

Community Stewardship I:

A Citizen's Guide to Participating in Florida's Growth Management Process



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This project was funded in part by:
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Firman Family Fund
Henry Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation



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About 1000 Friends of Florida

Founded in 1986, 1000 Friends of Florida is a statewide nonprofit growth management advocacy organization. We promote ways to save special places, fight sprawl, and build better communities across Florida. For more information on 1000 Friends, including how to join, visit www.1000friendsofflorida.org.

Introduction

Florida welcomes more than 800 men, women, and children every day. That's a population increase of almost 300,000 a year—the equivalent of a large city. Citizens across the state express a rising concern about the unrelenting development associated with this runaway population growth, as they face clogged roads, crowded schools, strip development, and impacts on our air, water, and natural and historic areas. It becomes harder and harder to preserve the quality of life that is Florida's great attraction. If there ever was a time for Florida communities to grow in a smart and sustainable manner, it is now.

An important tool for smart growth is Florida's Growth Management Act, which for two decades has provided every community with an effective framework for planning. To help explain the basic provisions of the state's growth management process, we have prepared two handbooks. This first volume opens with a brief overview of the process, and then focuses on how citizens can become effective advocates for better planning in their communities. For example, this handbook includes tips on making a persuasive case before local planning boards and city and county commissions, gathering community and political support, working effectively with the media, and other useful information.

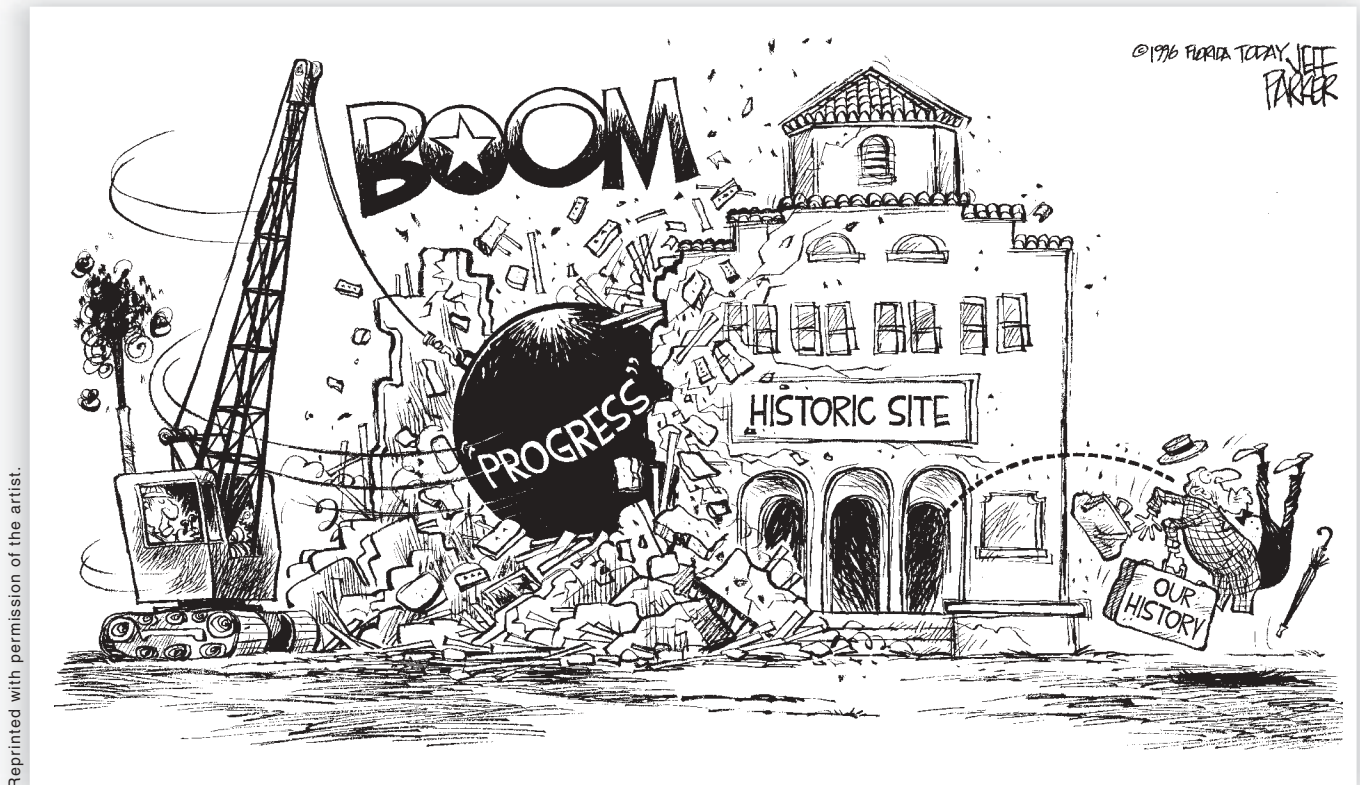
A companion handbook, *Community Stewardship II: A Citizen's Guide to the Nuts and Bolts of Florida's Growth Management Process*, is intended for individuals and groups who want to understand the process much more fully. *Community Stewardship II* offers an in-depth, more detailed description of the process, with suggestions on how citizens may participate in the shaping of local comprehensive plans, land development regulations, and development orders.

