

Development needn't be a four-letter word

Commentary by Bill Brush
Brush lives in Moneta.

Talk about a controversial topic. Talk about a topic some developers don't want discussed.

But there are at least three area developers that are open with their developments and the community. Their development plans reflect their quality and pride in the communities they've created.

They build quality neighborhoods that add real value – in short, they build community. George Aznavorian, the developer of Mayberry Hills and Downtown Moneta at Smith Mountain Lake, most notably has reached out to the local community, sought input (and listened) and is committed to building high-quality, well-planned and aesthetically pleasing residential and commercial development.

Consequently, he has the support and backing of the community and his Mayberry Hills / Downtown Moneta at Smith Mountain Lake project will be highly successful. Local residents will frequent the planned shops, medical facilities, and restaurants.

In an April 17 article in the Roanoke Times, Bedford County's administrator said, "I really don't think people realize what's going to happen down there." She's right: The people don't realize, and even worse, many don't give a darn. The article, "Pipeline to the future", concerned planned development along the Virginia Rte. 122 corridor in Bedford County.

But for those of us who do care, I'd like those developers with ongoing and planned developments in the area of Hales Ford Bridge to share their visions with the community in an open "town-meeting" atmosphere. I'd like to see the planning staffs from both Franklin and Bedford counties present to answer questions and talk about how the planned infrastructure improvements are protecting the lake and encouraging responsible development.

I'd like to see AEP attend and discuss how the shoreline management plan encourages economic development while enhancing the scenic, recreational and environmental aspects of Smith Mountain Lake.

The purpose of this town meeting would be to inform the community about this high-interest topic. All too often, residents react to rumors and misinformation, resulting in frustration and needless community division. This proposed town meeting could help ensure correct and timely information reaches our community.

There should be a free-flowing exchange of information. I realize that some feedback may be negative, but as one prominent local developer once said: "If you can't take the heat, get out of the development business."

I'm sure there would be many positive comments and maybe even some buyer interest. So let's take a lesson from those developers that believe in sharing their vision and marketing that vision to the community. Let's have one of our issue-oriented business or civic organizations sponsor a town meeting at the bridge.

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