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[www.citizensforfauquier.org](http://www.citizensforfauquier.org)

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## OUR MISSION

To preserve the natural, historic and agricultural resources of Fauquier County and to protect the County's unique quality of life through education and leadership.

# What's Our Motivation?

There's a story told in show business circles about a poor but dedicated "method" actor struggling with how to play a difficult scene. He stops and begs his director, "What's my motivation?" His answer is always some variation on "Money!"

We mention this story because many people have an idea that we of Citizens for Fauquier County only care about saving beautiful vistas and a "grand country estate" lifestyle for the privileged, monied few. Well,

if you want to know the truth, a lot of what lies behind our mission statement (it's over there to the left) *is* money. But we mean *everybody's* money.

That's right. What we do makes good economic sense for every man, woman and child in Fauquier County. That's probably why people of all political persuasions and socio/economic classes give us their support.

In this issue of the *Monitor*, we're going to talk candidly about that. ■

## Fauquier's "Cash Cow": Money in Everyone's Pocket *by Hope Porter*

In 1968, when the County was in the midst of a zoning war, members of CFFC (then the Mid-Fauquier Association) and the Upper Fauquier Association undertook a research project to determine who paid what in local taxes.

Months of poring over the County's tax records proved, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that open land benefitted all taxpayers. Conversely, subdivisions didn't.



*Everyone who is fortunate enough to live in Fauquier County sees views like this every day, whether from the windows of their homes or their automobiles. Our viewsheds aren't just pretty. They're also money in your pocket.*

We used the figure \$400 in combined taxes as the break-even point. A property, business or a piece of open land paying over \$400 in combined taxes created a

surplus for the County. Under that was a minus. Combined taxes included real estate, personal property, machine tool, and merchant's capital.

Taxpayers who paid \$400 and over were divided into business, industry, residential, dairy farms, farms that sent children to the public schools, and farms that didn't.

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subdivisions didn't.

We found that all farms were in the plus column, but dairy farms were paying more than even the big grocery stores. All cows were taxed as personal property. While the merchants could

*See CASH COW, Pg 4*

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# Why Are We Driven by the Health of Route 29? *by Leslie Cheek*

Poor planning makes things worse and costs us dearly. Here's our thinking about one such problem.



THE CAPTURE—CAVALRY FIGHT AT BUCKLAND MILLS, VA.

*Buckland Mills is one of Fauquier County's (and the nation's) most precious historical resources. It is constantly under threat of highway expansion and development.*

IF FAUQUIER COUNTY were a human body, U.S. Route 17 North from Rockford to Marshall would be its spine, and U.S. Rtes 211 and 29 would be its arms, radiating west and east from its heart, the town of Warrenton.

And just as each human body's metabolism is unique, so are Fauquier's arterial highways. They define its character; their health and beauty are among the County's most precious assets—hence CFFC's growing concern about the future of Fauquier's "right arm," the eight-mile-long stretch of Route 29 running northeast from Warrenton to Buckland.

The risks to the continuing rural character of this artery are both long-term

and short-term and major and minor, although the major long-term risks have been diminished by the Commonwealth's ongoing failure to fund its transportation priorities.

The major long-term risks include:

- Widening to six lanes;
- The creation of "bypasses" around perceived congestion areas; and,
- Expansion of existing shopping centers to include "big box" stores (like Costco in New Baltimore).

The minor short-term risks are:

- Increasing numbers of business curb-cuts; and
- Installation of more traffic lights.

CFFC believes that, taken together, these risks are serious enough to warrant a

thoroughgoing professional engineering analysis aimed at giving the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Route 29 Study Group recommendations for a comprehensive set of conservation-friendly improvements.

Accordingly, CFFC has agreed to fund, jointly with the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), a \$25,000 report to the VDOT Study Group that will address the following needs:

- Redesign of access to and across Route 29;
- Reconfiguration of the Route 29-Route 215 intersection;
- Reduction of the number of business curb cuts;
- Improved carrying capacity; and,
- Enhanced safety features.

*Fauquier's arterial highways...define its character; their health and beauty are among the County's most precious assets.*

The decision to fund this study was a natural outgrowth of CFFC's long-held conviction that transportation planning is *de facto* land use planning: Highway routing, access,

capacity and safety are the key determinants of development patterns.

CFFC believes that the future configuration of Route 29 is crucial to the retention of Fauquier's rural character, and that VDOT's Study Group would benefit hugely from enlightened local advice.

