

Economic development meets steep-slope reality

by Jeff Turner in Vol. 13 / Iss. 27 on 01/31/2007

Recently I was elected by the people of Buncombe County to the position of Soil and Water Conservation District supervisor. Many of you voted for change; many of you voted out of frustration. You've seen your constitutional rights slowly whittled away, your property rights diminished, tax dollars wasted on all the wrong projects, and now you're being told that developers—and the money behind them—are needed for continued economic growth for our area.

It is a vicious cycle, civilization's continued growth through the means of consuming every available piece of land. We know what happens next: your everyday life, your peace of mind, your neighborhood transformed by loud trucks early in the morning; backhoes, bulldozers, dump trucks polluting your breathing air with diesel fumes; the beautiful pine forest and laurel thickets replaced by a giant clear-cut swath straight up the side of the mountain. Yes, you know what's coming: two to five years of dust and construction debris flying through your yard; the stream behind your house a raging river of mud; the birds gone; the road by your full of potholes; your house with two broken windows from the rock blasting. Yes sir, progress sure has its bad side.

And speaking of bad sides, I, along with many of you, have personally witnessed the condemned homes from past quick development of mountainous terrain. We have already learned our lesson here. We don't need anymore of this. Some of these homes, only a few years old, are now just worthless investments. Developers who code jump or try continually to get variances on legitimate ordinances should be run out of town and forbidden to ever contract in our county again. It is my belief that they are violating our basic constitutional and civil rights to have health, safety and general welfare. We cannot allow these developers to take shortcuts that amount to serious liability issues only a few years later.

These issues are real and apparent. The safety and general welfare of the people are being denied or violated with willful intent. If my position allowed me, I would request the attorney general's office to file a petition for an injunction to halt all steep-slope development currently in the permitting stages, until such time as the courts could decide if the greater constitutional rights of the public are being ignored or denied.

Nothing should be built or graded or constructed on any ridge top or elevation above 4,000 feet. Solifluctuation (involving saturation), mast wasting (movement), icing, erosion, flash flooding and gravitational effects need to be studied more in depth, and after the study, state legislation should be passed.

Meanwhile, I encourage all of Swannanoa and other affected areas in Buncombe County to seek conservation help. I'd like to know the ideas of the voters; write to me at: 121 Old Charlotte Highway, Asheville, NC 28803. Or call our office about your needs: 250-4785. Attend our open board meetings on second Thursdays at 5:15 p.m., 155 Hilliard St., Suite 204 in Asheville. Also, it's time for our annual seedling sale of hardwoods and pines. Help to keep our area beautiful: Plant a tree and breathe easier!

- Jeff Turner District Supervisor Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District

Comments

There are no comments for this entry.

You must be registered and logged-in to comment.

Already have an account?: [Login here.](#)

Want to Register?: [Click here](#) to create a new account.