more dependent on cheap energy every year since 1973. With the end of cheap energy, the 35 year joy ride is over.

The choice is either an alternative Mobility and Access System to support a sustainable human settlement pattern or Depression. Take your pick.

Chrysler president Jim Press says: "The solution is product." No, the solution is a Fundamental Transformation in the settlement pattern and in the infrastructure and vehicles to provide Mobility and Access.

(This just in: The ASHTO laundry list released in Philadelphia today is made up mainly of projects that that will make human settlement patterns MORE dysfunctional. And to this a list of shared-vehicle system projects like the Silver Line and you have a real disaster.)

#### AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

The other half of the BIG ENCHILADA solution to address the Helter Skelter Crisis is a way to provide citizens with Affordable and Accessible Housing.

Here again the issue is quite clear and has been addressed by columns in Bacon's Rebellion for five years.

What triggered the Global Financial Meltdown was speculative paper base on bad mortgages. The underlying problem was not just loans to bad people or even bad people making bad loans, it was making loans on the Wrong Sized House in the Wrong Location.

For half a decade EMR has been saying that the problem with Fanning and

Freddie was not just bloated executive compensation, unsound lending practices and no oversight. The problem was that Freddie and Fannie was pumping Billions into an overheated housing market and exacerbating an unsustainable settlement pattern.

We explored this issue in a series of posts: "IT IS ELEMENTARY," (10 October 2008), "THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA," (11 October 2008), "SWIFT BOATING THE MORTGAGE CRISIS," (12 October 2008) and "THE BOTTOM LINE," (13 October 2008). These posts will appear, in an edited format as "IT IS THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN STUPID" in TRILO-G.

Bailing out mortgagees or mortgagors will not solve the Mortgage Meltdown problem, that will require Fundamental Transformation of human settlement patterns.

Who will lead that effort? When one looks for an answer to this question, the future looks very scary. In today's WaPo Robert J. Samuelson's column is titled "Bernanke's Burden." The column outlines why Bernanke is the central figure in solving the financial crisis and points out that Bernanke will be around in the new administration unless forced to resign.

Let us review Bernanke's understanding of shelter finance as noted in THANKSGIVING PERSPECTIVE:

"Bernanke: There's No Housing Bubble to Go Bust" in WaPo Business Section 27 October 2005 (A few days before President Bush nominated Bernanke to be Chairman of the Federal Reserve.)

"Housing Cool-Down Is 'Orderly,' Fed Chief (Bernanke) Says" in WaPo Business Section, 19 May 2006

"Fed Chief (Bernanke) Says Housing Problems Won't Spread to Rest of Economy" on Page C4 of the 29 March 2007 New York Times.

A 5 December WaPo headline reads: "Bernanke Stirs Pot On Home Loan

Help: U.S. Must Take Action, Fed Chairman Says.

The bottom line is still that the “leaders” at the federal level did not have a clue what was happening and they still do not know what happened or what will result from pumping more cheap money into shelter related Enterprises before everyone understand the importance of evolving functional human settlement patterns.

At the least mortgage assistance must be focused on loans that qualify for Location Efficient Mortgages.

If mortgages are secured by interests in sound, well located dwellings, even if the mortgagee cannot pay, someone can buy the dwelling and make it a home.

In the National Capital Subregion, the typical cost of a foreclosure mortgage wash for a dwelling in a scattered (orphan) Cluster-scale subdivision in the R = 25 to R = 40 Radius Band are running around \$100,000 for a \$190,000 resale. A 35 percent mark down on just 5 million underwater mortgages is \$500 billion.

Here is the first paragraph of our 9 November 2008 post “Wrong House, Wrong Location”:

“On 31 October CNNMoney.com reported that First American CoreLogic had found 7.5-million home mortgages already “underwater” and another 2.1-million that were on the brink. The International Herald Tribune story cited in EMR’s post “WAPO AND IHT HOUSING AND MORTGAGE COVERAGE,” 29 October on this Blog pegged the potential for underwater mortgages by 2010 at 19-million.”

You heard about the cause for Thanksgiving on turkey day. Any idea about New Years resolutions?

Note: This post (and other recent posts) have not been edited by Jim

Bacon so it may not be as clear as it might otherwise be.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#),  
[Mobility and Access Crisis](#), [The Helter Skelter Crisis](#)

## THANK YOU, GROVETON

EMR is posting this thank you here because so many have reported that they do not bother with the comments due to the volume of New Flat Earth Society, the Business-As-Usual Crowd and 12.5 Percenter comments that our posts on this site engender. Especially now that Jim Bacon is gone.

No one should miss Groveton's great 9 Dec 08 post at 8:43 (Pages 13, 14 and 15 for those who print out important posts) on STIMULATING DISASTER - II posted 8 December.

EMR hopes you do not object Groveton, Point 4 will appear in an End Note in Chapter 19 of TRILO-G - with attribution of course.

Re Point 5, my guess is that you have not looked up the Six Overarching Strategies we cited in our earlier response to you on this issue.

Problem is NOT figuring out what to do, the Problem it is convincing majority of citizens that the these six strategies (and others too, of course) are things that must be done.

That is the lynch pin if a democracy with a market economy is to be preserved - or should it be "restored" now that 'the market' is being bought up by Agencies?

One of the reasons it is hard to gain a majority of support for intelligent action is not just the New Flat Earth Society et. al. but a larger issue:

The subject of the post by Rabbit at 11:03 on the same string concerning centralization / decentralization by "jeffvail" of 10 Dec (The link did work for EMR) is a perfect example.

The whole post (and the graphic) that Rabbit referred to is great stuff but

lacking an overarching Conceptual Framework of human settlement patterns and Vocabulary to articulate the Framework, it is not possible to communicate (“note use of “Suburbia” in title).

If you do not like The New Urban Regions Conceptual Framework and Vocabulary, come up with your own but do not pretend that it is possible to have meaningful dialogue without a comprehensive Conceptual Framework and a supporting Vocabulary.

One other thing, now EVERYONE has someone to blame for their 401K tanking. It was Fannie and Freddie. Now there is a fresh set of villains. You can either hate the Donkey Clan and the White House / Big Government Elephants or the Senate No-Bailouts Elephants concerning the Automobile bailout.

Just for fun reread “Riding the Tiger” of 2 June 2008.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## GENERATIONAL GENERALIZATION

In a 10:31 AM comment on the post "Transportation and Generational Analysis Part 1.", Peter G points out that he and Jim Bacon have birthdays that are only three weeks apart. While both were born near the Atlantic Coast of North America, they have far different experiences and current perspectives.

We are too busy to flesh out this thought but here is a draft thesis and a question for generational difference advocates:

Thesis: Global economic reality will trump generational stereotypes.

The emerging reality is for Collapse. Collapse driven by those at the top of the Ziggurat wasting Natural Capital to:

- Pay the total cost of contemporary 'driven-by-technology-to-a-frenzy' society, and
- Subsidize the full cost of dysfunctional settlement patterns.

Genetic proclivities (aka, genetic hardwiring) will erase many of the "generational" differences that have seemed important to data miners.

The drive to survive will wipe out most of the nice distinctions between generations and the technology / innovation with which they are comfortable -- vehicles, communicaitons, appliances, recreation, employment...

The absolute necessity of a secure source of potable water and edible foodstuffs will be of primary concern. Having access to a warm shower and a heated bathroom will be luxuries.

All the techno 'stuff' will be out of reach of the vast majority and this will spell DOOM to generational differences. Why?

There are close to 6.5-billion humans on the planet. They all want something to drink, something to eat, a warm shower and a heated bathroom.

Most of those on the planet do not have these things. They are becoming less and less willing to allow five percent of the population to consume 25 percent of the resources so that the Fortunate Five Percent at the top of the Ziggurat can enjoy the luxuries of Mass OverConsumption.

One, as yet, unappreciated consequence of the headlong rush to create Friedman's Flat Earth is that 'everyone' can see what is going on all across the Globe. The 'have nots' are learning they can attack those who are consuming more than their share and in the process depriving them of enough to eat, drink and the basic rudiments of creature comforts.

In the past decade it has become clear that the 'have-nots' can attack the 'have-more-than-their-shares' directly and indirectly. They can even do it remotely via the communications grid ...

(Excuse us while we reboot our computer and restart the air traffic control system, the North East Power Grid, the Wilson Bridge lift span and....)

The attacks will become ever more brutal once it is clear that there are not enough resources to allow "everyone" a chance to float up in the 'growth and prosperity tide' that for the last 200 years was thought to "rises all boats."

One can see the realization dawning in China, India and Indonesia. Many think they can bring the 'big-wasters' to their knees economically. Some who are more desperate, believe they can take a shortcut to haven - and 77 virgins - by accelerating the process via self-sacrifice.

So the generational generalizations will erode.

The three forces can will drive real change are aging of the population, immigration and the fact that humans now know how to NOT to bring more new humans into undesirable conditions (aka, voluntary population control based an understanding that the church with the most souls does NOT win because it cannot deliver happy and safe adherents while they are alive.)

In a consumer driven economy with instantanious Global communications: Consumption levels (note the price of gas); The attractiveness of places to immigrate to get rich; and, Birth rates can turn on a dime from the perspective of a 'gereation' two.

One question: How does anyone identify the start and end of a homogenous "generation?"

The Greatest Generation fought in World War II. The Baby boomers are their children. What about those of us born in the late 30s? Too young to fight in WW II and coming of age in the 50s when world had already changed to become the home of Boomers?

This 'inner generation" is experiencing what the Boomers will experience but is a few years ahead of them. There are not so many of them that they will drive Social Security broke - unless the Really Great Depression drives down Social Security receipts...

Perhaps answer is in Gladwell's new book Outliers: The Story of Success.

By the way, Chapter One of that book demonstrates how a Balanced Community can trump lard in the diet vis a vis health and happiness.

EMR

Labels: [Generations](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Technology](#)

## IT IS MainStream Media's FAULT

A teaser on the front page of today's WaPo says:

“Outlook

“Feeding a Gloomy Monster

“Research shows that media news reports can affect consumer confidence. So how much of the current recession is the media's fault?”

The answer is simple:

MainStream Media is largely responsible for the current economic crisis.

But not for the reasons that Eric Weiner explores in his story “The Year of Living Gloomily: The recession is bad enough. A relentless news cycle is making it worse.”

Most of what Weiner is true, or mostly true, and is well worth reading. But Weiner's ‘reasons’ only spotlight the pitfalls of creating a Regional, nation-state or Global economies that are driven primarily by consumer consumption - when the consumers are uninformed about the cumulative consequences of their actions.

The truth is citizens do not pay all that much attention to “the news.” That has been documented by a much larger body of research than the one Weiner cites. MainStream Media likes to pretend that citizens pay close attention to their content and thus their advertising. That is the only way they can sell advertising. That is also why they run stories like Weiner's rather than drilling down to the real causes of civilizations dysfunctions and it discontents.

Sure, bad “news” feeds on itself and saturation coverage leverages bad decisions for the reasons that Weiner outlines. However, what is REALLY driving down the consumption-dependent economy is what is happening

in:

The Household - "We owe more on the mortgage than the house is worth."  
"Our monthly out-go exceeds our in-come." "Our credit interest card rate just went up again." "We cannot refinance again to get cash to pay the doctor bills, buy a new car or make a weekly trip to Charlestown Races and Slots.

The Dooryard - "Joe and Martha have filled for bankruptcy." "The people across the street cannot afford to get their roof fixed."

The Cluster - "Did you see what that house on the next street is listed for?"

The Neighborhood - "Two more stores closed at the Neighborhood Center." "Wal\*Mart has that for a dollar less." See "THE PROBLEM WITH CARS - Learning from Big Boxes."

The job - "There is talk of more layoffs at the office."

The family - "Our daughter who went off to with her new college degree to Atlanta and then started a business with her partner said at Christmas dinner that she may have to move back ..." "Great Grandad did not put a college fund check in each great grandchild's holiday card because his retirement account is frozen by the bank..."

And in the Village, the Community and the Region.

In other words what is driving down the economy is...

The unsustainable consumer driven economy.

So why is MainStream Media to blame?

As noted above, citizens and their Organizations (aka, consumers) are uninformed about the cumulative consequences of their actions - the cumulative impact with the most widespread and unsustainable impact is dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

Telling citizens the truth about Mass OverConsumption kills MainStream Media ad revenue.

As noted in GENERATIONAL GENERALIZATION:

The emerging reality is Collapse of the Mass OverConsumption 'civilization.' It is on the brink of Collapse because those at the top of the Ziggurat have been wasting Natural Capital to:

- Pay the total cost of a 'driven-to-frenzy-by-technology' society, much of which has been written off as 'externalities,' and
- Subsidize the full cost of dysfunctional settlement patterns.

The role of MainStream Media is complex. One view is spelled out in THE ESTATES MATRIX. Since 1973 MainStream Media has abandoned the Fourth Estate become a Second Estate Enterprise. Since MainStream Media must live off of advertising, truth about the impact of Mass OverConsumption is toxic. Every MainStream Media employee knows that illuminating reality is cutting their own throat.

MainStream Media driving consumption drives profits and profits buy the publishers / owners of Media Enterprises trout fishing retreats in Montana and the fox hunting estates in the Piedmont.

That is not "bad" if citizens had the information they need to make intelligent decisions in the voting booth and in the marketplace.

Citizens do not have that information.

Those who like to think it is their duty to inform 'the public' are out of a job and / or will lose their job if they challenge the Myths that "growth and consumption raises all boats" and that "competition without an informed market fairly - or sustainably - allocates resources."

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Media](#)

## MORE ON MainStream Media's DEFAULT

Further thoughts on MainStream Media's culpability vis a vis Collapse of the global financial house of cards:

The previous post (IT is MainStream Media's FAULT) engendered a number of useful observations concerning financial Collapse and the role of the Media:

### REID ON THE RIGHT TRACK

At 6:37 AM on 30 December, Reid Greenum put his finger on a key issue: Greed.

He is right to rail against individual greed, but there are two kinds of greed.

The individual moral shortcoming that Reid is concerned about AND

The systemic, institutionalized (small 'eye') greed that is a key to the 'success' of Agencies, Enterprises and Institutions in the Friedman-Flat-Earth economy. Robert Reich documents this form of greed in *Supercapitalism*.

Organizational greed could be controlled by enlightened citizens through Agencies but at the current time this systemic problem is the more important of the twin manifestations of greed.

That is because it impacts almost every one of the Planet's 6.3 billion citizens and because it is seen as a virtue by Business-As-Usual and Politics-As-Usual advocates - especially Consumption-Uber-Ales, pseudo-conservatives.

While systemic greed could be contained by enlightened Agency action, individual greed is genetically hardwired into humans. That is because

what we now call 'greed' served humans well in most Hunter / Gather and Early Agrarian Societies.

On the other hand, the greed proclivities lead to unsustainable consequences in an Urban society - Mass OverConsumption and dysfunctional human settlement patterns. In a Driven-to-a-Frenzy-by-Technology Urban Society, there are too many choices; too many opportunities to do something "because I can." This dire circumstance is often are mistaken for 'freedom.'

That is why greed of both sorts must be controlled in the context of functional human settlement patterns. It flourishes in disaggregated and dysfunctional settlement patterns. More on that in a moment.

The flip side of both kinds of greed is ignorance. That is because even the most greedy individual or Organization will constrain their proclivities and desires if they know they will suffer more than they will benefit. Note the current course of consumer confidence and consumer spending...

This is where MainStream Media comes in. The Enterprises that control MainStream Media benefit from citizen ignorance. If citizens and Organizations fail to understand the cumulative consequence of their actions they will continue to over-spend, over-borrow and in other ways feed Enterprise greed.

**BUT WHAT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENT PATTERNS?**

If one does not understand human settlement patterns, they will not comprehend why the pattern and distribution of human activities is a key issue with respect to economic Collapse.

Saying dysfunctional human settlement patterns is not in play with respect to financial Collapse is like saying gravity had no role in killing Uncle Pete when he fell down three flights of stairs last News Years Eve. One can

blame the rotten banister and too much moonshine, however, but for gravity, Uncle Pete would be alive this New Years Eve.

Saying dysfunctional human settlement patterns is not in play with respect to financial Collapse is like saying electro-magnetic fields do not effect radio reception. But for electro-magnetic fields there would be no radio.

In fact one way to come to understand the economic, social and physical impact of human settlement patterns is to understand gravitational forces and magnetic fields via celestial mechanics and physics.

