

## **Don't close county off to new ideas - The Daily Progress: Letters To The Editor**

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The Southwest U.S. may be, as the film title claims, “No Country for Old Men,” but Albemarle just might be the county for some old men.

In this case, “old men” has nothing to do with age, but with old ideas and limited vision. A stultified embrace of no change, no growth, and no newcomers to Albemarle County, lest there be some challenge to the comfort of the old established order, characterizes those who fear population growth.

The youthful embrace of challenges requiring new and innovative solutions to the unexpected is rejected in favor of the status quo. The present is seen as the “best of all worlds” and change is to be feared.

Such thinking and advocacy reflect a pessimistic view of the world, and contradict the philosophy and actions of our Founding Fathers. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison all had an optimistic view of the future, and risked their lives and personal fortunes to make that vision a reality. They set the pattern for the growth of our nation in facing unknown adversity in the confident quest for a better life for those who would follow.

Somewhere along this timeline, those who themselves benefitted from the vision of their predecessors and staked claim to their bit of paradise have decided that the county has become too good to share with others. Newcomers are pictured as expensive threats to their personal comfort and a burden on the environment. When these population pessimists themselves first arrived here in Albemarle County, were they told they would make the population “unsustainable”? Now they are the ones advocating raising the drawbridge at the county line to keep others out of their private paradise.

Quite a different viewpoint of population growth was expressed by the economist Julian Simon in his 1981 book “The Ultimate Resource.” What is that resource? He expressed it as human imagination coupled to the human spirit. Population growth was welcomed, as it would bring new people with new ideas and new solutions.

Albemarle County Board of Supervisor meetings often resound with such terms as “vitality” and “vibrant” as county goals. “Out with the old, and in with the new” would hasten that process.

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Albemarle County