

# Planned developments help save environment

## Editorial

An important way to reduce the nation's dependency on automobiles is to create communities that fill multiple needs.

While it was once common- place to have neighborhood mom and pop shops that people visited on foot, it has become a rarity in a world of suburban sprawl.

In planned communities, grocery stores, restaurants, and other businesses can be reached on foot or bicycle and are mixed with green, open spaces – a prominent feature of such communities. That mix keeps both the environment and the residents healthier.

It also promotes a real sense of community. People get a chance to know each other – an impossible task when they whiz by each other in automobiles.

Bedford County recently approved a planned development zoning district, called a “PD-1”, which is intended to allow greater flexibility than conventional zoning regulations.

As the new regulation states, “...the PD-1 district creates an opportunity to reflect changes in technology of land development, provide opportunities for new approaches to home ownership, and provide for an efficient use of land which can result in reduced development costs.”

These types of development are supposed to be visual assets to the community, rather than buildings that clash with existing natural and cultural features.

One of the main purposes of planned development is to integrate a variety of uses, not just to increase residential densities.

In Bedford County, George Aznavorian is likely to be the first applicant for a PD-1 classification. He is building a development off Virginia 122 similar to Lynchburg's Wyndhurst community. The community is to have a residential area called “Mayberry Hills and a commercial area called “Downtown Moneta at Smith Mountain Lake.”

The PD-1 district will allow Aznavorian to build relatively small lots of about 5,000 square feet in much of his development to promote a pedestrian-friendly community.

To qualify for the new zoning district, a development must be at least 50 acres and maximum lot coverage is limited to no more than 75 percent.

To encourage walking, the development should be designed at a walkable scale. In residential areas, for example, sidewalks must be a minimum of 5 feet in width if separated from the curb by a planting strip, or 6 feet if adjacent to the curb.

The district also calls for low-density lighting, which helps to curb light pollution, and limits on signage to curb visual pollution.

At least 15 percent of the development must be in open space. For developments with a density greater than eight units per acre in residential areas, the minimum open space or recreational area must be 30 percent of the residential areas in the district.

PD-1 must also be well landscaped and have a “park-like atmosphere”. Like any other zoning change, a developer must go through the rezoning process to get a PD-1 designation.

Continued development of Bedford County will come. Encouraging clustered development in traditional type neighborhoods will make development more palatable. The county is to be commended for adding this zoning choice, and must continue to find ways to preserve its natural beauty for generations to come.

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