ATWOOD ARCHITECTS INC.

March 6, 2008

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale
Community Development
401 McIntire Road
North Wing
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: Crozet Zoning Amendments

Dear Ms. Ragsdale:

I am writing to express my concern over the wording for parking setbacks in the proposed Downtown Crozet zoning. I expressed these concerns at a recent Planning Commission meeting, but I wanted to make sure that you also had a written version of my comments and that these comments are forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their upcoming discussion on March 17th, 2008. The proposed language for parking setbacks is as follows:

Parking Setbacks: Parking must be located behind rear façade of buildings

The language of the proposed ordinance is problematic for several reasons. First, there is an issue of semantics. Buildings generally do not have a rear façade. Façade is a term that is usually reserved to describe the front of a building or a public face of a building. The usage above is awkward. Below is the primary definition of façade from dictionary.com

fa·cade –noun
1. Architecture.
    a.   the front of a building, esp. an imposing or decorative one.

    b.   any side of a building facing a public way or space and finished accordingly.

The proposed amendment does not really speak to the issue.

- For example, parking could be located behind a building but still be very visible from the street. On the other hand, the code does not allow for parking to be located under or within a building in which case it might be completely invisible from the public realm. Given the topography on some of the downtown Crozet sites, it could be quite beneficial to tuck parking under buildings.

- Many people prefer covered parking and this strategy can also provide roof surface to effectively harvest rainwater onsite. This code seems to imply that one would not be allowed to extend a building/roofing cover parking because it *must* be located behind the rear façade of a building.
- This code also assumes that there is only one building or layer of buildings on site. It seems to not allow parking in between two layers of buildings. I can imagine that this code would immediately require much interpretation from the Zoning Administrator.

The language of the proposed ordinance should be updated to more closely mirror the intent of the code. As I understand it, the primary goal is to avoid having parking lots in front of buildings. Instead, the parking would be relegated behind buildings. The City of Charlottesville uses the following language in their Zoning Ordinance to tackle this concern:

Parking shall be located in side or rear yards, except that: (i) parking shall not be located within any yard that faces a public street

In general, the current wording of the proposed ordinance is awkward and vague. This language could be extremely limiting to many of the creative design solutions for providing parking in Downtown Crozet. It seems like a much better approach to instead prohibit what is not wanted as shown in the example above, instead of only allowing one potential answer to the requirement.

Thank you for your consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Ashley Cooper, AICP
Atwood Architects