

May 8, 2007

To: Dave Norris, chair
Citizen Committee on Environmental Sustainability
From: Andrea K. Wieder
Re: Starting at ground level

More than 40 acres of mature trees, shrubs and ground cover have been stripped from the land two blocks from my home here on Highland Avenue in the city of Charlottesville.

In one case, at the Cherry Hill development site, 23 single family homes and 94 townhouses are almost complete. Where a forest once was, asphalt roads and multiple dwellings now rise up. The project began April 2006 and nears completion now. The homes site right on the bank of Lodge Creek, a tributary of Moore's Creek.

In another case, at the Huntley Development, hundreds of new homes will be built on what had been more than 20 acres of forest. This land, like that of the Cherry Hill development, has been clear cut. Every tree, pulled up by the roots, is gone and gone forever. If you have not visited this barren, pillaged landscape, I suggest you do so. And take the committee with you, to see for yourselves what development has meant in the last two years in Fry's Spring.

When Phase I of the Stadium Sanitary Sewer project is built, along Lodge Creek, and then in back of the houses in my neighborhood, more acres of trees and shrubs will be removed, grubbed out, to clear a 20 foot wide area for the sewer lines.

To build homes these days developers routinely clear-cut the land. Why does the city of Charlottesville permit this? As new water, gas and sewer lines are built, more land will be grubbed out, trees destroyed, ground cover torn away.

How can any of this be considered progress? How can the issues of "green" and "sustainability" be routinely discussed in the current environment of wholesale destruction of the natural landscape?

Start at ground level. Instead of looking for tax breaks for building "green", place a value on each tree in the city. Use aerial surveys to locate each one and map them, neighborhood by neighborhood. The trees and shrubs, ground cover and open space in this city are at a premium: they contribute to keeping whole areas of the city cool and comfortable in the hot months. And they do so naturally, without the use of double-paned windows or power from Dominion.

Charge developers and builders fees based on the value assigned to each tree within their development area. Require that they pay, before they build, for each tree they remove. Require that 25% of the total land area they develop be replanted with trees of the same value as they removed.

And do not permit any builder or developer the right to clear cut the land. This is what I mean by starting at ground level.

Please review the materials we have posted to the Fry's Spring Neighborhood web site regarding the Huntley Development. A video and images with captions tell a very tragic story of how this city permits destruction of it's natural environment. We have documented this development site extensively and will continue our work. The web addresses are below:

<http://avenue.org/fsna/huntley.html>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fsna/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qAHetjEaN8>

Once the natural environment is gone no amount of building "green" can replace it.

Thanks for your consideration of this matter, and all matters of concern to the Fry's Spring community.