We hope you find one or both of these handbooks helpful as you strive to bring about positive change in your community.

A Community Crisis

Historic preservationists in Tallahassee were alarmed when a proposal surfaced in the mid 1980s to relocate one of the few remaining antebellum buildings out of the downtown Park Avenue National Register Historic District. They claimed that such a relocation would harm the integrity of the historic district and, worse, set a bad precedent. What's more, no guidelines were in place to ensure compatible future development on the property.

After numerous emergency meetings, phone calls, and presentations before elected officials and staff, the city commission agreed to stop the relocation. But the commissioners warned the preservation community that, to prevent future crises like this, it needed to develop a comprehensive approach to historic preservation downtown.



Tallahassee's historic preservation board responded by establishing a task force to work on an ordinance to protect historic downtown properties and provide guidance on new development. City and county officials, preservationists, and property owners joined the task force. They held a series of public meetings to obtain input before drafting their recommendations.

At the same time, Tallahassee was developing its local comprehensive plan and had also hired a consultant to develop a downtown plan. Preservationists participated in all the public meetings to advocate for preservation provisions in the downtown plan. They also began preparing a preservation element for the city/county comprehensive plan that stressed the importance of protecting the downtown's historic resources.

Unfortunately, the owners of three historic properties in the Park Avenue Historic District (including the owner that had proposed relocating the antebellum building) adamantly opposed these regulatory efforts. While previous historic preservation ordinances in Tallahassee had been voluntary, the new measures would be based on the historic character of the properties, not owner consent. They argued these new measures violated their property rights.

The city commission was sharply divided on the issue, with two strong supporters of preservation, two strong opponents, and one swing vote. The issue quickly turned into a public relations campaign.

As was their right, the dissatisfied owners worked hard to halt the adoption of the ordinance, element, and downtown plan preservation provisions. They convinced other property owners to join them in vocally opposing the pres-

ervation measures, obtained coverage for their concerns in the local paper, and lobbied elected officials heavily.

The preservationists also rallied and established a network of grassroots supporters. They made presentations to the appropriate boards and commissions. They obtained letters of support from a number of historic neighborhood associations, civic groups, community leaders, and downtown property owners who supported preservation. They called and met with elected officials (particularly the swing vote on the city commission) and wrote letters to the editors. They met with the editorial board of the local paper, securing highly visible editorials supporting historic preservation. Also, at the commissioners' request, preservationists helped to develop recommendations for a city-funded grant and low-interest loan program for owners of historic properties covered by the ordinance.