The first 350 pages in the first Volume of *The Shape of the Future* detail why human settlement pattern has controlling impact on the economic, social and physical well being of citizens.

THE ROLE OF SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IS SUPPORTING ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Reid is also correct about “ethics” playing a key role in economic Collapse. But it is not just the “family” that has fallen apart and is not providing an ethical rudder.

Back to human settlement patterns. It takes a Dooryard, Cluster, Neighborhood, Village and Community to engender and support ethical behavior. The more complex the society, the more important each of the organic components of human settlement become.

For a snapshot of what has happened to ‘family,’ see definition of Household in GLOSSARY as to why EMR stopped using the word “family” as in Single Household Attached Dwelling.

As Reid points out, ethics is important. That is not clear with respect to “religion.” There are a lot of citizens going to places of worship - on several different days a week - but few who practice their beliefs in the market or on the highways.

## OTHER COMMENTS

Several other observations following the IT IS MainStream Media's FAULT post deserve a note:

Larry Gross at 3:57 PM on 30 December:

Larry is right on with respect to the federal income tax mortgage deduction!

When Larry finally gets around to reading *The Shape of the Future* he will see that the mortgage deduction is high on the list of damaging subsidies driving dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

The last time EMR looked, something like 90 of benefit of the deduction went to top 20 percent of the Ziggurat. EMR has no problem with well considered Agency help for those in need of shelter assistance but those are the wrong folks to help. In fact they are the only one who do not need help.

There is absolutely no justification for the subsidy other than Business-As-Usual and driving Mass OverConsumption.

Larry will not admit it but this is another major cause of putting The Size Wrong House In The Wrong Location.

Larry Gross, 8:54 AM on 29 Dec:

It is not just citizens READING the wrong stuff. MainStream Media has other outlets besides material that is "read."

It is hearing and seeing the wrong stuff and reading, hearing and seeing it over and over again - all slanted to encourage consumption and Mass OverConsumption.

NovaMiddleMan, 9:49 AM on 29 Dec:

NMM said... ("In quotes")

"MSM is not relevant anymore."

Some may wish that were true but if so, why are billions spent on advertising?

And if MainStream Media goes away tomorrow, where would citizens get any information? From self-serving, dysfunctional Agencies without geographic legitimacy? From Institutions funded by those who want to drive their own agenda? From the other Enterprises that do not even pretend to provide useful information? From Alternative Media? From Anti-media?

Achieving a sustainable trajectory for civilization requires that new "citizen media" take over the abandoned Fourth Estate before there is no source of information. See THE ESTATES MATRIX.

"People say other people read the wrong stuff because you can pick whatever "news" you want"

Now, there is an important statement! Reading only what one wants to believe is worse than reading what MainStream Media presents as 'balanced' - if that is possible.

"'News' anymore is just another wing of politics."

No, it is not just Agency babble (aka, politics) but also and even more important Enterprise babble and Institution babble.

At 3:07 PM on 29 Dec MIGHTYBIGMEDIA provides a nice summary.

And in the meantime WaPo has concluded today (31 December) a "balanced" three part series on the crash of AIG and credit default swaps (CDSs). This follows up on their coverage of collateralized debt obligations (CDOs) on 16 December and the three part series on The Housing Bubble in

June.

Again, WaPo did not get to the root causes. They tut-tut over the wreckage and have nice photos of the scape goats.

Interestingly, on 28 December the front page of the Business section of WaPo ran a great graphic showing how responsible, conservative, saving citizens have had no place to “invest” for a decade. Nothing but the ups and downs of gambling venues.

And to this day, there is nothing to encourage conservative citizens to save, or reward those who have saved.

Happy New Year.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

## MORE ON MONTANA McLODGES

Reporting from Los Angeles ('The West' is "The West" to *WaPo*) Karl Vick in today's *WaPo* is back on the Plum Creek / McLodges story addressed in column # 127 "Rocky Mountain Low" of 21 July 2008.

The sources Vick quoted in the earlier story -- that EMR heard from after it was published -- were not very impressed with Vick's July coverage.

If Vick has this report about our home territory even partially right, EMR is not at all impressed with ANY of the players.

FEDS: The feds (US Forest Service) are trying to get a new "agreement" in place before 20 January (Inauguration of the new administration) to allow paving roads on public land to access potential Urban home sites on Plum Creek Timber Co's land. What would you expect from an Agency which is being run by a former timber lobbyist?

MUNICIPAL AND STATE AGENCIES. The municipal and state governance practitioners (and the tut-tut-ers in Congress) are hoping the feds will keep Plum Creek from paving logging roads so they do not have to acknowledge their central role in fostering dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

PLUM CREEK: Plum Creek Timber cannot be so deluded as to think they can sell enough land for McLodges to make a difference in their bottom line.

Many owners of existing McLodges now realize they will NEVER be able to afford to spend another late summer / early fall in Montana. When the snow melts and current owners put their second, third and fourth 'places' on the market, the market will disappear.

If selling any significant part of their land for McLodge development is in

Plum Creek's business plan, they might as well file for bankruptcy right now.

ENVIROS: By failing to address the root problem - scattered Urban dwellings and dysfunctional human settlement patterns - Enviros have opened the door to ignorance compounding ignorance. See Larry Grosses' note on Wal\*Mart @ Wilderness Battlefield. Same problem here: The issue is Regional, Subregional settlement patterns - inside and outside the Clear Edges. Fussing over this or that transgression is a losing battle.

Further, 'conservation advocates' have never run the numbers. If they had, they would understand that the McLodges ploy is a smoke screen to get 'conservation interests' to buy the land and perpetuate the myth that these "Remote and Inhospitable" lands have Urban "development" value. Almost no one would want to develop most of the land. And the rest? If all the location-variable costs were fairly allocated almost no one could afford to "develop" or maintain a McLodge much less subdivisions of them.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [The Helter-Skelter Crisis](#)

## THE TRAGEDY OF TRICKLE DOWN

As the Wealth Gap has widened over the past 35 years, Organizations have become more and more addicted to Trickle Down. It is now clear that Trickle Down is not working for Enterprises, Agencies and Institutions. More important, Trickle Down is not working for individual citizens or society in general.

The addiction to Trickle Down primarily ensnares Enterprises in the mobility and shelter sectors of the economy. But it has now spread like a global cancer to other Enterprises as well as Agencies and Institutions are also hooked. In fact, Agencies at the municipal, state and federal levels are the primary enablers of the addiction.

The immediate result of Trickle Down addiction is that citizens have been forced to rely more and more on Trickle Down for both mobility and shelter. The overarching result is the acceleration of the Mobility and Access Crisis and the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis. Now the entire Global / trading block / nation-state / Regional economic structure is on a downward spiral and will Collapse unless a cure to Trickle Down addiction is found.

### MOBILITY

Because of ever more dysfunctional human settlement patterns - at all scales from the Unit and the Dooryard to the Subregion and Region - citizens NEED large numbers of vehicles to achieve even rudimentary levels of Mobility and Access. Vehicles - many of them private vehicles - are the only way most citizens have to Access Jobs / Housing / Services / Recreation / Amenity - in other words everything upon which contemporary civilization depends.

**Automobile Enterprises make the most money from Large, Private**

**Vehicles - the larger and the more expensive the more profit.**

Most citizens who NEED vehicles cannot afford large, expensive Automobiles. For this reason the Automobile Enterprises build vehicles not for those who NEED vehicles but for those who can afford them and can be convinced that they DESIRE them. The tragically failed theory was that over time, the vehicles will TRICKLE DOWN to citizens who NEED them.

Automobile advertisements tout the glories of the high end vehicles. Right now, YES TODAY! YOU can buy “The most powerful Acura EVER!” Do you NEED a powerful Acura?

There is now the opportunity to choose from a stupendous array of vehicles that will haul 5 or 7 people under all sorts of adverse conditions. The vast majority of citizens NEED vehicles to carry at most three or four people when the conditions are not adverse. Most Large, Private Vehicles are occupied by only one person the majority of the time. Average private vehicle occupancy is less than two under almost all conditions. If one wants to feel REALLY green they can get a 5500 pound ‘hybrid’ to drive solo.

Do you want a truck? YOU can buy a pickup with a 362 horsepower Hemi engine. Most pickup ‘trucks’ carry 1 horsepower loads. MainStream Media’s advertising shows pickups traveling through deserts and over poorly maintained routes with exploding buildings, massive I-beam pendulums and other uncommon roadway obstacles.

Charge truck owners the true, total cost of hauling the full load capacity of trucks and see how many REALLY NEED a dualie to haul a few tools. But NO!! That would reduce the sales of DESIRE vehicles and force Enterprises to sell NEED vehicles.

WaPo says "Detroit Overhauling its Image: Auto Show take Sharp Turn From Glitz to Green" (Saturday, 10 Jan 2009) but you would not know that from the Show's top of the line "car of the year" or from the GT 500s, "Zs" and the other vehicles featured in the stories out of Detroit the week of the show.

The decades of addiction to Trickle Down has established an economic context that makes it apparently impossible to change course, even with billions federal in bailouts. The same author who wrote about Detroit turning green on Saturday says (correctly) on Monday that the "Road to Fuel Efficiency Is Lined With Orange Cones: Automakers' New Designs Face Obstacles." A 362 horsepower Hemi or a 5500 pound 'hybrid' will NOT overcome these obstacles.

On Tuesday the same WaPo reporter says "GM Puts a Charge in Auto Show." The 'charge' comes from new battery technology that allows vehicles to go farther and faster. New technology to go farther and faster is all the rage - expensive batteries in expensive vehicles.

**Those who NEED a vehicle do not NEED one to go farther and faster, they NEED one to go safer and cheaper.**

Those who NEED a vehicle cannot afford faster and farther. A nation-state that has squandered its natural capital on Mass OverConsumption cannot afford to buy them one that goes faster and farther much less citizens them pay to use and maintain the vehicle so they can survive dysfunctional settlement configurations until they evolve to be more functional.

And speaking of money: It is said that there is no money for "investment" in capital goods and that Agencies need to pump more money into circulation. Automobile buyers can TODAY pay "Zero Down," they can

just "Sign and Drive." Does that sound like a "SubPrime" strategy for Mobility?

It is not just the Automobile Enterprises that are addicted to bigger and more expensive vehicles. The big news out of the 2009 International Consumer Electronic Show (in Las Vegas, of course) was "In-car Computing." What society needs is out-of-car life, not in-car anything. See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS.

#### THE TRICKLE DOWN BOTTOM LINE

Every new vehicle one sees in MainStream Media's advertisements is loaded with features that foster Geographic Illiteracy and provide a false sense of invulnerability in poor driving conditions. Even Smart Cars have heated seats. And that gets back to the real problem with Trickle Down:

By time these new vehicles are 10 years old - and those who NEED a vehicle can afford these vehicles - many of the safety, fuel economy features (and the heated seats) that made them so expensive in the first place will not work.

What citizens NEED are small, sturdy vehicles to get them where they NEED to go while the human settlement patterns evolves so that soon they can go less far and NEED to go there less often in order to secure the requirements of a quality life. See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS

After all, that is what those at the top of the Ziggurat do. They live, work and play in places that do not require an Automobile to meet every Mobility and Access requirement. Those who have a choice favor places with functional settlement patterns. These are places that the market demonstrates are by far the most popular. And the market is important, right?

SHELTER

Trickle Down has an even larger and more important impact on shelter. There are many citizens who NEED better housing. They NEED housing near Jobs / Services / Recreation / Amenity.

Because of a simple-minded focus on one metric (percentage of home ownership) instead of a focus on expanding the supply of Affordable and Accessible Housing, Agencies have pumped billions into the shelter industry. In addition, Agencies deprived themselves of billions in revenue by providing tax breaks on mortgage interest - primarily for those at the top of the Ziggurat. AND they have spent billions on paper mache infrastructure that supports - in fact, is useless without - Automobiles.

**The cumulative result is scattering the Wrong Size House in the Wrong Locations. Just the opposite of what citizens who NEED housing REALLY NEED.**

Citizens would be willing and able to pay for Affordable and Accessible Housing but for policies, programs and incentives that foster dysfunctional human settlement patterns. See "Wild Abandonment," 8 September 2003 (Column # 15), "Scatteration," 25 September 2003 (Column # 16) and "The Myths that Blind Us," 20 October 2003 (Column # 18). These column have been updated and will appear as PART ONE - ROOTS OF THE HELTER SKELTER CRISIS in TRILO-G.

The rapid and continuing Global financial system meltdown is a direct result of the failure of Trickle Down housing and the greed catalyzed by a simplistic approach a complex problem rooted in dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

**THE HELTER SKELTER CRISIS AND THE THIRD ELEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION**

It is not surprising that Trickle Down in mobility and in shelter has resulted in making the Mobility and Access Crisis and the Affordable and Accessible

Housing Crisis far worse over the last 35 years. These two crises have now become an integral part of the Helter Skelter Crisis.

There is no conceivable way to preserve democracy with a widening Wealth Gap. There is no conceivable way to narrow the Wealth Gap or reverse the current unsustainable trajectory of civilization without successfully addressing the Helter Skelter Crisis.

For over two decades EMR has been articulating the need for Fundamental Transformation of human settlement patterns. The PROPERTY DYNAMICS process identified the need for a Fundamental Transformation in governance structures. The current world-wide financial crisis - recession or depression depending on to whom one listens - make it obvious that there must be a need for a third element of Fundamental Transformation:

#### **Fundamental Transformation of the economic structure**

First, things first. The priorities must very be clear: A governance system must have full democratic processes that create, maintain and insure a Balance between individual rights and community responsibilities and a system that achieves a sustainable trajectory for civilization.

Most who support this overarching goal also support a market economy. That is because - to paraphrase what Winston Churchill said about democracy itself - the market system of resource allocation is the very worst system, except for all the rest that have been tried over the past 400 years.

Classical socialism, theoretical communism, compassionate conservatism and all the other "isms" do not work because they fail to reflect or account for the genetic proclivities that are hard wired into the human psyche.

WHAT WOULD DR. SMITH SAY?

The first edition of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776, just nine months after the US of A's Declaration of Independence. It is clear from Smith's editing of the book between the first and fifth editions that he was following closely the "unpleasantness" in the North American Colonies. EMR's copy of *The Wealth of Nations* is the fifth edition, published in 1789, two years after the Northwest Ordinance and the same year that the Constitution was ratified by New Hampshire.

There are important parallels between the current governance structure - which many now agree is in need of Fundamental Transformation - and the current economic system.

Few suggest that "the invisible hand" was not a good idea in 1776. Smith was articulating an alternative to the nation-state protectionism and the foundering colonial, mercantile system. But in 1776 the three level structure of representative democracy was state of the art as well.

The current three level structure of representative democracy governance was a stroke of genius. However, it was created when 95 percent of the population were yeoman farmers, indentured servants and slaves. Few had the education necessary to read, write or understand concepts of governance. The three level structure of representative democracy governance functioned when it took two or more days to get from the border to the Capitol of most states and two or more weeks to get to the federal Capitol from many state capitols.

Now, society is Urban with only 5 percent engaged in NonUrban activities. Reading and writing for all is established policy, if not yet reality. Information can be exchanged instantaneously and travel is far faster. At the same time, the most important focus of economic, social and physical activity - The New Urban Region - has no governance structure to represent the interests of its citizens.

With respect to governance structure, it is not the dignity, rights and freedom of individuals and the mutual interests of citizens and their communities that are in need of Fundamental Transformation, it is the governance structure itself. Citizens need a new structure and ensure benefit from the rights, privileges and protections of the Constitution. There are now new strategies to evolve the management of society so that it is sustainable. See THE ESTATES MATRIX

It is clear that citizens cannot prosper with a governance structure (or an economy) that is dysfunctional and is opaque. Further, citizens must understand what they are seeing so they can make intelligent decisions in the voting booth and in the market.

The past three plus decades have demonstrated that those at the top of the Ziggurat can game the current economic system to their advantage. They have taken classic Ponzi schemes - in Enterprises, Agencies and Institutions - to the third power. They have created imaginary investment vehicles to trade and gambling venues in which to trade them. They beat Second Life to the draw and did it using other peoples money.

The current Global system is far too complex, and - and the last two years have shown - far too fragile. The current system creates paper wealth - something Dr. Smith railed against. This system subverts all markets to gambling venues.

#### THE ROAD AHEAD

No one questions the existence of, or the danger of, the Wealth Gap.

