

Floridians for Smarter Growth Frequently Asked Questions...

From Floridians for Smarter Growth Website

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(<http://www.floridahometowndemocracy.com>)

Q: I want to see Florida's growth more carefully planned - will the "Hometown Democracy" amendment make things better?

A: No, the Vote on Everything amendment will simply make matters far worse, not better. That's why respected environmental leaders refuse to support the amendment. They know this amendment will not put a stop to all development, but will make well-planned, smarter growth impossible - thereby encouraging sprawl that reduces green space and makes effective growth management unachievable.

Q: But the lawyers at Florida Hometown Democracy say this amendment gives decision-making power to ordinary citizens - is that true?

A: No, they are trying to mislead you. Right now local neighbors and neighborhood associations have significant leverage in the development approval process - which involves multiple meetings and public hearings and often negotiations between developers and neighbors. But if the Vote on Everything amendment passes, voters who live in other parts of the city or county will have just as much of a say, even though they are unfamiliar with the project or the neighborhood. The voices of those most directly affected would ultimately be diluted in a citywide or countywide political campaign.

Q: Is it realistic to expect voters to approve every change to hundreds of comprehensive land use plans?

A: With hundreds of ballot questions every year, the Vote on Everything amendment is unworkable, unrealistic and ridiculous. Statewide over the last four years, an average of 10,599 local referenda per year. During the same period in Broward County, every voter would have had to decide an average of 686 amendments per year. And you can't get away from it in a smaller town. Last year, people in Carrabelle (Franklin County) would have voted on 840 amendments. It would not be unusual for local voters across Florida to be expected to vote on 200 to 300 comprehensive plan amendments per year.

Q: What are the costs associated with this amendment?

A: The Vote on Everything amendment will raise taxes, increase spending and waste tax dollars. Local governments - city and county - will be required by this new law to hold expensive referenda on hundreds of amendments every year. Voters will be asked to vote not only on big development projects but also on any and all minor or technical changes to their City/County's existing Comprehensive Land Use Plan. In the last four years alone, this would have meant over 10,000 extra and costly elections across Florida - and

more elections require more tax dollars to pay for them. Also, if the extreme special interests sponsoring the amendment are successful stopping development, the supply of real estate will be reduced and home prices will increase - that means higher assessments and higher property taxes.

Q: Is anything being done already to assure smarter growth in Florida?

A: Yes, many communities have undertaken local or regional visioning efforts. These efforts are designed to engage citizens directly in planning the future of their communities. While these projects vary across Florida, they generally seek the input of all citizens through thoughtful discussion and dialogue. However, Amendment 4 is a one-size-fits-all proposal that will sideline ordinary citizens. Under this Vote on Everything amendment, special interest groups on both sides of the development debate will gain influence while communities with the most at stake will find their voice drowned out in countywide media campaigns. Rather than encouraging compromise solutions, Amendment 4 promotes conflict that results in uncoordinated, piecemeal planning and more sprawl.