



ONLY ONLINE

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Signs of these times

A drive through no-growth North Chatham

By Bill Sommers

I live in Ferrington Village and frequently drive north on 15-501. This small corridor up to the dusty skeleton of County Line Plaza shows the high and lows of Chatham's recent wave of frenzied development. Let's take a trip up 15-501 to see what's happening – and what's not.

Coming out on Village Way we see a large sign, directly across, noting that the 40-acre **FEARRINGTON PLACE** is offering "outparcels" for its small-scale shopping center. Sewerage is offered, surprisingly, in an area where no sewer lines exist.

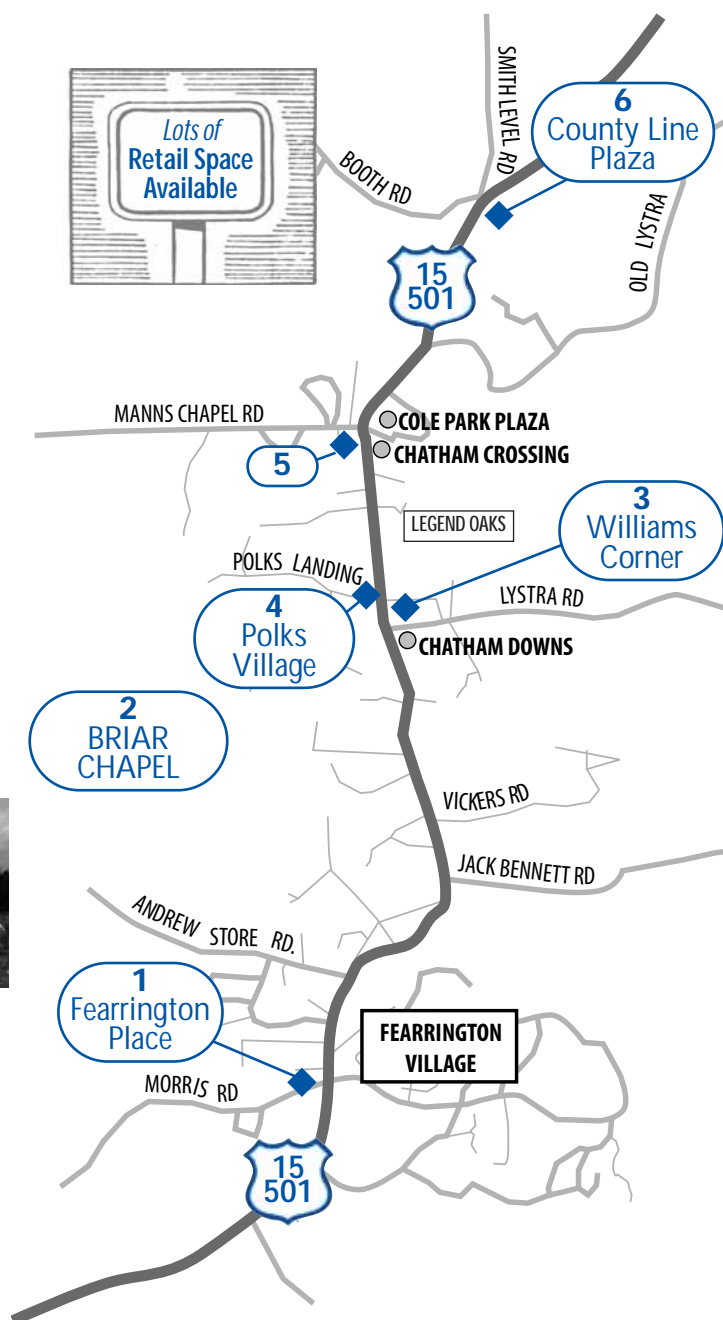


1 The Board of Commissioners approved **FEARRINGTON PLACE** on July 17, 2006 over objections of its planning staff. The OK may have been prompted by an Economic Impact Study, promising a 81,000-square-foot grocery store to anchor a bank, a drug store, a high-end restaurant, fast-food convenience store: a \$24.2 million estimated investment!

Yet no signs of any constructive construction to date. What we see is a tree shorn-leveled land with a couple of dirt piles, which look like they might contain T-Rex bones.



2 Approaching the Andrews Store Road area: the country façade for **BRIAR CHAPEL DEVELOPMENT**, fronting a substantial space on both sides of the highway. Here are three large signs advertising the sale of commercial land and, after passing the sale



signs at **FEARRINGTON PLACE**, we begin to wonder.

Briar Chapel has over 60 acres of commercially zoned land on both sides of 15-501. Briar Chapel had planned three separate commercial and office units of vast possibilities. Now these potential commercial centers are overgrown in weeds, trees and wild grass and are beginning to cover the signs.

On the north corner of the Lystra Road intersection, we can see, if a bit askew, the placard announcement of **WILLIAMS CORNER**: Opening 2009, an un-built planned unit development by North Chatham Investments, approved by the County Commissioners on January 17, 2006.

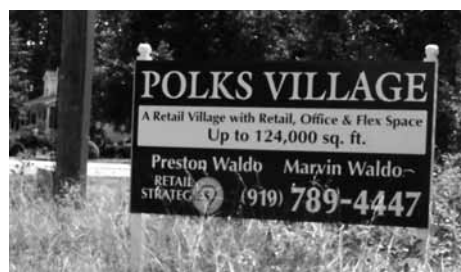
3 Using the joint driveway to **LEGEND OAKS**, the **WILLIAMS CORNER** project area is surrounded by a locked, gated fence, which, between the slots, gives no evidence of any significant building. A construction

permit was issued for a waste water treatment plant but no action yet. Right now **THE CORNER** consists of the fence, the signs, a building permit receptacle box on and a rather murky "Lake Williams" with a subsidiary swamp wrapped by a rough bituminous road.



The residential community of Legend Oaks next door is an established development with a very hilly and winding terrain, approved for some 58 lots. Another 56 on 100 acres is now under consideration by the Planning Board and the Board of Commissioners. Chatham Water Department records show that of the 58 lots already approved for construction, only 17 are registered as water users.

4 Continuing north, a look across the highway reveals another languid development effort, **POLKS VILLAGE** at the intersection of 15-501 South and Polks Landing Road.



This proposed 40-acre development includes retail, offices, restaurants, furniture, pet shop, art house theatre, gallery and a Fifth Avenue bevy of other commercial features. Wow! The Board of

15-501 NORTH continued on page 12.

Make health insurers do the right thing

By Julian Sereno

A friend and fellow small business owner has just hired a lawyer to sue her health insurance company. She said they invented a pre-existing condition so they could avoid paying for doctor bills resulting from a recent auto accident. They want to refund the premiums and leave her holding the bill.

OPINION

I expect that she will prevail in making the insurance company pay up, and if she is lucky, she will get the insurance company to cover her legal bills too. Which means that at best, she will have broken even financially.

For the insurance company, the worst thing that could happen is that they will have to do what they promised to do in the first place. They may pay a little extra, but they will face no fine. If health insurance companies choose not to, there is no way to make them do the right thing other than by suing them. If you go through the company's in house appeals process, they will stretch it out, string you along and then hang you out to dry.

What it means is that small businesses are in the most difficult position in today's health care system. Health insurance is expensive, hard to get and companies will drop you in a heartbeat. Nobody has your back.

Health insurance companies' primary mission is not to help heal the sick but to make money for shareholders and pay huge salaries and bonuses to executives. They accomplish this by trying to maximize revenue inflow and minimize outflow. Take in as many premiums and pay out as few claims as you can. They make more money by letting the sick die.

INSURERS continued on page 9.

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