Equally serious is the fact that even as the Wealth Gap has widened, the economy has not performed well even using the measures that those at the top of the Ziggurat love - employment, GDP, etc. See "Economy Made Few Gains in Bush Years: Eight-Year Period Is weakest in Decades." in

WaPo 12 January 2009.

Many are not happy about the \$700 billion in bailouts. But, so far they seem to be “working.” The bailouts are allowing the economy to slowly deflate. Citizens seem to be turning from Mass OverConsumers to become at least partial savers, conservationists and true conservatives.

Unbridled Winner-Take-All competition and SuperCapitalism is a great vehicle for hyper consumption-driven pseudo prosperity but ONLY in a system with infinite resources: “I can grab as much as I want because there is always plenty left for others.” The real world does not have infinite resources and a growing number of citizens world-wide want a fair share of what is left.

As pointed out in the Backgrounder “A New Metric for Citizen Well Being,” a “new metric” is needed to replace consumption, expansion and “growth uber alles” as a measure of citizen well-being. This Backgrounder has been revised and expanded and will appear as PART FIVE of TRILO-G.

One element of this New Metric must be economic processes that are transparent so that educated citizens can understand their enlightened self-interest.

There is no question that new economic processes will slow the expansion of the economy. But slowing the process of Mass OverConsumption to a level that is sustainable is not just a good idea it is the only way to avert Collapse.

If the vast majority do not believe they have a good chance to be better off in the future, it is not a sustainable economic system for anyone.

Those at the top of the Ziggurat are no longer safe from terrorists or from Madoffs.

The vast majority of all citizens must come to understand that in the future everyone will be better off with fewer total citizens and less per

capita consumption.

For reasons spelled out in Volume II of The Shape of the Future, the choice is Fundamental Transformation or Collapse. Fundamental Transformation has three elements:

- Human settlement patterns
- Governance structure
- Economic structure

The focus of most governance and economic activity must devolve down to the Regional scale. Economic, social and physical activity must reflect the organic structure of human settlement.

SuperCapitalism is not sustainable. Citizens need new Institutions - Think Tanks, not "Belief Tanks" (tip of the hat to Doonesbury) and of course there must evolve citizen media. See THE ESTATES MATRIX.

It will be a long and difficult process but one of the first steps is to understand that Mass OverConsumption is not sustainable and that Trickle Down is not a way to provide Mobility and Access or Affordable and Accessible Housing.

Trickle Down drives Helter Skelter and leads to Collapse.

EMR

## BACK TO HOUSING

Jim Bacon's 9 January post "Fewer Homes, Smaller Homes" makes a number of useful points. It is a shame that the discussion wandered off into the wasteland of Abstract Belief Tank Topics unrelated to the original post. These topics will be moot in the future if there is Fundamental Transformation. There will be no future without Fundamental Transformation. Why waste the bytes?

Housing is back on the front page of WaPo today: "The Crash: What Went Wrong; The Growing Foreclosure Crisis."

The opening teaser reads: "One oft-repeated assertion no longer holds true. Those in trouble are not, primarily, lower-income borrowers. The foreclosure crisis has become a wave, afflicting neighborhoods [sic - note small "n"] of every stripe - but particularly communities [sic - note small "c"] created by the boom itself."\*

### **Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location.**

If you do not understand that the evolving "news" supports what EMR has (and to a large extent, Jim Bacon has) been saying about the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis for half a dozen years then increase your Geographic Illiteracy medications.

If you do not understand, you do have an excuse. As pointed out in PART EIGHT Chapter 27 of TRILO-G:

"Conventional 'regional' mapping is based on municipal and state boundary geography and 18th century horseback perceptions of spacial relationships." The data derived from the municipal, state, federal, and Enterprise geographic categories such as municipal borders, election districts, state borders, large Census agglomerations, zip codes, Area

Codes and service areas are nearly useless in understanding fundamental economic, social and physical relationships.”

\* Which is it? “neighborhood” or “community” Without a robust Vocabulary even discussion of human settlement pattern issue is a wasteland. Fundamental Transformation of human settlement patterns requires a comprehensive Conceptual Framework and a Vocabulary with which to discuss that Framework.

EMR

## TMT AND BALANCED COMMUNITIES

In the 47th comment on the TRAGEDY OF TRICKLE DOWN string, TMT posted a question unrelated to Trickle Down but on an important topic:

The optimum location for the evolution of Balanced Communities.

Jim Bacon posted a responding comment that is on target but TMT's post provided an opportunity to nail down some flapping issues and misunderstandings (aka, misunderestimations).

We have reproduced TMT's comment here and interlined comments. That is the fastest way to deal with the issues.

*"Maybe I'm still missing something - wouldn't be the first time and won't be the last.*

*"But assuming, for the moment, that Balanced Communities are the "natural" or "intended" way."*

*Perhaps "most efficient" or "most likely to meet the needs of the largest percentage of the population at the lowest total economic, social and physical cost" would be a better way to characterize a sustainable New Urban Region composed of Balanced Communities.*

*"My question is then: How are balanced communities to be implemented?"*

Jim Bacon outlines three good principles in his post. In The Shape of the Future, EMR lays out six Overarching Strategies that provide a comprehensive context for achieving Balance.

The first step is to understand that achieving Balance will be to everyone's benefit and the failure to achieve Balance will result in Collapse.

*"Having lived in the Midwest and Great Plains for many years, I know from personal observation that there is plenty of room in many states to*

*the west of the Eastern Seaboard and to the east of the Left Coast.”*

Here is the first issue that needs to be nailed down: There is “plenty of room” not just in the Midwest and the Great Plains but right here in the National Capital Subregion. There is a vast amount of vacant and underutilized land for which the public has already provided infrastructure. Check out Blueprint.

EMR prepared a PowerPoint on this topic (“Five Critical Issues”). No one has (nor could they) dispute the calculations. All they can say is “I would rather not live in a dwelling in the patterns and at the density that the market demonstrates is in the greatest demand.” This pattern is, by the way Balanced at the Alpha Community scale and it functions / performs well.

*Jim Bacon and EMR say: “Live where you what and as you want so long as you pay the fair cost.” The 12.5 Percenters do not like it but 87.5 percent is a majority and if they do not want to go with the majority, all they have to do is pay the cost.*

*“Should it be the policy of the United States to push population and even job growth to “Fly-over Country”?”*

No, No, No. The markets shows the vast majority do not want to live in Fly-over Country. That is why it is Fly-over Country.

Some do want to live there and there is no reason they cannot build Balanced Communities there. However, it should not because “policy” pushes them there.

There is another reason besides the value of free choice. That reason is that the cost of contemporary society is vastly more than anyone is now paying. That is why there is huge debt -- public and private -- but what is being paid plus what is being barrowed now is not nearly the total cost. If

'policy' starts pushing citizens where they do not want to go it will cost far more.

*"What if it would be much less expensive to triple the population of North Dakota than to build a mixed use Tysons Corner?"*

No, not even close. How much would they have to pay you to move to Fargo? OK you are from Fargo and want to return but only 1 out of 7,346 are in that situation. The market says; the Creative Class says; common sense says: Go to the best places.

*"Should immigration reform be tied to "settling the great open middle"?"*

No, no, no. There is no need "settle" anyplace. Over 95 percent of the population is Urban and to house the entire Urban population of the US of A requires less than 5 percent of the total land area of the Lower 48 at MINIMUM densities.

*"For example, just as with homesteading in the 19th century..."*

You could have a lot of that homestead land right now for NonUrban activities - really cheap. If you want to use it for Urban purposes the cost will be huge.

*"... should Obama propose "amnesty" to any person who lived here illegally for five years or more, but only if she/he lives in a place such as Iowa or Wyoming for five more years?"*

Of course not.

*"Should new immigration permits be conditioned on settling in Montana or Arkansas?"*

Only if the immigrants have skills that will evolve Balanced Communities in Montana and Arkansas and that is where they want to go.

*"Should Congress enact a law that says 50% of federal agency staffs must*

*be located in either the Central or Mountain Time Zones?"*

No, see note on cost above.

That does not say that for some Agency purposes it would be more efficient to have facilities in small New Urban Regions or in Communities in Urban Support Regions but the function should dictate the location. And be prepared to pay bonuses to those who do not end up in desirable Communities and the most desirable Communities are Balanced Communities.

*"Should Fairfax County simply say, "We've grown as big as we are going to get. The next big building boom must occur in Fairfax, Minnesota or Fairfax, Ohio."*

Fairfax County's problems are rooted in settlement pattern dysfunction and lack of Balance, not over-population. Over-population is what dysfunction looks like to those who do not understand human settlement patterns and have let an inequitable allocation of costs line the wrong pockets.

*"If we recoil at all or some of these programs as being violative of free choice, why is so-called 'Smart Growth' being rammed down people's throats?"*

So far as EMR is aware no "smart growth" policy or program has been established in any jurisdiction where the elected representatives did not believe that the majority of the citizens supported those policies. There may be cases where the governance practitioners believe that the majority would support these policies if they knew what was good for them but by the time "smart growth" is an issue, the majority do support it. Yes, most want the change in someone else's Neighborhood, not theirs but few favor "dumb growth."

*“Is “Smart Growth” just an alliance between those who hate autos and suburbs and the landowners/developers who want to make money, but don't want to move west, or south or wherever?”*

You know the answer to that. But if it is the case, then the alliance is the majority in the jurisdiction where it occurs.

EMR

## WHO IS IN CONTROL?

There seems to be an intentional attempt on this blog to distort EMR's views of governance and the achievement of Fundamental Transformation in human settlement pattern, governance structure and the global economic structure.

Darrell - Chesapeake dismisses EMR as just another socialist.

Larry Gross somewhere got the idea that it will require a philosopher king to manage society. He has not bothered to read THE ESTATES MATRIX.

Nova Middle Man recently said:

“EMR and You (Jim Bacon) seem to have similar goals but totally different ways of getting there. EMR's plans only work with massive government regulation. Am I missing something?”

Yes!

“EMR probably would want 100% control in the typical liberal elite I know best mentality. In reality what would this look like.”

Where does this foolishness come from?

Not from anything we have written. Not from any lecture we have delivered. The primary source of this foolishness appears to stem from readers not understanding the Fundamental Transformation means FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION.

Since inquiry is part of a chapter we will be editing soon and we have not specifically addressed this issue before in this forum we will try to summarize:

Management at the Cluster scale is critically important since the Cluster is largest organic component with realistic potential to have effective direct

democracy. This observation is based on years of Community management experience and on the study of group dynamics as well as the physical constraints of meeting space that is available at times and in locations when all the citizens of a Cluster can assemble.

So that means at least 2-million "leaders" and if there is any delegation of responsibility about 10-million.

The New Urban Region is the smallest Organic Component of human settlement that can achieve sustainability (and may also be the largest but that is another issue). To lead New Urban Regions, citizens need thousands of "leaders." There are also Subregions and Urban Support Regions so let us say there is a need another 250,000 to manage at the Regional scale.

Above the New Urban Region - MegaRegions, nation-states, trading-blocks, continental and global scales there are many who would like to have roles. These are the one now hears about as "leaders" but they should have worked up through to ranks and they should be among those already tabulated.

Of course there are more than just Agencies in need of leadership. Many Enterprises and Institutions will be managed by those who also participate in the governance structure. The difference between now and a sustainable future is that in 24-7 Sunlight, everyone will know of the multiple roles and the conflicts can be eliminated.

At the other end of the spectrum of Organic Components is the Unit occupied by the Household. It is clear that to be a functional Household there must be at least one informed "leader." If part of Household activity is to raise children there need to be at least two. So there is another 130-million more or less leaders.

The Dooryard, Neighborhood, Village scales components need leaders too but almost all will also be among those already identified.

So far we are up to 140,250,000 leaders. In a true democracy everyone has a vote so even those who are not in a leadership position at any given time role have a say.

So where is the central committee, the philosopher king or the liberal elite? Pure fantasy on the part of those who do not want to understand Fundamental Transformation.

Will such a system work? So far the field tests say yes - if citizens understand their role and take responsibility for their actions.

There need be no central committee and no philosopher king. No liberal elite, no pseud-conservative Belief Tank, no Tri-lateral commission, no messiah, no caliph, no dictator, no Darth Vader. Just citizens making informed decision in the market and in the voting booth.

As we suggest in posts over the last three months that focused on achieving a sustainable trajectory for civilization, creating an AntiParty and the upcoming change of administration - for example "Thanksgiving Perspective":

The problem citizens face is massive over expectation that any one person or the team any one person assembles can "solve the problem."

Larry Gross again:

"But EMR has failed repeatedly and miserably IMHO to lay out a clear and articulate path for citizens to understand what a Balanced Community is (and is not) - and what changes they should support via elections and referendum and current development proposals (like Tysons) to move in that direction."

No, Larry, you have failed "repeatedly and miserably" to bother to read

what EMR has written on these topics. For some reason you expect that every time a question occurs (or reoccurs) to you, that EMR has the obligation to drop everything and try to again answer it. That is especially a problem when you appear to only listen / read / understand what supports you preconceived notions which lack a comprehensive Conceptual Framework or a Vocabulary to articulate that framework.

That is why a sustainable trajectory requires hundreds of millions of citizens who are 'responsible' and informed so democracy and the market can work.

So far Jim Bacon is the only one who has grasp just how profound "Fundamental Transformation" - in settlement patterns, governance structure and economic systems - must be to obtain a sustainable trajectory.

The central tragedy is that the market and the vast majority of citizens indicated that they WANT that change but are thwarted by those who now benefit from special privileges under the existing system.

That is exactly what Niccolo M. said thwarted change...

EMR

20 January 2009

## VOCABULARY OF SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Well into in the blog titled “The Intellectual Pretensions of Suburb Bashing” Peter G. said:

“EMR,

“It's so frustrating. I can never win. Just when I think I come up with a really good post, you tell me I got the vocabulary all wrong. If I get the vocabulary right, you'll say my point is all wrong.

“Geez!

“Peter Galuszka”

Peter:

EMR did not intend to be critical in any way.

As many other comments following your post suggest, settlement patterns that have evolved since 1940 are different things to different people. All we say is to understand why patterns are functional or dysfunctional everyone must speak the same language. If you do not like ours, come up with your own.

Here is a little exercise for readers:

Take the original post by Peter, Jim Bacon's 6:59 AM post (good to see Jim up early!) and Groveton's posts of 12:13 PM and 12:59 PM. Print them out and circle all the times that “suburb” and “suburban” are used. Now look at those circled words and see how many different things they describe, especially in the context of the experiences noted in the other comments – some good, some bad; some accurate, some appear to be ‘adjusted’ to fit preconceived ideas and agendas.

Peter: I have not visited or lived in some of the places you have. But I do know something about one place you visited: EMR's office at North Lake Cluster in the Fair Lakes Neighborhood of the North Village in Fairfax Center, Virginia.

Was that place “Urban” or less than urban?

To refresh your memory, the residents of North Lake Cluster live 30 persons per acre - yes even with that great view of the lake from the decks and the Openspace. You may recall the Four Seasons photographs of the very large swamp Maple from the front porch that could have been taken in Sherwood Forest.

If one half of the Clusters in an Alpha Community were at that 30 person acre density, then 25 percent could be Multi-Household Dwellings (at 40 to 60 per acre) and 25 percent could be Single Household Detached Dwellings on quarter to half acre lots (at 10 persons per acre) and achieve 10 persons per acre at the Alpha Community Scale.

That distribution of dwelling unit types was the original plan for the almost Alpha Community of Greater Reston. The ratio could have been 30 / 40 / 30 as it is in Village-scale Burke Centre and in the still Beta Community of Columbia, Maryland, Peachtree City Georgia, etc.

The density of the Single Household Attached Dwelling Clusters listed above is just what EMR's current dwelling is in Menlough Cluster next to the Clear Edge (the Town and County governance practitioners Vocabulary, not just EMR's) around Greater Warrenton-Fauquier.

Fairfax Center was designed to have a relative Balance of J/H/S/R/A and 55,000 residents on 5,500 acres. Given its context it has not done badly but for some unfortunate rezonings that undermined the Neighborhood Center service idea where everyone could walk to get weekly necessities in a 100,000 sq ft Neighborhood center. If designed today, these centers would have live-work units, a Zip car station and other innovations.

Fairfax Center is still not that bad even with traffic from US Route 50, I - 66 and Fairfax Parkway running through the middle and is still one of the three Beta Communities we choose to visit inside the Clear Edge on a regular basis. The Fairfax Government Center, hands down, is the worst "development" in Fairfax Center.

