8. **Mixture of Uses**

It is common practice in Albemarle County and throughout the nation to separate uses from one another. Incompatibilities between uses was the primary reason why zoning regulations were initially conceived. In its extreme, however, walking or bicycling to work has now become almost impossible; and, people are realizing that different uses are not inherently incompatible with one another. It is the way in which uses are conducted that creates impacts and many of these impacts can be mitigated to allow for mixed commercial, residential, and even light industrial uses in close proximity. Images in Figures 6:68 and 6:69 show how mixed-use developments can thrive.

The following approaches should be considered to allow for mixed uses in Albemarle County:

1. **Modify the Zoning Ordinance to allow for and encourage mixed uses in residential and commercial areas.**

   At present, the ability to have a true mixture of uses is limited to a few “planned” districts in the County. The percentages of commercial use in a planned residential district and residential use in a planned commercial district are low. A modified zoning ordinance should allow for greater mixture of uses.

2. **Develop performance standards so that light, noise, odors, and traffic from commercial and industrial uses can be mitigated for the residents nearby.**

   The Zoning Ordinance requires landscaping and buffers to be placed between parking areas and residential uses. These standards should be reconsidered in light of the neighborhood model. Impacts of traffic and noise from trucks should also be considered when dealing with mixed uses.
3. **Allow for Higher Floor Area Ratios (FARs)**

Commercial density is measured as the total gross floor area of a structure (area per floor times the number of floors) divided by the total area of a site. This number is called the Floor Area Ratio, or FAR. Increasing the FAR for a development allows for more building area on a lot. Figure 4:55 shows three different FARs and the location for parking in relation to those buildings.

The biggest detriment to achieving higher FARs is the size of the parking lot required to serve the intended activities. Thus, while commercial densities are specified in the Zoning Ordinance, they are determined just as much by land values and the expectations of the commercial real estate industry. Allowing for higher FARs will require changes to the parking standards and regulations in the County.

Figure 6:72 and 6:73 show a relatively low FAR.

Figure 6:74 and 6:75 show a medium FAR.

Figure 6:76 and 6:77 show a relatively high FAR.