

Dear City Council,

It has now become 100% clear that the residents of Charlottesville have been completely misled from the beginning of the Cville Plans Together initiative. Please consider these simple facts:

1. City staff admits that by their best projections very, very little new affordable housing will be built under the DZO. It's clear that this was never about affordable housing from the beginning.

2. All protection against gentrification and displacement has been surreptitiously removed in ways that were intended to hide its removal. It's clear that this was never about protecting those citizens in Charlottesville who are in greatest need for protection from development.

3. Commercial uses in residential areas were never asked for by the residents of Charlottesville but were nevertheless added at a late date by the Planning Commission on their own whim. In response to public outcry, the most recent DZO draft proposes that commercial uses in residential areas require a Special Use Permit. This is like putting the fox in the henhouse; PC wanted commercial anywhere, and if they are appointed as the gatekeepers, OF COURSE they will recommend approval of anything and everything. It's clear that the entire planning process was never about community consultation, but rather a chance for PC to experiment with ideologically-driven questionable initiatives.

4. No willingness on the part of PC to limit the inevitable highly profitable development of student housing by restricting uses. In fact, the Affordable Dwelling Unit Monitoring and Procedures Manual (page 5) specifically considers students to be deserving of affordable housing. Twisting the purpose of this DZO away from people who truly need affordable housing and allowing developers to exploit it in order to generate housing for many of the well-off students of the University of Virginia is sad. It's clear that making money for developers has driven this and many, many other decisions made by PC (who regularly argue that "the economics of development" won't work without huge increases in density; what they are clearly saying is "we want to help developers make more money").

5. The entire process has been bait-and-switch. Many changes to the DZO were made long after PC and the consultants did presentations and tried to convince citizens that changes were acceptable. For instance, R-A and R-B zones were limited to 2.5 stories, but now (long after many citizens took this at face value) PC have tried to slip in a height increase to a full 3 stories for multi-unit buildings and commercial enterprises. Page 2-5 of the DZO continues to claim that "2.5 stories / 32' height (max)" even though this is not true. As a result, few if any residents actually know what the DZO contains. How can PC claim support for their plans - clearly people can't support what they don't know about. All of the outreach that PC and the Consultants performed to date sold many of what now turn out to be falsehoods to anyone who came to their presentations.

It's clear that this was never about engaging the community as many last-minute changes are rammed through the process without the kind of broad public consultation that they require.

6. The entire process has never been about lowering rents. Ask any trained economist (the University has a whole building full of them!) and they will tell you without hesitation that any temporary reduction in housing costs (or rents) in Charlottesville city will quickly be bid back up to earlier prices and rates by people moving in from the suburbs and relocate from more expensive cities further out. Professional economists will confirm that the logic used by PC for years is simply faulty. PC will no doubt tout the purported environmental benefits of moving people from the suburbs in to town, but by doing so they make it clear that this was never about reducing housing costs to help housing affordability.

Each of the six points above is based on facts about the planning process that led to the current DZO. Please do not be the City Council that presided over this sham.

Respectfully,

The Lewis Mountain Neighborhood Association

Meadowbrook Hills-Rugby Neighborhood Association

Belmont-Carlton Neighborhood Association

North Downtown Residence Association