During the Blueprint process, the Coalition for Smarter Growth came up with some good ideas to evolve Fairfax Center into a great Alpha Community: Fairfax "City" would become the third Village and Fair Oaks Mall would be reconfigured to span both US Route 50 and I-66. Both the Core of Fairfax City and the new Core Village would be served by an extension of METRO.

But no, the economic activity was scattered across the R = 20 to R = 40 Radius Band at a far greater TOTAL cost.

Oh yes one other thing: Larry do you have no shame?

"...and it occurred to me that even after a gazillion tomes from EMR - I still don't have a feel for what he thinks is an optimal density level for a balanced community."

First, EMR has written only one Tome. He is working on a Mega-Tome.

More importantly, when reading this post do you not recall seeing the 10 Person Rule [10 Persons per Acre at the Alpha Community scale] at least 50 times in last two years? If TJI had not screwed up the BR archive, EMR could cite you the number of times it was mentioned.

There are only Five Natural Laws of Human Settlement Patterns. You can write them on your arm with a Sharpie and refer to them when you get confused.

The Tysons issue. How many times has EMR suggested you read Column # 25, “The Shape of Richmond’s Future,” 16 Feb 2004 for the overall regional evolution process? And while you are at it # 65 “Balanced Communities,” 23 Aug 2005 which Jim Bacon’s header describes as “... Herewith is a primer on what they are and how to create them.”

Also the Backgrounder “Five Critical Issues” is a text version of the PowerPoint of the same title and answers many or the questions you have asked a gazillion times.

EMR

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Tuesday, January 27, 2009

## SHELTER FOOLS GOLD

On 26 January NAHB reported that existing home sales INCREASED in December: "Existing-Home Sales Spike As Bargains Glut Market: Sales Up a Surprising 6.5 Percent in December."

This was the only "good" economic news in weeks:

24 January 2009 WaPo: "Downturn Accelerates As It Circles The Globe: Economies Worse Off than Predicted Just Weeks Ago." Record losses in jobs, defaulting banks, defaulting nation-states, riots in Eastern Europe, Automobile and retail closings, the four largest print media Enterprises in the US of A lost \$18.3-billion in market value in just a year, the new federal administration scrambling for ways to expand bail-outs, consumer confidence at an all-time low, ...

The 2001 Nobel prize winner in economics and former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors Joseph Stiglitz suggested to CNNPolitics that the US of A follow Sweden's lead: Agencies should take over failing banks - wiping out owner and bank investor interests - instead of just loaning them money or buying preferred stock.

The existing home sales news was apparently what kept the gambling venues (aka, Dow Jones, et. al.) from tanking during the first part of the last week in January because other news from the shelter sector not good:

On 24 January it was reported that Freddie Mac will ask for \$35-billion more in taxpayer's money and on 26 January that Fannie Mae will ask for \$16-billion more. On 24 January FHA reported that the number of FHA-backed loans in default were rising.

There was some good news: The Newton Bank of Nigeria is offering loans

to all comers over the Internet.

And almost as foolish, Bill Bolling who wants another term as Lt. Governor of Virginia has a "legislative agenda" that includes a \$2,500 per person (\$5,000 per couple) "tax credit" for Virginian's buying homes with no location related criteria - such as qualifying for location efficient mortgages.

Perhaps most scary of all was the front page of WaPo's Real Estate section on 24 January. The feature was a puff piece on green building (this story has already been cited in prior comments): "Seeking a Smaller Footprint: Builders Scale Back House Sizes as Buyers Commit to Energy Efficiency."

Why is this scary? Check out the photographs of the featured buildings! If there were real standards for journalistic decency this would be stamped "PORNOGRAPHY!" It is well known that even those committed to energy efficiency will not walk forever. These dwellings are said to be "near Winchester." But from the pictures it is clear they are not THAT near. Where are the Jobs and Services needed to achieve Balance?

Somewhat Better Size House, still in the Wrong Location.

But what puts the December rise in existing house sales in the deception category? The real estate industry is using the percentage drop in home value during the Depression when looking for the "bottom" of the market.

There are major differences in the unsustainable runup in house prices over the past 35 year, and especially the last 15 years with the Roaring 20s and the Depression Era drop of around a third in value. Here are some:

Far lower percentage of homes with mortgages

Far fewer homes

Far more dwellings with two or more generations in a unit.

This later point is critical. These occupants could work to help make ends meet. Multi-generational occupancy was especially prevalent in detached dwelling and detached dwellings were mainly in the Countryside. The occupants of detached dwellings were far more likely to be able to depend on the land for the needs of everyday life.

Then there is the fact that the housing bubble built up over the 20s was a far smaller bubble and it was not nearly as leveraged nor were the mortgages packaged, securitized and peddled around the globe. Home mortgages were a Community and a Regional activity.

If one wants to look for levels of property value declines they need to look not at nation-state wide percentages of owner occupied dwellings but at the bursting land speculation bubbles in Florida, California and elsewhere.

While NAHB reports that sales were up “a surprising” 6.5 percent in December, CNNMoney was reporting: “Flood of foreclosures: It’s Worse Than You Think.” “Banks are moving slowly to list repossessed homes for sale, which could mean that housing inventory is even more bloated than current statistics indicate.”

Of course most of these not yet listed dwellings are Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location - see “THE TRAGEDY OF TRICKLE DOWN.”

The bottom is not yet in sight. December sales numbers are Fools Gold.

And still new units are being built in the Wrong Locations, and the wrong dwelling type, even if somewhat closer in size and energy consumption.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Friday, January 30, 2009

## VOCABULARY AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

Today, the President and Vice President launched a task force on “the middle class.”

Here is what EMR said last month in a draft of Chapter 26:

### A 2009 PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY

There is a larger context for understanding the importance of Vocabulary. The Shape of the Future, Chapter 1. employs statements made during the decade of the 1990s by senior elected leaders to illustrate the importance of an understanding of human settlement patterns and need for a robust Vocabulary to discuss the topic. When the book was completed in 2000, 20-20 hindsight provided a crystal clear way to compare statements of the intent of the Clinton / Gore Administration with the results over the following 8 years. Chapter 1. provides the perspectives and goals of President Clinton and Vice President Gore in their own words and then evaluates progress on those goals.

Now the US of A stands on the cusp of a new Administration. With no hindsight upon which to rely, a robust Vocabulary - a prerequisite of getting the issues “right” - becomes even more important due to the diminished resource reserves that remain after 35 years of intentional Mass OverConsumption to fuel “growth” and prosperity for a few at the top of the Ziggurat.

There is a broad range of specific problems that citizens who voted for ‘change’ hope the new administration will address. The broad topic which the obligatory Vice Presidential Task Force will address is: “Strengthen the Middle Class.”

At first blush, strengthening the Middle Class would appear to address a number of hot button issues:

1. The economy
2. Job creation
3. Energy independence
4. Affordable health care
5. among others

It might be obvious that “strengthening the Middle Class” must address the Mobility and Access Crisis, the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and the Helter Skelter Crisis. However, without a functional Vocabulary that reality will be missed by even those with the best of intentions.

The meaning and intent of “strengthening” should be clear to all:

Improving the economic, social and physical well being of...

... of the “Middle Class,” of course. But there is the rub.

What is the Middle Class?

The Wikipedia discussion of “middle class” opens with this statement:

“The term “middle Class” has a long history and has had many, sometimes contradictory, meanings.” Well put!

The bottom line is that almost no one believes that the classic Middle Class still exists. That Middle Class existed after the dust settled following World War II. It was articulated and confirmed by C Wright Mills, David Riesman, Robert and Helen Lynd and others. While Middletown’s Middle Class has changed and some say it does not exist, the term “Middle Class” is still used even though it has morphed to become a prime candidate for listing as a Core Confusing Word.

The Wikipedia discussion of “American Middle Class” focuses on three academic “class models” to summarize current scholarly classification of

social class. Although there are three separate models, they divide the post 2000 social structure into four broad groupings that are remarkably similar. The four classes (with three sets of titles and percentages of the population) break down this way:

Class 1. Capitalist Class (1%) // Upper Class (1%) // The Super Rich (0.5%) and The Rich (0.5%) - percent total of the class is 1 percent in all three models.

Class 2. Upper Middle Class and Lower Middle Class (45%) // Upper Middle Class and Lower Middle Class (46%) // Middle Class (46%) - percent total varies from 45 to 46 percent in the three models.

Class 3. Working Class (30%) and Working Poor (13%) // Working Class (32%) // Working Class (40-45%) - percent total ranges from 32 to 45 percent in the three models.

Class 4. Underclass (12 %) // Lower Class (14-20%) // The Poor (12%) - percent total ranges from 12 to 20 percent in the three models.

The totals for those below "Middle Class" range from 42 to 65 percent.

Note: The totals do not equal 100 percent within any single model.

In the three models selected by the Wikipedia authors the academics have remarkably similar categories and percentage distribution. The biggest variation are in the names and allocation of population of the lowest two classes.

In this 'composite' view of the Ziggurat, it seems there is not much room at the top. However, one percent of the population is about 3,060,000 citizens or something over 1,000,000 Households. These fortunate few would fill the largest NFL stadium about 37 times. While they compose a minuscule percentage of the population, this class provides - directly and indirectly - the majority of the funding for ideologically oriented

Institutions (aka, think tanks or 'Belief Tanks') and support for the two major political parties. See THE ESTATES MATRIX for discussion of the impact of Institutions (especially Belief Tanks) in the New Third Estate.

Also see Supercapitalism noted in Chapter 36. - Fireside Reading

It is significant that Class 1. (Upper) plus Class 2. (Middle) no longer make up a majority of the citizens of the US of A as they did in 1960 and in 1973. This raises the first question about the Vice Presidents Task Force:

Who needs "strengthening" most?

Vocabulary becomes even more important when one digs a little deeper.

The core concern according to Vice President-Elect Biden's own statement is "Working Families."

Here is a 'two-fer' with respect to Vocabulary:

First, "family:" For reasons spelled out in GLOSSARY, the term "family" itself has become a candidate for Core Confusing Word status. This is due to disaggregation of the settlement pattern and to the constant changes now experienced within almost all Households / Dwelling Units.

Second, and even more important, if it is "working" citizens that are of concern from a social structure perspective, those are folks in a different place in the Ziggurat (and in a different class) than "the Middle Class."

There is no question those individuals and Households who are productive members of society (aka, working) and who have been slipping further and further behind since the mid-70s NEED to be the focus of attention if democracy is to be preserved.

As emphasized in Chapter after Chapter of TRILO-G the widening Wealth Gap is anathema to, and incompatible with long term stability of democratic processes and to market economies.

So if Vice President-Elect Biden is to "strengthen the Middle Class," the

first thing to do is to define what it is he and the task force are talking about. There is no way to “strengthen the Middle Class” unless the Task Force understands reality and embraces a realistic Vocabulary.

There is a second point in this context with respect to “The American Dream” of working citizens and expanding home ownership. A fair allocation of location variable costs will make it very clear that from 60 to 70 percent of the population can never afford Single Household Detached Dwellings. That does not rule out “home ownership” but it does impact the settlement pattern. Further, most of the urban citizens who can not afford Single Household Detached Dwellings also cannot afford Large, Private Vehicles to secure Mobility and Access in dispersed settlement patterns.

This is not a matter of policy or preference, it is a matter of physics and economics and also requires an understanding of human settlement patterns. See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS.

EMR

Labels: [Vocabulary Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Saturday, January 03, 2009

## CUBA AND THE NEW FRU

MainStream Media reports that President-Elect Obama will support a Change in relations with Cuba. It is about time.

And just in time. Every region will need to import some Cubans, not for cheap labor as in the past but for their ingenuity in converting Mass OverConsumptive Technology to sustainable levels.

With the New Fru, every place that hopes to evolve to become a Balanced Community will need a Cuban New Fru Guru.

Cubans have demonstrated how humans can be (relatively) happy in spite of:

- Having to rely on pre-1957 Large, Private Vehicles,
- A demented dictator, and
- Oppressive foreign intervention.

These are all things that will be important to every citizen of the US of A due to the past 35 years of Growth-is-Good-but-More-Growth-is-Better driven Supercapitalism and Mass OverConsumption that underlies the New Fru.

Now Cubans have focused on saving money in communications. See today's WaPo Page 1 "In Cuba, Cellphone Calls Go Unanswered."

This new technique should make driving safer for those who will still be able to afford to drive Large, Private Vehicles.

(By the way Peter, WordPerfect tells EMR that WaPo has just invented a new word and saved space - they dropped the space between 'cell' and

'phone.')

EMR

Sunday, February 01, 2009

## PERPETUATING THE TRAGEDY OF TRICKLE DOWN

The WaPo headline reads: “Economic Signs Turn From Grim to Worse: Another Wave of Evidence Of A Deepening Recession.” The BBC reports from Davos: “We are not about to turn the corner, we do not know where the corner is.”

There is increasing acrimony over the shape and implementation of the federal “stimulus” and “bailout” legislation.

On one hand the Donkey Clan says “action” is imperative.

On the other hand the Elephant Clan says the proposals for action are shameful wastes of citizen’s money. The Elephant Clan has offered few alternatives except to imply that the bromides from the feel good 80s are still the right medicine.

For those who want to look under the hood, the 1 February WaPo has a great summary graphic on A9 of the current packages.

AN AD SAYS IT ALL, OR DOES IT SAY NOTHING?

A clear encapsulation of the 80s bromides that are a root cause of the current Global Meltdown - and especially of the last eight years of Agency malfeasance, Enterprise greed and Institutional filibuster - can be found in the 29 January full page ad by the Cato Institution that ran in WaPo and other MainStream Media outlets. The cottage industry “right blogs” was touting this ad the day before it appeared so this was a well orchestrated public disinformation blitz. See End Note One

The Cato ad features a list of 200 academic economists who apparently agree with a statement in the ad, the bottom line of which is:

“Lower tax rates and a reduction in the burden of government are the best ways of using fiscal policy to boost growth.”

There are several levels of deception in this one sentence:

Boosting “growth” is not a rational strategy to achieve economic prosperity, social stability and environmental sustainability in a Global context of finite resources. It is also NOT the way to preserve democracies with market economies. See NEED FOR A NEW METRIC FOR CITIZEN WELL BEING

Business-As-Usual ‘growth’ is a recipe for disaster because the Global Financial Meltdown was caused by the shelter based speculation bubble. (See 29 Jan 2009 report by Brookings: “The Origins of the Financial Crisis”)

Even a temporary re-acceleration of recent (unsustainable) patterns and rates of ‘growth’ (aka, Mass OverConsumption and dysfunctional human settlement patterns) will mean burning through more of the remaining Natural Capital and cause an upward spiral of prices, especially for energy.

Let there be no mistake, neither the Donkey Clan, nor the Elephant Clan have faced the reality that a return to recent “growth” is NOT the “answer.” However, the Elephant Clan and supporting Institutions calling for application of the bromides of the 80s is inviting Collapse as articulated by Jared Diamond.

The path to ‘growth’ that the Cato ad champions: “Lower tax rates and a reduction in the “burden of government” is Trickle Down. One of the Thomas Jefferson Institute’s “bipartisan public policy” newsletters reminds readers that Trickle Down is another word for “supply side economics.”

There are applications of "supply side economics" that make sense but

Trickle Down in shelter to achieve Affordable and Accessible Housing and in Mobility and Access via Large, Private Vehicles are NOT among them.

WHO PAYS FOR ADS LIKE THIS?

Near the end of the 14 January post "THE TRAGEDY OF TRICKLE DOWN" EMR said:

"No one questions the existence of, or the danger of the Wealth Gap"

One reviewer wrote in the margin: "Really? I think plenty of folks think the Wealth Gap is just dandy"

Of course he is absolutely right! (The text that will appear in PART FOURTEEN of TRILO-G has been edited.)

Many in the top five percent of the Ziggurat - The Happy As Clams - are very pleased with the Wealth Gap and with Trickle Down. They believe they can amass enough wealth to shield themselves and their children from Collapse. They have not yet considered their grandchildren or the need to achieve a sustainable trajectory for the society upon which they depend.

It is interesting to note that at the Elephant Clan's National Committee conclave this past week, it was pointed out that one of the groups that had "abandoned" the Elephant Clan is "the very rich." Perhaps some at the top of the Ziggurat are starting to look beyond next summer at The Hamptons.

Who is paying Institutions to run ads like the Cato ad? The recent obit of Holly Coors provides some insight. So do web sites that profile the activities of Richard Mellon Scaife.

