

The Florida of Tomorrow  
2009

Citizens Control Growth

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Circulated by Joyce Tarnow #4 for Florida

No pipe dream any longer. Citizens will be able to control growth in their communities if we can reach enough voters to tell them about their opportunity to pass Florida Hometown Democracy's Amendment 4 in November 2010. Without having the big-time funds needed for mass-media advertising, we're counting on you folks in Sierra, civic associations, Audubon groups, garden clubs, and hunting and fishing clubs, among other supporting organizations. We might even be able to garner support from large ranch owners, since so many of them have already indicated their values by selling conservation rights on thousands of acres. (See the fall issue of Nature Conservancy magazine for a marvelous spread on Florida's cowboys and ranchers.)

Maybe you didn't hear about Hometown Democracy six years ago when the effort first kicked off. That was the spring of 2003. Since then a lot of dedicated people have worked very hard to gather over a million signatures of Florida-registered voters to put Amendment 4 on next year's ballot. Nearly \$2 million dollars was raised to get the campaign this far, including a significant contribution from Florida Sierra – the statewide organizations and regional Groups.

Now, we need YOUR help and YOUR dollars, to beat back the well-heeled Growth Machine and make sure 60% of voters say "Yes" in 2010. The folks who overbuilt our state, with the help of elected officials at local and state levels, also crashed our economy. Having them continue in control of land-use changes will only insure the further destruction of our resources, water being the most critical.

Recent news stories around the state tell of two women in Marion County who pulled off a big win at the Florida Cabinet meeting on September 15<sup>th</sup>. They'd fought for two-and-a-half years to stop a project to build 780 homes in horse country, far from utilities and roads to service those homes. The county approved the project, and then the Florida Department of Community Affairs (which administers the Growth Management Act) also approved.

The women took issue with the DCA, showing that the county had not, as is required, demonstrated a NEED for more housing units. Subsequently, the DCA, headed by Tom Pelham, reversed the approval. "Need" is a part of the analysis required for amending a comprehensive land-use plan that is supposed to guide growth in every one of Florida's 67 counties and hundreds of cities and towns. With over 400,000 vacant homes around the State, and more foreclosures on the horizon, there is obviously no "need" for more units.

The developer of the project then appealed the DCA's about-face to the Florida Cabinet and, fortunately for the whole State, the developer's appeal was turned down. Had the Cabinet sided with the developer and not upheld the DCA on the "need" issue, mega projects all over Florida would be able to gain approval in spite of the housing glut that's forcing down the value of all homes. Hundreds of thousands of new homes, creating new cities on cheap(er) rural land, could be approved by local governments, and current residents would be taxed to pay for roads, sewers, water, schools, and other infrastructure and services out into the hinterlands.

Fearing the passage of the Hometown Democracy amendment, the DCA has been swamped with developers trying to get huge projects approved, projects requiring land-use changes, before the voters decide on Amendment 4 in November 2010. Why not call a halt to these proposals for now?

Ken Nadeau, city commissioner in Belleview, Florida, wrote a guest column about the benefits for everyone of a moratorium on new land-use changes. We should all urge our local governments to consider his reasoning (See Ocala Star-Banner, August 16, 2009, below or at <http://www.ocala.com/article/20090816/OPINION02/908161005>)

The New York Times last December wrote about corruption in state governments, and Florida ranks #1. This says a lot about how uncontrolled growth has rampantly proceeded for decades.

NOW is the time for you to volunteer your efforts to take back Florida for its residents, the people who've been paying the bill in so many ways for overdevelopment and developers' profits. For suggestions on how you and your friends and family can help, contact Joyce Tarnow at [tarnowj@bellsouth.net](mailto:tarnowj@bellsouth.net). Send contributions to FHD, P.O. Box 636, New Smyrna Beach 32170. [www.FloridaHometownDemocracy.com](http://www.FloridaHometownDemocracy.com).

Make sure you do not have to keep forking over your ever-increasing tax dollars to fund the infrastructure of new developments that don't pay their way and that make your community less livable.



## **A moratorium on new land development could, would have multiple benefits**

*Special to the Star-Banner, by Ken Nadeau*

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<http://www.ocala.com/article/20090816/OPINION02/908161005>

Our local economy is in a real state of distress - unemployment, foreclosures, slumping sales, and the list goes on and on. And although one idea can't make a sweeping change to help us all, here's one idea that might help Marion County in the long run.

What if the County Commission (and our three major city governing boards) placed a 10- or 20-year moratorium on all new residential developments? I'm not suggesting stopping homebuilding, but stopping the conversion of existing undeveloped land to residential purposes. What would happen?

We would essentially be placing a temporary population cap on Marion County. The message would become something like, "We only have room for the first half-million people, and after that, you'll be on a waiting list."

Granted, this only begins to happen once the majority of the platted and unbuilt lots are built out, but it's a message that no other county has ever had. And it might help push property values up, too.

Homebuilders would have to build on all existing platted lots, and by golly, there are thousands,

indeed tens of thousands, of lots in inventory right now. And not just in the back ends of Silver Springs Shores and Marion Oaks. There are plenty of good lots in good locations left, even in high-end communities.

The homes built in those areas (presumably) have the infrastructure in place to support development, such as utilities and roads. After all, when their development was rubber-stamped by the city or county, the developer had to show that infrastructure was in place. So even though the roads may get more congested, the need to expand with miles and miles of new roads to new, undeveloped areas is reduced.

The development limitations also slow the stress on our water supply. With this "cap" on residential development, it may help us with projecting water needs. And just think, if the other counties in our water management districts followed suit, we would substantially extend the existing life of the water we take from our aquifer.

The eventual shortage in residential development, again assuming that the population starts to grow again, becomes a factor in driving residential values up. That becomes a win for the homeowner who lost equity in the last bubble, and it keeps inching up the tax-assessed values.

Property that now is greenspace remains greenspace during the moratorium. Horse farms would remain horse farms. Farms would remain farms. We may be able to return to the title "Horse Capital" instead of "House Capital" once again.

School planning improves, and instead of building new schools next to new developments, they could expand existing schools near the growth areas at a lower cost.

This proposal would not cap commercial development. We need an employment base. Perhaps this will stimulate the growth of industry near the existing population centers.

Who loses in this deal? A couple of county planners, a couple of land-planning engineers and land developers who own land but did not complete the platting and development process at the time the moratorium took effect.

Is this reasonable? If it is a viable option, then it's time to start this conversation in our community, hopefully reaching the ears of the elected leaders.

*Ken Nadeau is a member of the Belleview City Commission.*