

HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY

MAKING SENSE OF IT



Presentation to:
Heartland Association of Realtors®, Inc.
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HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY 101

- ❖ How did it come about?
- ❖ What is Comprehensive Planning?
- ❖ Pros & Cons of Hometown Democracy
- ❖ Case Study: St. Pete Beach
- ❖ What do you need to know & do?



ORIGINS OF HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY

- ❖ Response to Growth Management legislation
- ❖ Stop the “bullying” of government officials
- ❖ Put decisions before the voting public



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

- ❖ Long-range plan for a community to guide and control future growth and promote and preserve quality of life
- ❖ Broad-based with long-term vision
- ❖ Includes goals, policies and objectives regarding transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing
- ❖ Does not include specific design standards such as landscaping requirements, setbacks, square footage, etc...
- ❖ Future Land Use Map is a key element of the Plan which dictates locations for future development



WHY WOULD IT BE AMENDED?

- ❖ Amendments to the Future Land Use Map allow property owners to change the use of their land
- ❖ Text Amendments allow for the addition of new goals, objectives, and policies pertaining to a specific area or community or changes to the existing language
- ❖ Text and Future Land Use Map Amendments allow for the creation of new Future Land Use Categories or Overlays



WHO CAN AMEND IT?

- ❖ Text Amendments can be initiated by property owners, citizens or government agencies
- ❖ Future Land Use Map Amendments can be initiated by property owners or government agencies



WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

- #1 Prepare a Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application
- #2 Submit to the Local Government with Application Fee
- #3 Local Government Review
- #4 Planning and Zoning Commission Transmittal Hearing
- #5 Board of County Commissioners Hearing Transmittal Hearing
- #6 Review by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and other agencies
- #7 Objections, Recommendations and Comments (ORC) Report





WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

(cont.)

#8 Prepare Responses to the ORC

#9 Local Government Review

#10 Board of County Commissioners Adoption Hearing

#11 Transmittal of Adopted Amendment to DCA

#12 DCA Issues Notice of Intent (NOI)

#13 “In Compliance” – 21 Day Appeal Period

#14 “Not In Compliance” – Further Negotiation or Hearing before the Division of Administrative Hearing (DOAH)





WHERE WOULD HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY FIT IN?

- ❖ Hometown Democracy would require every Comprehensive Plan Amendment, in every county and municipality throughout the State of Florida to go before the voters following approval by the Board of County Commissioners or by a City Council
- ❖ Highlands County has 48 Amendments submitted since January 2008
- ❖ Following economic recovery in Florida, local governments can anticipate an average of 200-300 amendments to be submitted each year
- ❖ Additional voting responsibilities for the general public
- ❖ How will you inform yourself adequately on all the amendments on your ballot?



PROPONENTS CASE

- ❖ Will eliminate “corruption” in approvals
- ❖ Will lead to better land use decisions
- ❖ Will protect property values & neighborhoods
- ❖ Will protect natural areas & scenic beauty
- ❖ Will not impact provision of essential services
- ❖ Will eliminate sprawl



WHO SUPPORTS IT?

- ❖ People who don't want any more growth
- ❖ Some don't understand all the facts, but support a change in the process

Florida Hometown Democracy

www.floridahometowndemocracy.com





OPPONENTS CASE

- ❖ Puts development in areas without public services
- ❖ Will reduce jobs and economic growth
- ❖ Will result in planning done in a vacuum
- ❖ Will discourage meaningful public participation
- ❖ Will lead to more lobbying by special interest groups



WHO OPPOSES IT?

- ❖ American Planning Association - Florida
 - ❖ Will increase public relations campaigns and reduce elected officials' accountability

- ❖ 1000 Friends of Florida
 - ❖ Will result in piecemeal planning
 - ❖ Agree current legislation is not effective, but think Hometown Democracy is too extreme



WHO OPPOSES IT?

- ❖ Florida Chamber
 - ❖ Will reduce jobs and stop economic growth

- ❖ Florida Health Care Association
 - ❖ Will require a costly media/political campaign to get funding for the expansion of much needed facilities



WHO OPPOSES IT?

- ❖ Tom Pelham, AICP, DCA Secretary
 - ❖ Says it is extreme – prefers amendments to the legislations and/or a Citizen’s Bill of Rights
- ❖ Approximately 130 businesses and organizations have joined *Floridians for Smarter Growth* (www.Florida2010.org)



WHAT IS THE STATUS?

- ❖ Need 676,811 verified petitions to get it on the 2010 election ballot as a referendum
- ❖ Must be validated by January 31, 2010
- ❖ In June 2009, it was determined that the initiative had enough valid signatures and **will be on the 2010 ballot**



BALLOT LANGUAGE

“REFERENDA REQUIRED FOR
ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLANS”



WHAT IF IT GETS APPROVED?

- ❖ Initiative needs 60% of eligible voter approval
- ❖ If approved, Florida Legislature could repeal the Growth Management Act which would negate Hometown Democracy
- ❖ Legislature would create new development regulations



CASE STUDY: ST. PETE BEACH

- ❖ Group called “Citizens for Responsible Growth” organized in 2005 to rescind changes to the Comprehensive Plan which allowed for increased density/intensity
- ❖ Referendum passed in 2006 by small majority that requires voter approval for:
 - 1) Any change to the Comprehensive Plan involving more than 5 acres
 - 2) Any land development proposal for increased height
 - 3) Any proposal for a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)



CASE STUDY: ST. PETE BEACH

- ❖ Another activist group emerged – Save Our Little Village (SOLV)
- ❖ Effectively organized local government and passed new referendum in 2008
- ❖ Allowed for increased density and height, similar to the original amendment rescinded in 2006
- ❖ Did not repeal the requirement for voter approval



CASE STUDY: ST. PETE BEACH

- ❖ Resulted in three (3) pending lawsuits
- ❖ Cost the City almost \$500,000 in additional legal fees since 2005
- ❖ One lawsuit has placed a temporary hold on the issuance of building permits



CASE STUDY: ST. PETE BEACH

- ❖ No opportunity for economic development
- ❖ Huge cost to tax payers
- ❖ Increased frustration between community groups and the government

YES
 NO

IF NOT HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY, THEN WHAT?

- ❖ Get more involved in public participation process
- ❖ Request community workshops on planning



WHY ARE WE HERE?

- ❖ To suggest that you do your homework
- ❖ To encourage you to vote
- ❖ To ask you to make informed decisions

YES
 NO

Thank you!

Allison Megrath, AICP

Alexis Crespo, AICP, LEED AP