Their money, and that of those with similar proclivities, support The Heritage Foundation, The Cato Institute, Reason and other Institutions as

well as the lobbyist Enterprises that push Trickle Down. Smaller sums and millions of hours from similarly motivated individuals support the electronic blizzard of "right blogs" that sing the same song - over and over and over.

These expenditures were very effective as long as they helped secure 50.5% of vote in election after election. The 50.5% strategy worked so long as the illusion that a rising tide (growth of GDP) was raising all boats could be maintained. It was being maintained by running up citizen, Agency and Enterprise debt.

That was then;

This is now.

That past has collapsed. The Wealth Gap can no longer be papered over. Red is turning blue.

As EMR has noted before in this forum, it will be hard to find more than of the 20% voters to supports any one of the core planks that have comprised the Donkey Clan platform and almost no one will support all the planks now that it is clear that it is a physical and economic impossibility to rely on 'growth' to raise anything like 'all boats.'

Until the last general election, both dominate political clans have been able to rely on funders tossing crumbs down from the top of the Ziggurat. That no longer works.

#### THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM

Broad based (aka, real) democracy and a narrowing the Wealth Gap is not supported by the genetic proclivities that drive individual behavior.

Humans "do it because they can." As long as they can get away with it, humans will continue to carry out activities that they believe are in their best short term interest, with out regard to the commutative impact.

It is not just Enterprise greed such as that of Indymac, Countrywide, Lehman Bros, Bear Sterns, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, AIG, CitiCorp, Bank of America, UBS, et. al. that is the problem. How about Tyco, Enron, World Com and the rest. Step away from the Enterprises and look at Institutions. What about the scandals that have rocked many large religious Institutions?

Trickle Down is an easy path to political party success in times of great affluence - the 1870s and 80s, the Roaring 20s and the past 35 years of escalating Mass OverConsumption. The idea of Trickle Down appeals to a spectrum of interests from the self-righteous to the soft porn "just-so-logical-and-it-feels-good" to the "go-along-to-get-alongs." When the party is over, it is hard to make a virtue out of selfishness.

The bottom line is that citizens are finding they cannot trust individuals or small like-minded groups unless there is transparency and sunshine. Electronic media can pound deceitful messages but it can also expose deceit.

There must be more effective Agencies that reflect the economic, social and physical structure of contemporary society to turn on and to maintain the sunlight.

Humans in groups with lots of sunshine and accountability can do great things. Turn out the lights, limit participation of stakeholders or move the level of control from the level of impact and you get AIG.

The opposite poles of "fear" and "trust" have become the magnetic field to social structure as explored in Chapter 30. But that is getting ahead of the story. Here is how Trickle Down is summarized in Chapter 29.

THE TRAGEDY OF TRICKLE DOWN

The Wealth Gap is so large that relying on Trickle Down to provide shelter (Affordable and Accessible Housing) has become a sick joke. Even with a less obscene Wealth Gap, for Trickle Down to operate, the value / value of dwellings must go down not up. With a dwelling being many Households largest "investment" growth in cost is essential.

Even more important, the dwelling units must be the right size and in the right location.

Mortgage packaging, securitizing and leveraging by Fannie and Freddie exacerbated the shortcoming of municipal land use controls yielding grossly dysfunctional and unsustainable Regional settlement patterns.

To overcome the long term impact of decades of Trickle Down in Affordable and Accessible Housing (and in Mobility and Access because of reliance on Large, Private Vehicles) there are two choices:

- Massive, forced redistribution of wealth between layers / levels of the Ziggurat which almost no one thinks is a feasible much less 'good' idea, or
- A fundamentally different mix of dwelling types and settlement patterns.

Citizens and their leaders have failed to evolve a Regional governance.

States and the feds "let them eat cake" by turning the use and management of land over to self-serving municipal governments. See "The Role of Municipal Planning in Creating Dysfunctional Human Settlement Patterns" in RESOURCES, PART FOURTEEN OF ACTION.

The result is:

- Far too much land devoted to and planned for urban land uses. A factor of three or four, nation-wide is a conservative estimate.
- Far too much of the land planned for urban land uses was and is designated for "employment," "commercial" aka, tax base uses land uses.

See End Note Two

- Municipal jurisdictions planned and zoned an unsustainable mix of dwelling units - far too many Single Household Detached Dwellings, far too few Single Household Attached Dwellings and Multi-Household Dwellings.

Unless there is a massive forced redistribution of wealth - which no one supports for good reason - those who need Housing cannot afford it.

Then there is the issue of Access. The only way to Access the dysfunctional human settlement patterns that result from the intersection of bad land use controls and in informed market is Large, Private Vehicles.

According to some estimates, 1 in 13 jobs in the US of A depend on designing, building, selling, repairing and loaning money for Large, Private Vehicles. The Automobile industry, like the Housing industry, runs on OPeoM - Other Peoples Money - and has become addicted to unsustainable levels of high 'growth,' low interest and large debt.

Large, Private Vehicles and the Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location is a toxic mix and a recipe for disaster. A disaster now called Global Financial Meltdown. Trickle Down of dwellings and of Large, Private Vehicles drive dysfunctional human settlement patterns and thus:

It really is the settlement pattern, stupid

And who is to blame. Pogo had the answer but "us" has received no help from the leadership of Agencies, Enterprises or Institutions.

EMR

END NOTES

1. Beyond the obvious problems, the Cato ad is worth a careful review for several other reasons. The list of university and Nobel economists is interesting. George Mason University has eight endorsers. At first glance that seems to be at least twice as many as any other educational

institution. It would be hard for a student to escape from GMU without a huge dose of Trickle Down. The role of ads such as this one is explored as activities of the new Third Estate in THE ESTATES MATRIX

2. Two adjacent counties that fell outside the logical location of the Clear Edge around the Core of the National Capital Subregion in the '90s tell this story well. Eastern Loudoun County, Virginia had the non-residential capacity planned for two Mid-Town Manhattans and West Prince William in Prince William County, Virginia had the non-residential capacity of four Mid-Town Manhattans. Further from the Core of the Subregion, Fauquier County, Virginia currently has land designated for employment / tax base uses that would support around 10 times the current population and Fauquier is considered a "leader" in land use controls from some perspectives.

## ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE

On 3 February, WaPo published Eric M. Weiss's story: "A Dubious Distinction: The Longest Ride in U.S. - Prince William Enclave Has Longest Commute In Nation; Three Others in Area [the National Capital Subregion] Make Top 12."

If you have not read the story, it is a classic. This story is a poster child for why citizens have debilitating Geographic Illiteracy and why far too many struggle with long commutes and sub-optimum lifestyles that spell financial disaster for Agencies, Enterprises, Institutions and Households.

At first glance this is a story about earnest, well-intended citizens doing what they believe to be in their best interest. There are also concerned governance practitioners and sage transport experts facing an intractable problem laid out in award winning journalistic form. But look under the hood, and there is a different story.

The featured citizens are trapped in terrible Jobs / Housing / Services juxtapositions but they believe they have done the best they can. These citizens are in this position because they inhabit dysfunctional settlement patterns but they do not yet know what those words mean.

What citizens in these enclaves DO know, (although it is not reported) that they have rapidly deteriorating home equity but they do not yet know how their location decisions contributed to this condition.

And the "journalism": The primary source of information is very badly informed citizens. "Human Condition" reporting (which IS much better than "He said / She said" reporting) provides no historical context, there is no reference to an overarching strategy to achieve functional settlement patterns or less onerous living conditions. Even worse, the "experts" avoid reality and toss up their hands. The politicians spin away

with what they hope will get them elected one more time.

This review focuses on the two low-density urban enclaves that are located in the Virginia part of the National Capital Subregion. These enclaves are the “Census Designated Places” of Bristow and Dale City, Virginia. A similar story could be told about the two enclaves in Maryland noted in the story.

#### IT DID NOT NEED TO TURN OUT THIS WAY

Decades ago there were adopted Agency policies and plans that incorporated excellent strategies to guide the evolution of human settlement patterns and to match transport facility capacity with the travel demand generated by the settlement patterns.

Decades ago there were good examples of far better settlement patterns that were actually built in the Subregion.

There could have been better reporting had WaPo not Lancastered those who were starting to understand human settlement patterns out of the Region.

There could have been well informed, prosperous happy citizens living in functional human settlement patterns, but NO...

#### THE TRAGEDY OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Here are just a few of the critical historical mile posts avoided by the story and by the experts:

1. In the mid-50s the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan called for four Balanced Communities with Clear Edges in the R=10 to R=20 Radius Band and Compact urban fabric supported by a shared-vehicle system inside a Clear Edge (near R=10) around the Core of the National Capital Subregion. (Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia would be the villains in

this story if naming villains was a productive approach to evolving a sustainable future.)

2. "The Year 2000 Plan for the National Capital Area" published in 1960 laid out in detail the basics of functional settlement pattern on the Alpha Neighborhood-, Alpha Village- and Alpha Community-scales. This plan also introduced a famous sketch that outlined the distribution of Alpha Community-scale components in what has evolve to be the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region.

3. In the mid-60s a composite of municipal comprehensive plans for the northern Part of Virginia - as well as a similar one for much of the National Capital Subregion - presented a functional settlement pattern for the Subregion.

Had these plans been followed and had Balanced Communities evolved following these plans, policies, programs and strategies, then less than half the area now devoted to urban development would have been cleared and subdivided. Much of the vacant and underutilized land within 100 miles of the Centroids of the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region would be in active nonUrban production and serve as a the green lungs of the Region. The Chesapeake Bay would not be on life support.

4. In the late 60s the federal government committed to fund 90 percent of METRO, and over the next three decades built, a world class "heavy rail" shared-vehicle system serving the Core of the National Capital Subregion. Contrary to a written agreement with the federal Agency, municipal Agencies did not uphold their end of the bargain. They did not plan and encourage station-area development with land uses that would support the METRO system.

To this day - over 40 years after construction on METRO started - the majority of the land in METRO station-areas is vacant and / or

underutilized. There is no Balance between the METRO system capacity and the station-area travel demand. This is why most of the METRO trains leave most of the METRO stations essentially empty most of the time.

4. In the 70s full-scale, examples of much more functional settlement patterns were planned at the Alpha Community- and Alpha Village-scales. Several of these projects were built and while there were glitches, they were and ARE far more successful from economic social and physical perspectives than the vast majority of the land developed for urban land uses since 1973 in the National Capital Subregion.

These places proved that:

- A far higher percentage of the residents could live “on or near the water” and / or “in or near the woods,”
- Have better schools,
- Have far stronger identity and social cohesiveness,
- Serve a far wider range of housing needs,
- Achieve a far greater Balance of J / H / S / R / A,
- Have far more useable Openspace,
- Achieve higher and more stable home values per square foot
- And still take up less than one quarter of the total land at the Alpha Community-scale when compared to the land devoted to scattered subdivisions such as those in the enclaves (Census Designated Places) noted in the WaPo story

5. In the mid 80s a 54 member citizen task force drafted a plan that took the best of the 60s and 70s ideas for evolving Balanced Communities and created a plan for Fairfax Center. Fairfax Center was planned to be 5,500 acres where 55,000 citizen could work, live and seek services. Almost immediately the plan was nickled and dimed (least common denominatored) but today it is still far more functional than the other places of similar scale and intensity of use.

6. In the late 80s and into the 90s Wash COG carried out a process that could have guided the location of new jobs and dwellings to evolve Balanced Communities from the then existing "Activity Centers."

While this was going on, in October 1973 OPEC, issued a wake up call that should have gotten every citizen and every governance practitioner on the board strategies to evolve functional and sustainable settlement patterns that did not rely on importing foreign oil and did not depend on Large, Private Vehicles for Mobility and Access.

Based on the strategies that existed from the mid 50s Agencies, Enterprises and Institutions could have leveraged the booming SubRegional economic activity that lasted from the late 50s until mid-2007 to build and rebuild functional and sustainable human settlement patterns.

The 3 February WaPo story did not refer to any of this context. It is as if the current result was inevitable and no one had ever given thought to a different outcome. In fact, clear, concise arguments in favor of alternatives to the current result have been published in every decade since 1920.

#### LOCATIONAL OBLIVIOUSNESS

The 3 February WaPo story also did not establish the Subregional Context of the featured enclaves.

These enclaves are NOT in the middle of nowhere. These enclaves are outside the location for the Clear Edges shown on the 50s and 60s plans. However, they are INSIDE the logical location for the Clear Edge around the Core of the Subregion based on the late 90 and early 00s work of Wash COG, the employer of one of the experts quoted.

It would have been very useful to point out that each of the enclaves are served by major limited access radial roadway corridors paid for by

federal government - I-66 and I-95.

Both these corridors have HOV lanes and both have public AND private bus and van service using the HOV lanes.

Further, both of these corridors are also served by commuter rail - the Virginia Railway Express.

In addition both corridors are served by radial lines of the METRO system.

And there is icing on the cake: For over four decades the I-95 corridor has had the Shirley Express Lanes. By many measures these are the most effective applications of asphalt used by Automobiles on the planet.

It would have been informative for the experts cited in the story to point out that these two enclaves have access to every type of facility that federal, state and municipal jurisdictions have relied on to provide Mobility and Access to low-density, monocultures of auto-dominated settlement patterns.

Would it have been too much to ask these experts why all these billions of dollars in public facilities obviously do not work? It turns out relying of these facilities to support dysfunctional settlement patterns will never work for reasons spelled out in THE PROBLEM WITH CARS. But that is getting ahead of the story.

AND THEN THERE IS THE COST

Of course the CAPACITY of the radial and circumferential roadways could be increased and more vans, busses and trains could be added to the shared-vehicle services.

However if the COST of these facilities were allocated to those who would use them in the target enclaves, most of these citizens could not afford the fares / tolls / taxes to pay for the new facilities.

It is also clear that the bottom line result adding very expensive new capacity would be to shave a few minutes off of the record setting AVERAGE commute times but it would not "solve" the problem.

AND WHILE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A FAIR ALLOCATION OF COSTS:

If all the current costs of the location decisions that resulted in putting these dwellings in these enclaves were fairly allocated many, if not most, of the present residents could not afford the FULL cost of living there.

What drives up the cost? The mix of dwelling types and the Regional and Subregional location of Jobs and Services result in settlement patterns that do not function. These patterns violate the basic laws of economics and physics. It is not a matter of policy or preference.

THE ROLE OF EXPERTS

In addition to not mentioning - or not mentioning forcefully enough to make it into the story - any of the history or context of the enclaves, the experts did not provide any insight on a path to sustainability.

They did not point out the necessity of evolving Balanced Communities in sustainable New Urban Regions - using what ever Vocabulary they might choose.

They did not point out that the Beta Communities in the municipal jurisdictions inside R=5 (primarily Alexandria and Arlington) have job to dwelling ratios on the order of 5 to 1. They did not point out that while one of the largest municipalities in the US of A occupies most of the territory within the R=5 to R=20 Radius Band (Fairfax County) has a ratio closer to 1 to 1, there is a gigantic imbalance of housing affordability to wages for the jobs in the jurisdiction due to exclusionary zoning.

Only two of the nine Beta Communities that fall all or part in Fairfax County have achieved anything like a Balance of Jobs / Housing /

Services / Recreation / Amenity.

In explaining the difference between Fairfax County and Prince William County where the two enclaves are located, one of the experts demonstrated a complete lack of knowledge of the physical relationships that control human settlement patterns. By suggesting that Fairfax County once had “the same situation” he demonstrated ignorance of  $A = \pi R^2$ . He further implied that Fairfax County is OK because there are now more jobs in the municipality than in past decades without regard to location or Balance.

It would have been useful to point out that the two Virginia enclaves (Bristow /Linton Hall in Greater West Prince William and Dale City in East Greater Prince William) were low-density, imbalanced enclaves in badly unbalanced Beta Communities.

Road scholar and congestion guru, Tony Downs famously pointed out that congestion is not the problem, it is the solution. Tony correctly noted that when congestion gets bad enough, citizens, Households, Agencies, Enterprises and Institutions make different location and settlement pattern decisions.

Tony correctly identified the political (SMALL “p”) and the unenlightened citizen self-interest that has prevented intelligent changes that have been advocated for 90 years.

Downs had two solutions:

First: Buy a big comfortable car (Large, Private Vehicle) with a great sound system to enjoy the ride. Addiction to this formula is EXACTLY why the Automobile Enterprises, supported by Agencies and “freedom” oriented Institutions have driven to the brink of Collapse.

