

# The Language of Progress

by Bob Katrin

Thomas D' Alesandro's impressive article about Chatham Park is just that and it's meant to be. It tolls all the bells and blows all the whistles of contemporary real estate developer speak promising a glorious outcome for the taking of land that was doing nothing, just minding its own business. Land, especially land within the profit to be made purview of builders and developers, is not supposed to just sit there and be itself and as long as government doesn't step in to stop it, this is not an age of regulation, the tide has turned against it, although it's needed as much as ever, even more so, now that development is becoming profitable again. Imagine the billions to be made by everyone involved in building five villages and 20,000 homes over 30 or 40 years. Generations of builders, developers, and a lot of low-wage workers stand to make inequitable livings for a long time. This is a Golden Goose if there ever was one, however, more golden for some and more getting goosed, shall we say, for others.

Since 2008 when the finance industry brought down the economy there's certainly been less development because there was no need for it, there was less growth, more business's were failing, as well as scads of homeowners under water. But folks like Mr. D' Alesandro don't want to talk about that, people like him are movers and shakers they have the pulse of the times and they're always waiting in the wings to pounce when they see their chance.

Oh yes this sounds wonderful except of the size of the monster, the tremendous increase in population when all this is done and he touts the increasing growth of the Triangle as if that was a good thing. Raleigh was once a quaint and manageable city but no more. Has Mr. D'Alesandro driven the beltline? What a nightmare that is. So I can't imagine the infrastructure problems related to Chatham Park, the effects will last for a long time and the result will be choked highways while the developers play catch up with the reality of the monster they're creating. The Triangle desperately needs inter-city rail but that still hasn't happened.

So right now everything looks good on paper and in brochures written by slick advertising and marketing specialists making it look just dandy. "Sustainable" is the biggest attracting buzzword these days but to jump much farther in time than Mr. D' Alesandro wants to, or can, the biggest lie to sustainability, for example, is something like all those granite countertops; what do you do with them when they need to be upgraded, it's happening already, what do you do with all that junk granite? Take it to the landfill, and what do you want for a countertop now, I can't imagine, but you can be sure something else will be the rage, maybe Formica, that's still in my kitchen, I wouldn't have it any other way, will make a comeback. You see where I'm going. The main thing that's not sustainable in this fantasy is Capitalism, the engine that creates all this mess, then tears it down, doesn't harvest raw materials, just cuts down a million more trees and mines millions of more tons of gypsum for drywall while it's throwing everything it tears down away.

So I don't buy D'Alesandro's blarney, the rosy, modern, hi-tech picture he paints of a real estate future, for him and his cohort's maybe, but

not for the 60,000 new people, I think that was an estimate, jammed into these “sustainable” paradises.

*Bob Katrin is a writer living in Southern Pines (another growing out of it's britches community).*