CFFC therefore committed itself to the shared funding of the Route 29 study to ensure that nationally recognized experts provide the first-class analysis this section of US 29 deserves.

Everyone who lives along, or is within easy driving distance of, Route 29 has a stake in the debate over its future. That future could easily depend on a competent iteration of what the people who live here want.

CFFC is contributing to the study, along with interested organizations such as the Buckland Preservation Society and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership. It's money well-spent, because as Route 29 goes, so goes Fauquier County. We can't afford to let it go cheap. ■

*Want to help? CFFC needs many small contributions (\$50 or less) to ramp up its share of the study's projected cost. Please use the enclosed envelope or visit [CitizensforFauquier.org](http://CitizensforFauquier.org) to make a contribution. Think of it as money in the bank.*

# The Economics of Aesthetics *by Mary Page*

Here in Fauquier County, we love our views. Be they rolling pastures dotted with livestock, green farm fields bursting with produce, or breathtaking mountain vistas, beauty abounds. Even residents who have moved to Fauquier in recent years will cite the area's rural character and wide open spaces as one of the main reasons they chose to come to this county.

That's all well and good, but can anyone put a real number on the economic value of those landscapes?

As it turns out, you can.

According to national real estate data, homes that are located close to greenways and open space have a significantly higher resale value than those that don't. In fact, houses with access

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heritage. Fauquier is the center of hunt country in the United States, with fox, horse and hound activities serving as a driving force in its economy, contributing to Virginia's \$6 billion equine industry—an industry that is clean, green and requires no contributions from the Commonwealth



the improvement of their homes and properties, creates an environment that fosters community stability and greatly increases citizen safety. The crime rate drops drastically when neighbors know one another.

Another more obvious benefit of retaining open space fresh air and conserving rural lands is the effect it has on the overall quality

Immediately following World War II, many communities sought to attract business, industrial and residential growth in the hope of generate higher revenues for local infrastructure like schools and roads, as well as for fire and police protection.

In the 1980s, however, skeptics began to question whether or not such new development, especially in rural areas, actually paid for itself through increased tax revenues. We know now that housing developments' increased demands for services far outstrips its ability to pay for them. One only has to look at the staggering shortfalls that our congested neighbors to the east in Loudon and Fairfax are facing in their municipal budgets to witness the horrendous fiscal impact that unbridled growth creates.

Keep these facts in mind the next time you gaze out over our serene landscapes. What we have here at home is not only good for our soul, but good for our pocketbooks as well. ■



to trails will sell at a rate no less than 10% higher than their neighbors.

In Fauquier, open space quite often means horses. There is no denying that horses are a part of this County's rich cultural

towards its infrastructure.

Recent scientific studies also demonstrate that people who own rural properties have a tendency to stay in their homes far longer than folks in the suburbs. A long-term commitment to

of a resident's life, including their health. Traffic and congestion are greatly reduced, not to mention the lesser burdens that are placed on the municipality to provide fire, rescue and quality public schools.

Housing developments' increased demands for services far outstrips their ability to pay for them.

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## How Preservation Puts Money in Your Pocket

*CASH COW from Pg 1*

get rid of a lot of their merchandise by having sales at the end of the year, the dairy farmers were stuck with their stock in trade when the annual inventory for tax purposes had to be made.

The County very soon stopped taxing cows.

We also found that, unlike most counties in Virginia, Fauquier had several hundred farms on which there were large expensive houses, stables, barns, tenant houses and no children in the public schools. In other words, they produced high real estate taxes with almost no expenses to the County.

They and all the other farms collectively formed Fauquier's "cash cow," producing dependable income

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year in and year out. Four or five of these farms ranked among the first 20 of the highest-rated taxpayers. Paul Mellon's Rokeby was #1 in the County.

The facts that were brought to light as a result of this study may have already been understood in other jurisdictions, but they had not yet filtered through to Fauquier County. As a result, developers here were able to claim with impunity that their projects would be of financial benefit to the County's taxpayers. It took a lot of courage on the part of the Board of Supervisors to begin saying "No" to such false assertions.

Today, \$400 is no longer the amount that a house and land would need to generate in taxes to be called "revenue positive" (generating more tax revenue than it costs the County to support it with infrastructure and services.)

Now, it is well over \$5,000!

Today, many of Fauquier's "cash cows" have been placed under perpetual easements. Owners of the land may change, but because the land will never be developed, it will continue to generate a lot more income than expense for the benefit of all the citizens of Fauquier County. ■