Second: Drive to work with someone you REALLY like (wink, wink).

According to domestic and divorce court records that “solution” is a major cause of divorce and social instability in the Household and at all other scales of human settlement.

Tragically, Tony did not take into consideration was that at some point, the total cost of Regional-scale settlement pattern dysfunction would leave citizens and their Organizations without the resources necessary to change the settlement patterns to more functional and less congestion generating configurations.

To his credit, Tony was first an economist and had no way to know that the incredible BOOM of the 80s, 90s and 00s would exterminate “rational man” / “wisdom of the crowd” / invisible hand economics and replace it with “behavioral economics.” See Column # 124 “Riding the Tiger,” 2 June 2008 and the two recent post on the Tragedy of Trickle Down.

#### THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

For reasons spelled out in THE ESTATES MATRIX, MainStream Media has abandoned its responsibility to create informed citizens. Sadly, citizens are left to sort out advertisements for Automobiles and Wrong Size Houses in the Wrong locations that promise the American Dream without the facts or an overarching conceptual framework with which to organize their thinking. They believe the decisions they make are in their best interest and once made they defend them in the face of 46.3 minute AVERAGE commutes.

To his credit, WaPo reporter, Weiss only used one Core Confusing Word (suburban / suburb) and only used it three times. The use of “enclave” is very effective in this context and is a good choice. However, he used interchangeably two generic settlement pattern descriptors (neighborhood and community with no capital) seven times. Of course, it would have been helpful to point out that “political subdivisions” of the

Commonwealth and "Census Designated Places" do not reflect the organic components of human settlement patterns.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

Now, with a deepening recession, citizens and their elected representatives will support throwing more money at 'infrastructure' to remove fundamental drivers of dysfunction that cannot be solved except by evolving Balanced Communities.

There is no way to help commuters except to help them become noncommuters by building Balanced Communities.

See Column # 41 "The Commuting Problem," 17 January 2005, Column # 65 "Balanced Communities," 23 August 2005 and Column # 92 "Solving the Commuter Problem," 5 February 2007.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#), [Transportation/Land use](#)

Sunday, February 08, 2009

## NOTE FOR NMM ON ECONOMIC REALITY

Rather than add this note to the ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE post, EMR will put it here because it is important to understand these issues. Why is it important?

Because NovaMiddleMan's idea of economic reality is exactly why those who made bad location decisions are hurting now and will be hurting far more in five years. All those still alive will still be hurting in fifty years if there is not Fundamental Transformation of human settlement patterns and Fundamental Transformation of governance structure.

NovaMiddleMan said:

*"Look dude the free market is at work."*

Was this the 'free market' that was declared "dead" in Davos last week?

The US of A is a democracy and a clear majority are inclined to think Behavioral Economics is now in control and that a "free market" - which according to Adam Smith presumes informed buyers and sellers - has only rarely existed since 1870 outside the minds of those who perpetuated the myth to gain economic and political leverage.

Some think the "popular" backlash against the current stimulus packages is due to belief in "free markets." Not so, the popular backlash is driven by revolution over what happened to the money that was doled out and wasted in the last stimulus package.

*"People make decisions and face consequences."*

But "people" had no idea what the consequences would be.

Tell us how you feel when you are 75 and still have to work ten hours a day and have no health benefits because of the \$75-Trillion in unfunded liabilities for those ahead of you in line.

Or do you plan to be one of the few lucky ones at the top of the ziggurat? Watch out for the pitchforks, machetes and pikepoles.

*“Here is my perspective. Pardon me for not having as much context. I'm a bit younger than you folks :-p.”*

What is that about those who do not understand history having to repeat it?

In this case there are not enough resources left support a second round of mass overconsumption with 6 billion humans all wanting and deserving a slice of the pie.

*“Its 2003 and I am one of the young people powering the new economy of Northern Virginia.”*

Lets say “overpowering” the resources upon which a market economy depends. It is not your fault NMM, it is all of our faults but some of us have been pointing out the cliff since 1973, many for longer. Nouriel Roubini has come lately to the Common.

*“Some people want to get married and have kids. In 2003-2006 there were only a couple choices.”*

Choices about getting married or choices about getting married and having children and living the American Dream as portrayed by MainStream Media advertising? (See “A Yard Where Johnny Can Run and Play,” 1 Dec 2003.)

Even for the later there were many choices unless they relied on Automobile and shelter advertising and stories in MainStream Media for guidance. Millions of couples made more intelligent choices than those in Bristow and Dale City.

Check out the story about Grace Church in Saturday's WaPo Real Estate Section. Just for starters, if small groups of your friends got together they could have created real dooryards from the hundreds of similar buildings inside R=10.

Too busy playing video games to understand the real world? Not smart.

*"Finding a place under 500k..."*

See above.

*"... in a good school district ..."*

As noted in the 3 February WaPo story if one bought when they got married, by the time their children were ready for school the schools were over crowded.

*"... with low crime."*

Define "low crime." Check out the "safest" places by Prof Lucy's calculations.

*"The only choices were the two places mentioned in the article and outer Loudoun."*

Not in "outer" Loudoun (R=30 to R=45) and not "inner" Loudoun (R=20 to R=30 - the same Radius Band and Prince William) either. Both inner and outer Loudoun have different conditions.

For example, dwellings in the same price range as those in Bristow and Dale City were Attached Dwellings in the eastern Loudoun Beta Communities because they were closer to Jobs and Services due to the existence of Reston and Dulles Airport. These places also did not make the Top 12 in commuting times among Census Designated Places.

The bigger issue is this:

In the profiled enclaves between the time they were married and the first child going to school they spent on average 3,375 hours pre Household commuting. If your cohort spent half that time creating functional Dooryards (see Grace Church for example) they could have also evolved safe Clusters and good Neighborhood schools.

OK, no agents make a profit from sweat equity and building safe Clusters and good Neighborhood schools from the inside and so there is no advertising and no MainStream Media stories... But you get the idea.

*"This was insane."*

NOW YOU ARE TALKING

*"There needed to be a housing correction."*

The question is: what kind of a "correction?"

*"Now you can find a place for under 500k in many places."*

Not a place that meets your criteria because the schools are going down and the crime is going up faster than the price is changing.

*"Problem solved all through market forces with no planning or nanny stateisms."*

The problem is not solved, it is only now coming into focus for most citizens.

*"And I still say show me the demand for econoboxes right on top of each other with no cars."*

EMR dos not advocate "econoboxes" nor does he advocate depriving Households of vehicles. See performance measures in original post.

*"Right... Its not what the public wants"*

If the full costs were fairly allocated, the public would in fact want (and need) different settlement patterns and the dwellings need not be “econoboxes” nor “on top of each other.”

*“P.S. the people who live in the inner areas don't want what your development plan is anyway. Unless you can provide adequate infrastructure first and show the quality of life for existing residents wont be negatively impacted.”*

Here NMM is correct.

These NIMBY-like criteria can be (and should be) met.

The first step is for those in your generation to understand the reality of the existing conditions and the real future options.

EMR

Labels: [Access and Mobility Crisis](#), [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [The Helter-Skelter Crisis](#)

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

## THANK YOU LARRY

Your citation to BELTWAY BURDEN

<http://commerce.uli.org/misc/BeltwayBurden.pdf>

is a real service.

Since moving to a Beta Village in the Countryside in 2002 EMR's focus has been on understanding the economic, social and physical reality outside the Clear Edge around the Cores of New Urban Regions.

EMR was not aware of this work but it is a worthy successor to the 6th item listed in ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE. In fact those little red "employment centers" are the "activity centers" that could grow to be the Cores of Balanced Communities.

BELTWAY BURDEN is consistent with all the well founded work EMR has seen over the past three decades.

There are a few problems:

The great graphics make the file very large to download and print.

The work was done just before the roof fell in vis a vis gasoline prices, so some will discount the work because gas is now "cheap."

Of course the data is aggregated by municipal jurisdiction and there is some use of Core Confusing Words but one cannot have everything.

Someone needs to step up and look at these issues in light of the new reality. In the meantime all those interested in evolving functional human settlement patterns should have this in their libraries.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Functional human settlement patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#)

Friday, February 13, 2009

## TIME'S LIST OF 25 TO BLAME

Before it goes away, you might take in Time's [list](#) of 25 people to blame for the Global Financial Meltdown. (Time just calls it a "financial crisis.")

The list is fun, the voting by citizens on the rankings is very interesting.

Note that Phil Gramm comes in number one in the "Average Rank" voting but in total votes "The American Consumer" gets the most nods (well deserved) followed by G. W. Bush and Alan Greenspan.

All in all it is a great summary - except of course it is all about people and nothing about location, settlement pattern or Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location.

Look forward to thoughts about who else should be on the list. Time just listed one from each "category" (circle of Hell) so the list could easily be the top 75 with more bankers and more hedge fund types on the list.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Sunday, February 15, 2009

## BACK TO "BELTWAY BURDEN"

The ULI, et. al. report BELTWAY BURDEN that Larry Gross called to everyone's attention at

<http://commerce.uli.org/misc/BeltwayBurden.pdf>

is a very good piece of work. The Real Estate Section of the 14 February *WaPo* has a brief summary under the title "Factoring In the Cost of Getting Home." By the way the entire Real Estate section (usually printed in two parts) was six pages on the 14th.

The report is a very useful contribution to understanding EMR's post ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE.

Upon further review a few comments:

EMR wonders why it was call "BELTWAY BURDEN?" The burden is not the "Beltway," it is dysfunctional location and the radial distance from the Core focused job locations.

The data is collected on a Census Block Group basis - which is very good - but it is aggregated by municipal jurisdiction. Think how much more clear the message would be if:

- It was noted that 85 percent (or more) of the jobs in the National Capital Subregion that are not jobs that directly support residential land uses at or below the Village scale (e.g. food and beverage, etc.) are located in the little red boxes on the maps, and
- The data was aggregated by Radius Band and by organic component of human settlement pattern. If it is too much to ask to be aggregated by organic component of human settlement pattern, how about Radius Band

and Census Designated Place?

Equally important, it would have been much more effective if the report included all the territory that is in the National Capital Subregion. That would mean putting back in the MSA, the areas taken out for political reasons after the 2000 census such as Winchester and Frederick County VA., Culpeper and King George Counties, etc. While they were at it they should have included Rappahannock and Madison Counties in Virginia, the relevant counties in West Virginia and Maryland so that all the jurisdictions within a 70 mile radius from the Centroid of the Subregion are included. That is clearly what the 2000 Census indicated is in the commuting shed.

A complication that comes from multi-state Subregions is indicated by the listing of Fredericksburg, VA as the jurisdiction with the lowest cost. Also if Maryland treated "cities" as independent entities as Virginia does, Frederick, Md might well rank as well as Fredericksburg, VA. Lumping Frederick, Maryland with Frederick County Md. makes it look like the Maryland city is \$10,500 higher in average total cost.

Another suggestion would be to not interchangeably use "community" and "neighborhood" and to clearly define what is meant by both terms.

Then there are two overarching issues:

No where is there a discussion of the need to evolve Balanced Communities in order to bring down the costs.

Second, and related, is implicit reinforcement of the Large, Private Vehicle Mobility Myth.

On the front page of the 14 February WaPo there is a story about the Regional impact of the latest federal stimulus package. "Regional Impact: Billions Slated For Area Schools, Transportation." Buried six paragraphs

down on the jump page is the following:

“The more than \$1.6 billion for transportation represents a fraction of what officials (sic) said is needed to unclog roads in the region beset by some to the country’s worst commutes.”

NO, NO, NO

There is no amount of money will “unclog” roads if the money is spent just on transport facilities. There must be a redistribution of demand (aka, functional settlement patterns). This redistribution must match the capacity of the transport facilities with the demand. Building more facilities just induces more widely scattered urban land uses that generate more per capita demand and more congestion.

Belief that there is a way to build ones way out of congestion is the Large, Private Vehicle Mobility Myth as documented by Tony Downs cited in THE ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE.

On a related note under the THANK YOU LARRY post, Larry asked:

“If the "right sized house in the right location" includes homes that are near "shared vehicle" facilities - would that include the use of "shared vehicles" 50 miles from work - as long as they still lived in a "right sized" home?

“In other words - is there also a requirement that the "right location" not use shared vehicle systems for home to work commutes?”

EMR believes Larry already knows the answer to this question but...

Functional and intelligent application of “commuter rail” and “inter-urban” service started as a way to get a few of the residents of what was already a relatively Balanced urban enclave to a job location. By definition most of the residents of the enclave - large or small - lived, worked and secured services IN the enclave. Later day illusions that most

residents can hop on the train (or on a PRT or a heavy or light rail shared-vehicle system) is just the shared-vehicle version of the Large, Private Vehicle Mobility Myth.

That is why station-area Balance AND system wide Balance between system capacity and settlement pattern generated demand is so important. Today, most of the METRO system trains leave most of the METRO stations essentially empty most of the time due to a lack of Balance and thus the huge cost.

Now back to Larry's question.

If the shared-vehicle system serves origins and destinations that are 50 miles apart and if most of the station-areas are Balanced then there is no reason A FEW of the station-area workers cannot travel 50 miles if that is what works best for their Household.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#)

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

## DISAPPOINTMENT CUBED

On 29 January 2009 PewResearchCenter (sic) published a social and demographic trends report "Denver Tops List of Favorite Cities (sic): For Nearly Half of America, Grass Is Greener Somewhere Else."

The report was picked up by CNN and other media outlets. EMR downloaded it and read it with interest and disbelief.

In Chapter 32 - The Land Resource concerning the problems with "best places" listings EMR said:

"A recent survey by the Pew Research Center finds that nearly half of the citizens of the US of A believe that the grass is greener somewhere else and would like to move there if they could. See End Note Six

6. The January 2009 report by the Pew Research Center titled "For nearly half of America, Grass Is Greener Somewhere Else" is at once an important land mark and an encyclopedia of bad Vocabulary with extensive use of Core Confusing Words and aggregation of data that obscures the importance of the work."

THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT is that a lot of money was wasted asking important questions using a Vocabulary that was not defined. This Vocabulary was guaranteed to generate a wide array of conflicting Neural Linguistic Frameworks - a topic discussed in Columns #s 71, 72, 73 and 75 and in TRILO-G Chapter 26. - Gibberish: The Vocabulary of Babel.

For starters, the title is deceptive. The study focused on the 30 largest MSA's, not "cities." Boston (pop 590,000) is included by Charlotte (pop 611,000) is not. That makes a huge difference when one gets to DISAPPOINTMENT SQUARED. David Brooks, demonstrating typical

journalistic Geographic Illiteracy, missed this point completely.

Beyond the fact that nearly half of the citizens polled see the grass greener where they are not now living (See TRILO-G Chapter 1. - Wild Abandonment) most of the data is corrupted by poor Vocabulary and superficial analysis. One has to read the questions and the data aggregated to plumb the depth of the silliness but here is a peek:

What do “city,” “suburb,” “small town” and “rural” mean to each of the participants?

Lets take some examples from the northern part of Virginia:

Is Clifton, VA (a Town under Virginia law) that exists in the middle of Fairfax County one of the largest municipalities in the US of A (Fairfax County CONTROLS most of the municipal level services and governance provided to citizens of the Town of Clifton and each of the “local” County Supervisors represents over 100,000 citizens) a “small town”?

How about the Town of Vienna that is one of the Village-scale components of Greater Tysons Corner, the 8th largest commercial center in the US of A?

Is the City of Fairfax City a “city” a “suburb” or a “small town?”

Some who live in each of these three locations would give all four answers as to where they are and what they prefer, given their personal experience.

Similar examples are endless, especially in the R=20 Miles to R=70 Miles Radius band from the Centroid of the National Capital Subregion.

The study reinforced what has been said about Creative Class preferences and provided work for former WaPo staff (some of whom did similarly flawed work when working for the paper) but other than that, the study is

largely a waste of time and a waste of a wonderful opportunity.

## DISAPPOINTMENT SQUARED

On 16 February, David Brooks wrote an Op Ed for the NY Times. (Posted as a comment by an "Anon 8:15 AM" in BACK TO "BELTWAY BURDEN.")

David Brooks, like many "journalists" likes to think of himself as a free thinker and is sometime viewed as an iconoclast. He is a "story teller" as defined in The Shape of The Future. Brooks gets paid because he is an entertaining writer. Most important to The New York Times, they can sell Automobile advertisements because Brooks along with John Tierney, Joel Kotkin and others appear in the paper. See THE ESTATES MATRIX.

There is not much in the Brooks Op Ed that is "wrong" but it leaves a profoundly distorted impression with anyone who does not understand more that Brooks about Amsterdam and Denver and far more about human settlement patterns than Brooks.

Is Brooks talking about the Zentrum of Amsterdam or the Amsterdam New Urban Region? They are different places and in fact some settlement patterns in the later would appeal to a wide spectrum of those seeking greener pastures.

The places Brooks says people are attracted to are places where "the boundary between "suburb" and "city" is hard to detect." Like that is not the case elsewhere? The BIG difference is most of the places Brooks lists - and not just Portland - have a Clear Edge around the Core of the New Urban Region unlike the Washington-Baltimore and Houston New Urban Regions.

Brooks does not mention that ALL the places he lists as being attractive have had a explosion of share-vehicle system construction over the last two decades. And an explosion of transit related development. They are

LESS auto-dependent than many places in the National Capital Subregion

for example Dale City and Bristow.

Denver is known for its Light Rail system and station area development and the BRT system in the Zentrum. There is the Lower Downtown / Coors Field, Invesco at Mile High, redevelopment of Stapleton and other urbane living and working environments. Some are approaching Balance.

Sure there are critics of non-autocentric settlement patterns. Many paid directly or indirectly by Automobile Enterprises. The market makes clear that those who believe what the pro-Automobile shills spout make up about 20 percent of the population. Those who actually put their money where their mouth is and buy urban dwellings is the pattern and density that Wendell Cox, Joel Kotkin, John Tierney, the American Dream Foundation, Reason et. al. - and relish the David Brooks snarkyness - make up about 12.5 percent of the population.

You would think from their writing that they are standing up for the oppressed masses who are being deprived of the American Dream by demon socialist forces.

But go ahead and write this fun stuff. It sells papers and makes for "balanced journalism" just like Peanut Corp of America represents good old American competition.

#### DISAPPOINTMENT CUBED

Rather than try to use the Brooks Op Ed to understand how to change the unsustainable trajectory of civilization, the Brooks item is used by Bloggers to club EMR. They have not bothered to read the Pew report or consider what Brooks is really saying.

NMM why are you so ready to abandon the market? Why are you so delighted to hop on yet another ideological hobby horse?

The responses to [ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE](#) and to [BACK TO](#)

“BELTWAY BURDEN” show again how ineffective the Blog format is to help citizens understand how to evolve away from dysfunctional human settlement patterns.

If citizens want challenging work, the most interesting companions and access to a sustainable Countryside they need to figure out how to evolve functional Urban settlement patterns. The alternative is places like Dale City and Bristow and in the end, Collapse.

Ok, there are will be places where one can make a living by “taking in one another’s laundry,” over winter by eating root vegetables and driving to 20 year old cars - Cuba in the Heartland.

A sustainable trajectory for civilization that is anything like the current level of amenity depends on real research and real journalism, not story telling.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Friday, February 20, 2009

## THANK YOU GROVETON

Groveton:

Thank you for the data on school performance on the DISSAPOINTMENT CUBED string.

I wonder what the scores are for Dale City and Bristow profiled in ANATOMY OF A BAD COMMUTE where citizens have the highest average commutes so their children have the benefit of “good” schools?

Think how much better South Lakes SATs would be if it were one of two high schools managed by a Reston Community Board of Education instead of the educational administrator dominated “consolidated” Fairfax County Board serving over 1,000,000 citizens. (EMR’s father was an elected school board member of a small pyramid in the 40s and fought consolidation...)

Think how great it would be if all highschool pyramids were coterminous with a Beta Village and every Neighborhood had its own school and every Cluster had a preschool program to match its needs. That was advocated by many in the 60s and quashed by the educational “professionals” in the name of “efficiency” and big travel budgets - See today’s WaPo.

Think how great it would be if every Zip Code was coterminous with a Beta Neighborhood so that there was data to guide citizens in their decisions concerning Balance and moving components from Beta to Alpha status.

Think how great it would be if every Cluster was a Census Block (and every Neighborhood as Block Group) so there would be data to guide citizens in their decisions....

Small is Beautiful and in the long term sustainable.

EMR wonders if Adolfo Carrion Jr. (new director of White House Office of Urban Affairs), or Derek Douglas or anyone else Carrion hires to help him or to whom he listens would understand how great it would be...

EMR is also concerned that there will ever again be the resources to implement this evolution – Yes, the Resources that have been burned up to create the Wealth Gap.

EMR

Labels: [education](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Monday, February 23, 2009

## MORE INTERSTATE CRIME

Some may recall the story about the Howard County Exec who won an upset campaign against the ruling party establishment in the 70s and then spent the next four years proving to those who voted against him that he would NOT do what those who voted for him were counting on him to do.

Looks like a similar scenario is evolving because the new administration has a Secretary of Transportation that was chosen for 'bipartisanship' (NOT antiPartisanship) and who has little transport credibility. See "LaHood Talks of Mileage-Based Tax: White House Dismisses Controversial Idea to Fund Transportation Projects. WaPo 21 Feb 2009.

In an attempt to not rock too many boats at once the White House has apparently nixed one of the most important opportunities to improve Mobility and Access now available. They could also reverse one of the three catastrophic mistakes in implementation of an InterRegional roadway system. See "Interstate Crime" 28 Feb 2005

In summary the three problems are:

1. Running the Interstate roadways inside the Clear Edge (or the logical location for the Clear Edge) instead of stopping at the Clear Edge as called for by the earlier InterRegional Highway plans. Stopping at the Clear Edge is the normal practice for limited access roadways linking New Urban Regions in Europa.
2. Artificially holding down the true cost of the Interstate system by limiting the damages paid to Urban citizens in severance damages due to isolating land owners and citizens from the components of settlement that

supported their quality of life and their property values. The Urban landscape is littered with orphaned Clusters, Neighborhoods and Villages. NonUrban land owners WERE compensated. This is one of the prime drivers of both Abandonment and Scatteration discussed in the first two chapters of ROOTS OF THE HELTER SKELTER CRISIS.

3. Failing to develop a fair allocation of the cost of use of the Interstate System and Federal Aid Highways by failing to instituting a equitable weight distance levy on roadway use.

Now for some reason correcting the only error that is still correctagle without massive expense is viewed as “controversial.”

How can it be more “controversial” than Lexus Lanes or raising the gas tax enough to make a difference?

Footnote: This post was drafted on 22 February. On 23 February WaPo carried a lead editorial that said about the same thing about the usefulness of considering at least a step toward fair and equitable weight / distance levies. Credit where credit is due.

Now if WaPo could just focus on settlement pattern dysfunction...

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#), [The Helter Skelter Crisis](#)

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

## EVEN MORE ON INTERSTATE CRIME

### EVEN MORE ON INTERSTATE CRIME

On the INTERSTATE CRIME string Charlie said:

“EMR: Regarding your first point, a lot of people would argue that this is what happened in Washington, and that is the source of traffic problems.”

Not really. The InterRegional strategy for roadways stops major limited access corridors at the Clear Edge, not the Zentrum (aka, the “downtown.”)

“Only two highways run downtown (66 and 395) -- maybe 295 if you are stretching downtown a bit.”

True, some of the penetrations were blunted but that just left the Core inside the Clear Edge neither fish nor fowl. Stockholm and Paris are fish, Houston is fowl, or rather foul.

“Granted, since the Beltway was built, massive development has occurred outside.”

The InterRegional strategy has “beltways” but they are designed to serve far different land uses at the Clear Edge. You can still have “parkways” into the Zentrum as well. As noted below the issue is Balance.

“I'd argue the real beneficiary of that is not DC but the inside-Beltway suburbs.”

If anyone was a “beneficiary,” you are right, it was the Greater North Arlingtons, etc. but compared to a similar area in Stockholm or even Toronto it is not that great.

“Curious to hear your thoughts on the 66 expansion.”

I presume since it is on the front burner right now that you mean I-66 inside the Beltway. So here is my take:

“Anytime Agencies (fed, state, municipal) that control transport take actions to “expand” the capacity of a roadway without this expansion being part of a COMPREHENSIVE, Regionally endorsed and broadly understood strategy to BALANCE TRANSPORT SYSTEM CAPACITY WITH SETTLEMENT PATTERN TRAVEL DEMAND this action only postpones the day that the majority of citizens understand that Business-As-Usual will lead to Collapse.

In our Vocabulary this “enhancement” just reinforces the Large, Private Vehicle Mobility Myth (L,PVMM) spelled out for NMM below.

NMM said:

“I would suspect then that LA has poor settlement patterns OR poorly designed road system which would explain the traffic issues.”

NMM, you just cannot wing it on human settlement patterns. There are facts and there are Natural Laws that control the function of settlement patterns.

The Los Angeles NUR does not have bad settlement patterns on a Regional scale based on the intensity of land uses inside the Clear Edge. And there IS a Clear Edge for most of the Urbanized area - ocean, steep topography - much of it in public ownership e.g US Forest Service.

The Los Angeles NUR roadway system is not that bad either except that the interchanges take up huge amounts of land in areas that should be part of the Urban fabric and the “freeways” are impenetrable barriers between what are the logical components of Villages, Communities and SubRegions.

The traffic congestion problem in the Los Angeles NUR is caused by the failure to evolve Balance at the Village, Community and Subregional scales. Period. Too many people trying to go too many places at the same time.

For the record the Los Angeles NUR has the second highest AVERAGE density within the urbanized areas in the US of A. The New York NUR has the highest AVERAGE due to several very dense areas (but not ALL of "Manhattan"...).

The New York NUR is still half the AVERAGE intensity of the Toronto NUR and one quarter of that of the Paris, Stockholm, Wien NURs and other large NURs with far more functional distribution of Urban uses and Openspaces within the Clear Edge. Ever notice all those big forested areas from the Eiffel Tower?

"... The ultimate problem in this region may not be settlement patterns but road design and geographic problems (i.e. river crossing issues) Think about it of course there are going to be bottlenecks when the only way to get from Maryland suburbs to VA suburbs is over the American Legion Bridge due to the Potomac river."

NO, NO, NO. The problem is Balance. It is not possible for everyone to live where they want, work where they want, seek Services, Recreation and Amenity where they want and then be able to create a roadway (or shared-vehicle system) so everyone can go where the want, when they want and arrive in a timely manner. (L,PVMM) IT IS NOT POSSIBLE. It is not just the settlement patterns, it is not just the River, it is IMPOSSIBLE to design or build a system to accomplish that in a large NUR.

By the way check out what TMT said about 83-million sq feet in the Zentrum of Greater Tysons Corner at 9:42 on the THANK YOU GROVETON string that started out dealing with school governance. You hear more an

more planners these days admitting the L,PVMM is just that, a Myth.

EMR

Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#)

Thursday, February 26, 2009

## GREEN TECHNOLOGY BUBBLE AND BUST

On Jim Bacon's post "The Coming Green Boom - and Bubble" EMR noted something like the following (with corrected spelling and clarified intent):

Green Technology and the investment in Green Technology will just be another Bubble and Bust too without:

Fundamental Transformation in human settlement patterns;

Fundamental Transformation in governance structure, and;

Fundamental Transformation in the economic system.

And THAT means there must be a Fundamentally new way to get citizens the information they need to make INTELLIGENT decisions in the marketplace and in the voting booth. See THE ESTATES MATRIX

There are a number of good observations following Jim Bacon's post and they caused EMR to give further thought to the topic:

There MAY be a Green Technology Boom.

There MAY be great future benefits from Green Technology "Breakthroughs" that are not now even imagined.

There is no evidence at this point that there will be any "Breakthroughs" with more substance than cold fusion - or is it fission? Anyway, cold.

What IS known is that whatever form Green Technology takes, it will cost a lot of money, especially in the area of energy generation, transmission and distribution. There is NOTHING as cheap as digging up (and burning up) natural capital - unless nation-states and Regions have to fight wars to get it.

What is also known is that there are already a lot of expensive ways to replace cheap energy and there are millions of things to sell that will consume resources and occupy time - if citizens had time or money.

(For the record: Those things will not solve the Helter Skelter Crisis or the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis and even FREE energy for Large, Private Vehicles will not solve the Mobility and Access Crisis.)

The bottom line is that after 35 years of widening the Wealth Gap and the inevitable Global Financial Meltdown (Bust of the Household, Enterprise and Agency deficit spending bubble) there are not a lot of folks who can afford expensive energy or expensive Green Technology.

That means it will not be attractive to invest in Green Technology because the market will be small.

Those at the top of the Ziggurat - those who could afford expensive Green Technology - have demonstrated over and over that they would rather continue to ride on the Tiger because they make more money faster that way.

Over the past 35 years the US of A could have lead the World in creating a lean, educated, happy human population with an ever smaller ecological footprint and thus a sustainable trajectory for civilization.

The US of A has "prospered" by creating an obese, opinionated, antagonistic, human population with huge Mass OverConsumption driven ecological footprints. The growth in consumption, the growth in population and the growth in the Wealth Gap are not sustainable.

The net result of attempting to "enjoy" consumption based "prosperity" within dysfunctional human settlement patterns:

Over half the population is losing ground - economically and socially.

Most of the rest are Running As Hard As They Can and have no time or energy to understand why most of the benefit of increased productivity of the 95 percent is going to the top 5 percent of the Ziggurat.

The US of A ranks at the top in consumption and in an also ran in education, equity, health and happiness.

The Elephant Clan and the Donkey Clan have broken "politics" and gamed the governance structure so that one or the other - but not someone with new ideas - gets 50.5 percent of the vote.

They have done this by promising that a vote for their "principles" will allow everyone to continue to live a life based on Myth - forever.

Both the Clans try to out promise one another. It is all about short-term benefit / immediate gratification and nothing about cost long-term / cumulative cost or a Balance of rights with responsibilities.

Add to this the facts that:

The NRA (aka, gun lobby) and the individual rights advocates have armed and primed the "Deer Hunting with Jesus" crowd.

The alcohol lobby, the NRA and conflict generating agitators have armed and primed bros in the hood.

Let us not spend time creating another bubble to bust over Green Technology. Green Technology would be nice but what has surfaced so far is Green Greed. Even pure Green Technology is not what is needed.

How about creating a sustainable trajectory which requires:

Fundamental Transformation in human settlement patterns;

Fundamental Transformation in governance structure, and;

Fundamental Transformation in the economic system.

And, of course a Fundamentally new way to get citizens the information they need to make INTELLIGENT decisions in the marketplace and in the voting booth.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Mobility and Access Crisis](#), [The Helter-Skelter Crisis](#)

Friday, February 27, 2009

## MORE VOCABULARY

### A Phrase for Larry's Lexicon and a Cure for Major Mortgage Bail Out Defect

1) We are a bit late on this but here is a phrase for Larry's Lexicon:

"Green Sprawl:" An energy efficient industrial, commercial or residential building in a dysfunctional location. It is now in the lexicon of MainStream Media. A recycled Wal\*Mart with ground effects heating / cooling and a solar array on the roof (See "Big Box Reuse") or a LEED McMansion on a five acre lot or a 10 acre horse farm.

We have to sort out if the use of a Core Confusing Word ("sprawl") in a phrase that is clearly defined is a Core Confusing Phrase.

2) Use of "Location Efficient Mortgage" criteria for any residential mortgage bailout would cure a major problem with giving money to those who made bad decisions. The phrase is defined, there are criteria.

Implementation of a location efficient mortgage criteria would solve a major problem with the criteria-less mortgages consumed by Fanny and Freddie.

Location efficient mortgage criteria and prosecution for fraud at every stage of the development process from the original raw land sale to the final loan signing including all participating agents would save the public \$ billions.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [The Helter-Skelter Crisis](#)

Thursday, March 05, 2009

## UNDERWATER HOUSING

### Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location

There is a lot of loose talk by 12.5 Percenters about how the 'housing crisis' is all about California and Nevada.

Today's numbers: Virginia underwater mortgage rate is 19.6 percent. That is about one in five.

As luck would have it, Virginians are Over-housed. There is plenty of room for second and third dwellings in well located structures.

And there is plenty of room for chickens and goats in the walk-out basements of McMansions on one, two, five and ten acre lots that the 12.5 Percenters love.

The data shows a pattern: the more dysfunctional the settlement pattern, the higher the rate of underwater mortgages.

Good locations are still holding their own because even if the borrower is "subprime," the dwelling is not and 'someone' always needs a dwelling in a good location.

If Agencies and Enterprises had started to allocate the fair, equitable cost of location-variable expenses when the problem was first articulated and the data was first available (BEFORE the 2000's bubble) then the Affordable and Accessible Housing Crisis would not have become the 'housing crisis' that led to the Global Financial Meltdown.

You could have read all about it on the Original Bacon's Rebellion.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Saturday, March 07, 2009

## McMANSIONS AND LOCATION VARIABLE COSTS

GROVETON'S LEXICON AND TMT'S LOCATION VARIABLE COSTS - NOTES FROM UNDERWATER MORTGAGE COMMENTS:

Groveton, Good to hear from you.

You are right that the term "McMansion" is used to describe a range of inappropriately-scaled shelter options but as far as causing wide-spread confusion, it is not in the same league with the Core Confusing Words.

Actually, the admittedly 'rough' definition in Wikipedia is not bad. There is a list of characteristics which are stated to not ALL necessarily be present to be classified as a "McMansion."

As EMR sees it there are two general categories of McMansions:

Mc Mansions INSIDE the Clear Edge

Large, recently built houses on small lots. These Units are frequently the result of "knockdown redevelopment." These dwellings are disconcerting and disruptive for the Dooryarders and Clustermates. However, in the long term they MAY represent a transition to larger units in a given location.

When the dust settles from the ongoing housing bust, most of these McMansions will have far more square-footage than can be afforded by the vast majority of Households.

These may be wrong size house but not necessarily Wrong Size House in Wrong Location.

McMansions OUTSIDE the Clear Edge

The other form of McMansions are Big Houses on Big Lots - especially in

scattered, orphan subdivisions. They would be among the 12.5 percent of the Urban dwellings that fall OUTSIDE the 87.5 Percent Rule.

These dwelling may be Big or REALLY Big but the key is that they are too Big for the actual income / lifestyle of owner. Real mansions are owned by people who could afford to throw parties that would fill up the entertainment areas and have out of town guests that fill the guest suites and / or they can afford to let them sit vacant for months at a time.

There is a subset of McMansions called McLodges that are vacant most of the time.

Many owners of McMansions know they bought more house than the can afford / use. These dwellings have been marketed as "investments" in the housing obesity binge over the past 35 years.

From a settlement pattern perspective the problem is not the SIZE of the dwelling, it is the amount of land that is taken up for a single Urban Household.

From an economic perspective it is the SIZE and the LOCATION of these dwellings and the fact that they have been subsidized by Agency and Enterprise actions that generates dysfunction.

Others can speak for themselves but EMR does not live in a McMansion by any definition.

The dwelling plus, library, office and studio / conference room are in a substantial structure but not far from the median in the municipality and it is the same size as the others in its Dooryard and about the median for the Cluster.

The dwelling sits on a small lot (less than .2 acre) but the house is not too big for the lot. The Cluster is inside the Clear Edge around a Village-scale agglomeration and within walking distance of Main Street and a much

shorter walk to a range of services in the Neighborhood via a path system.

The Dwelling and Cluster would contribute to a Balance if the vacant and underutilized land within the Clear Edge were built out.

On the other hand Grovetons use of “socialist” IS a candidate for Core Confusing Words in the Fundamental Transformation of governance structure discussion because of its current wide-spread misuse.

There are no “socialists” as classically defined just as there are not “cities” as classically defined and not “rural” as classically defined. The world has moved on. See Harold Meyerson’s 4 March column “Who You Calling Socialist?” in WaPo. Even he is a “democratic socialist” not a “socialist.”

Groveton may be correct in describing the Obama administration program. However, there may be no alternative to “more government” given the state of the resources that citizens are left with after Supercapitalism has created:

The obscene Wealth Gap in the US of A and other First World Nation States,

The equally obscene Consumption Gap with the rest of the citizens of the planet, and

The Global Financial Meltdown - back to those Wrong Size House in the Wrong Location...

What did ANYONE expect would be the Global result when consumers were subsidized to buy stuff they could not afford and in the process provided Indians and Chinese with jobs making cheaper STUFF? Now they see no reason they should not Mass OverConsume too.

TooManyTaxes:

EMR thinks you were trying to slip in a trick question about Location

## Variable Costs.

The answer is very simple:

Both of the Households you hypothecate (as well as the neighbors who lives and works in Fredericksburg) would pay EXACTLY the same for the goods and services they actually used - no location-based subsidies or discounts.

Then they could decide if their choice of job location / and efforts to mitigate costs made sense.

EMR

Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Economy](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#)

Friday, March 13, 2009

## THE ANATOMY OF AN ILLUSION

IN TIMES OF IRRATIONAL EXUBERANCE, ILLUSIONS GROW LIKE KUDZU.  
BUT WHY DO THEY CONTINUE TO SURVIVE WHEN THE ECONOMY IS  
SHRINKING - AS IT MUST - AND AMONG CITIZENS SHOULD KNOW BETTER?

SuperMassDenial cannot be the whole answer.

One of the most frustrating aspects of working to create an understanding of functional and dysfunctional human settlement patterns is dealing with those who blithely claim that “the facts” support their position when they must know at some level that they are absolutely wrong.

It is one thing when the advocate of an Illusion if someone is heavily invested in an unfortunate decision. It is another for a person who claims to be young enough to know better continues to chan the mantra of dysfunction.

Case in point: The comment of NovaMiddleMan (NMM) that “the vast majority” support scattered Urban dwellings stated a comment on the DISAPPOINTMENT CUBED post of 18 February. Here is part of that post (in italics) with comments.

At 6:23 PM NMM said”

*“I agree the blog format is not the best way to communicate.”*

Great! An area of agreement to build on! In fact blogging may be the WORST way to communicate because it allows rabid defense of ridiculous positions.

*“I can sense your frustration about the lack of a common nomenclature.”*

But then why do you continue to use Core Confusing Words? Do you understand that continuing to use Core Confusing Words like “suburban” makes no sense, literally?

.....

*“The bottom line however is that the data suggests a vast majority reject your viewpoint...”*

Since EMR’s position is the market favors more Balanced settlement patterns, this must mean that “the vast majority” support unBalanced settlement patterns.

NMM must know there is no data to support his statement. Why does he make this statement?

The numbers are clear 87.5 percent (1980 to 1990 data upon which the 87.5 Percent Rule is based) did NOT choose scatteration at the Dooryard and Cluster scale, even when the choices were limited. There has never been less than 80 percent of the market who favor Balanced over scatteration IF GIVEN A CHOICE regardless of income. Twenty percent is not “a vast majority” it is an uninformed minority.

NMM has not shown one case where the same unit by the same builder sells for LESS in a more Balanced component of human settlement than it sells for a less Balanced or unBalanced, monoculture component.

The reason he has not cited the data is that it does not exist. From the 70s to the 90s there was a \$100,000 difference between more Balanced vs less Balanced / unBalanced contexts.

NB: IF the TOTAL cost of location variable costs were assessed, the scattered site (unBalanced) dwelling would cost far more but that is not the case under current conditions.

The bottom line is that the market pays a premium for a more Balanced

locations, period.

The market proves that NMM's view "The American Dream" is sales hype when citizens ARE GIVEN A CHOICE.

[NB: in a later comment in this string, NMM admitted he was basing his comment on the PEW survey noted in the DISAPPOINTMENT CUBED post.

This survey was profiled because of the gross Vocabulary confusion and is not a basis for identifying informed opinions. Using this survey to establish preference has all the validity of going to a used car lot and asking the first 100 tire kickers: "If price and maintenance was not an issue would you rather have a Hyundai or a Mercedes?"]

To further examine the blanket statement: "a vast majority reject your viewpoint" vis a vis residential settlement patterns - that is that the vast majority prefer scattered, unBalanced settlement patterns as opposed to more Balanced settlement patterns. Here is a two step exercise for those who want to understand the basics:

It is economically impossible for 'a vast majority' to own a Single Household Detached Dwelling. That is because given a normal distribution of disposable income in any First World nation-state from 60 to 95 percent of the population (depending on the state of the economy and the allocation of true costs) COULD NOT AFFORD a Single Household Detached Dwelling.

Let us assume that, fearing an uprising from 'a vast majority' who favor scatteration, it was decided to pay a housing stipend to every Household so 'the vast majority' could afford to pay for 'what they wanted' and they did in fact buy The American Dream per NMM.

Under those conditions it would be physically (to say nothing of economically) impossible to provide services, especially - but not limited

The following phrase was separated out from the rest of NMM's assertion because these last four words make the statement into a pure red herring.

*"... of urban dense living ..."*

EMR does not advocate "dense" Urban living. EMR does not advocate density for density's sake. EMR advocates exactly what the market finds most attractive - Balance, especially at the Alpha Village- and Alpha Community scale.

*"and prefer a 'sub'urban lifestyle ..."*

Intentional use of a Core Confusing Word such as 'suburban' is always a red herring. The user must define what they mean by "suburban" using lot size, dwelling size, persons per acre density and other metrics for each component scale of settlement pattern from the Unit to at least the Alpha Community (aka, lowest six components in the New Urban Region Conceptual Framework.)

*"close to a major metropolitan area."*

If "the vast majority" lived some where else, there would be no "metropolitan" area only scattered "sub"Urban land uses.

Even more important "close to" indicates this "vast majority" lives OUTSIDE major metropolitan areas. Since the majority of all residents live INSIDE major metropolitan areas this must be "the vast majority" of the minority?

*"Those are the facts and that is what the market has demanded for years ..."*

As noted above, that is not so. The MARKET provides a premium for well located units in more Balanced components.

*"... and still continues to demand."*

Even the marginal "demand" has slipped as the cost of dysfunction has become more painful.

*"I would also add again a majority also prefer ..."*

"Prefer" if they believe they are among the few who can afford the total price. The larger the Region, the higher the price.

*"... and demand access to automobiles and driving."*

There was never a time when driving would provide mobility for more than 50 percent of the population and that number is shrinking as the population ages and the cost rises and / or the ability to pay shrinks.

*"That is not an ideological hobby horse those are the facts on the ground."*

Sorry, it is an Illusion AND a ideological hobby horse..

*"I guess in all seriousness I question what you hope to achieve through this medium."*

Learn if there is a way to cure Illusions and to understand the perspective of those gripped by Myth.

*"I think after several months or years most of us understand what you are trying to do."*

Apparently not since NMM has not yet gotten a handle on EMR's perspective.

*"However you seem to fail to understand the reality of the situation."*

See above.

*"The world is not a sandbox you can control at will."*

Another red herring. NMM will not find a bigger advocate of the market, so

long as it is a well informed market, that is citizens can make decisions that are in fact in their individual and collective best interest. What is it that the vast majority would choose, if they had a choice and understood the consequences of their actions.

*“Like it or not the population has rejected and continues to reject your vision for the future.”*

See above.

Without a Fundamental Transformation of the governance structure (and the economic structure) there will be no Fundamental Transformation of the human settlement pattern and thus no potential for a sustainable trajectory of civilization.

The democracies with market economies are an impossibility without all three Fundamental Transformations.

As luck would have it more and more are discovering this reality. See Lifestyle preferences are shifting by Bill Cunniff in the 27 Feb *Sun-Times*. For a summary of the marketing success of those who claim to sell dwellings in more Balanced environments subscribe to *New Urban News*.

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Labels: [Affordable and Accessible Housing](#), [Human Settlement Patterns](#), [Illusions and Myths](#)

Sunday, March 15, 2009

## UNDERSTANDING LOCATION VARIABLE COST

### WHY IS IT SO HARD TO UNDERSTAND LOCATION VARIABLE COSTS?

EMR is awaiting Groveton's examples of same house, same builder prices to support his assertions on THE ANATOMY OF AN ILLUSION post.

In the meantime, Groveton has forgotten that EMR has outlined homework for Groveton to use to prove to himself the validity of location-variable cost calculations.

Before we start let's be sure everyone understands that it is not Groveton's fault that he does not pay his location-variable costs. No one does for reasons spelled out in *The Shape of the Future*. The same is true for the full cost of air travel - greatly subsidized by all tax payers and by all citizens but that is another story.

First EMR is glad that he did not say that Groveton could not afford to live where he does if he had to pay the location-variable costs. EMR said Groveton would not have made the location decision if he knew the true costs and thought he would have to pay that cost. EMR stands with that.

Based on his 8:30 AM comment of 14 March, Groveton probably could afford the true cost but he does not pay that cost and neither do his Clustermates and they may or may not be able to afford those costs.

In the 8:30 AM post Groveton said:

"OK -

"It's tax time in the Old Dominion. I pay about \$225,000 in state and local taxes. Not federal and I'm not even counting sales taxes, etc. Just plain old income and real estate taxes. I live on a 7 acre lot. I drive about

10,000 miles per year - total (commute and errands). My street is owned by me and the neighbors. We pay to pave it, plow it, repair it, etc. I have my own septic system and well water. I have five sons - one is in college (out of state), three go to private schools and one is in the Fairfax County system.”

“Now ... just one more time ... please explain how I am not covering my full costs.”

It is clear that Groveton would pay the same state and municipal taxes if lived in a dwelling that was taxed the same amount REGARDLESS OF WHERE he lived in the Commonwealth and the municipal jurisdiction. So by definition, not much of the information provided gives a hint of total location-variable costs.

In general taxes one pays DO NOT go to support location-variable costs. If one could reallocate payments to the location-variable cost categories Groveton, who pays \$225,000 might come close, but on average those in his Cluster, Neighborhood and Village do not come close.

There is further information from Groveton's past posts that provide additional insights:

Groveton says he “lives Great Falls.” By that we suspect he means that he lives in the 22066 Zip Code. (More on Zip Code data problems in a future post.)

Groveton also implied that he is in the Difficult Run watershed and that this stream is close to where he lives. That means he lives in the far southeast (most Urban) corner of Zip 22066. His total location-variable costs will be lower here than in “Great Falls Proper” which is north and west of the Walker Road / Georgetown Pike Cross Roads (Village Centre). Places such as Richland Forest, Tally Ho or Beach Mill Downs to pick three names at random off the map

Now about those costs:

The first thing to do is to pick a nice house on Lake Audubon or Lake Thoreau that has about the same market value as his house.

The following will remind Groveton that EMR suggested an exercise to get a grip on location variable costs.

Start with electricity. How much is the cost of generation, transmission and distribution of a kilowatt to Groveton's vis the alternative (capital cost and monthly delivery). Be sure to figure in line loss for low voltage transmission, the single most clear demonstration of location-variable costs.

There are 40 plus or minus services that vary in cost by location that are, by-in-large now charged on a flat fee basis.

The original calculations were based on 1,000, 4 bedroom, two car garage Single Household Detached Dwelling Units (a nominal Neighborhood) located on 10,000 acres in four different patterns:

10 acre lots

functional but scattered Dooryards

functional but scattered Clusters

A functional Neighborhood.

It was assumed this Neighborhood was adjacent to another Neighborhood but the location- variable cost savings at the Village, Community, Subregion and Region were NOT calculated.

The best available cost were used and yes there were changes for water and sewer licencing, monitoring, and testing and off site impacts based on charges made in other Regions.

There were assumptions about the cost of bussing children, the cost of mail delivery, parcel delivery, telephone service, etc.

The data was collected and refined over a four year period. Two years after *The Shape of the Future* was published, and no one who bothered to take the time to understand the calculations challenged the assumptions or the numbers the data was recycled when EMR moved to from Inside the Clear Edge around the Core of the Subregion to a location inside the Clear Edge around a potentially Balanced but Disaggregated Village.

In 2008, some of the costs will be higher, some will change completely - cell phones use for example -- but overall the 10 X Rule would stand up quite well.

Groveton said: "This is BS. The facts don't support the conjecture."

This is not BS, it may appear to be inconsistent with the experience of those who do not bother to take the time to understanding human settlement patterns and location-variable costs.

In the same string of comments, TMT said that "Not EMR" was smoking something AND inhaling.

Actually "Not EMR" really does understand, he / she just can not bring themselves to admit it, and so they work to obscure and obfuscate reality.

TMT also said: "A semi-rural Great Falls is the best friend of county residents."

It would be it the residents paid their fair share of the location-variable costs.

There is no reason for scattered Urban land uses outside the logical location of the Clear Edge around the Core of the Subregion - UNLESS

THEY ARE IN COMPONENT OF A BALANCED COMMUNITY, in which case they would be within a Clear Edge of that Alpha Community.

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Labels: [Human Settlement Patterns](#)