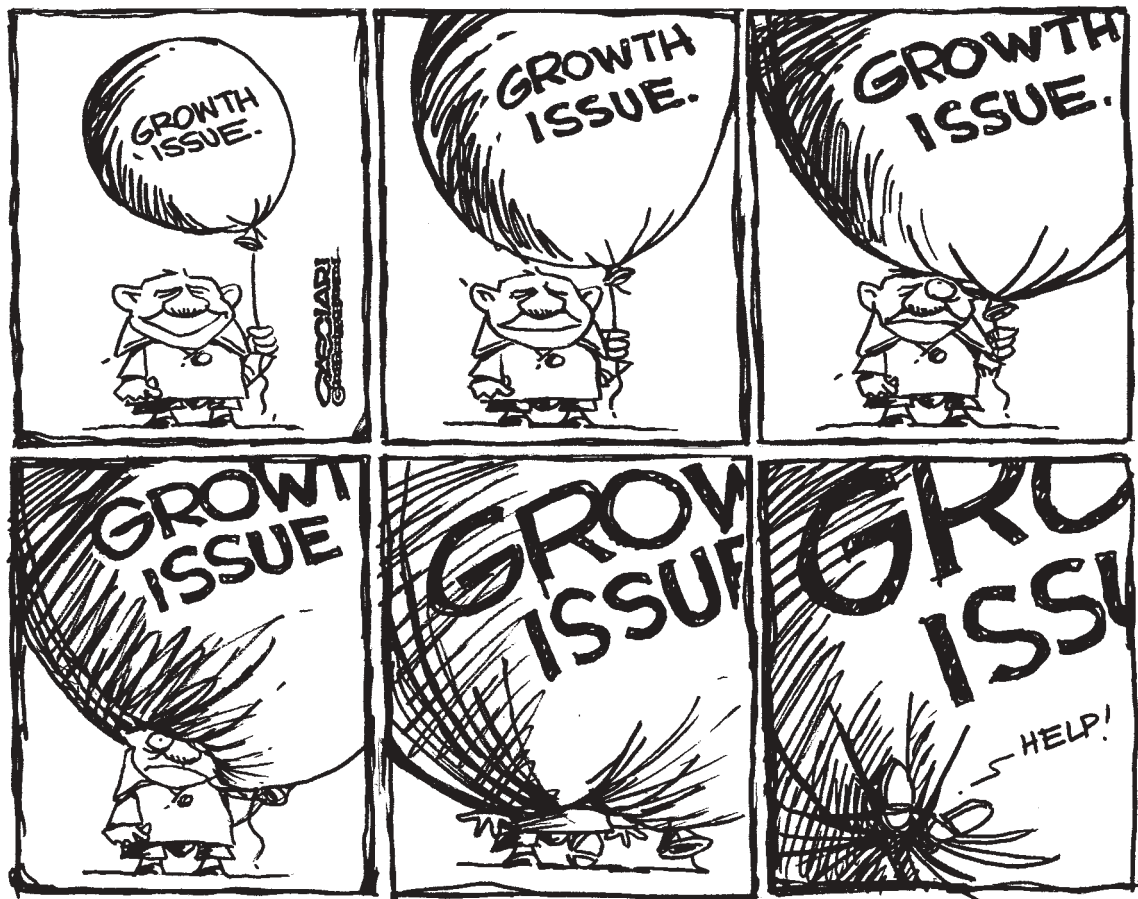
The debate, long and often divisive, finally found resolution. The city commission passed the task force's proposed historic preservation ordinance for downtown, included compatible preservation provisions in the downtown plan, and enacted the historic preservation grant and loan program. The city and county also adopted the historic preservation element for the local comprehensive plan.

Along the way, the preservationists learned a number of key lessons: 1) Develop a consistent message—in this case about the community-wide benefits of preserving downtown's historic resources; 2) Go the extra mile to keep grassroots supporters informed, involved, and engaged; 3) Remain responsive to the concerns and wishes of the elected officials who are doing their best to propose "win-win" scenarios and viable compromises; and 4) Direct your message where it will do the most good—in this case focusing on those who were undecided instead of trying to convince the opposition.

Getting Started

You are outraged at hearing that a new development is proposed for the woodlands behind your neighborhood. How could someone even think of developing such a beautiful and environmentally sensitive area? How could your elected officials allow such a thing to happen? Surely your community doesn't permit this type of development! What can you do to stop it?

These are often typical reactions when change is proposed, especially for an area close to your home or your heart. This chapter outlines some of the first steps in challenging unwanted new development.



Do Your Homework

Before rallying the neighbors and calling the press, do your homework. Find out what, exactly, is planned. Contact your local planning department to learn more about the details of the project and determine where it is in the planning process.

Find out whether the project is allowed under existing regulations or requires amendments to the local comprehensive plan, zoning changes, variances, or special permits. If it is currently allowed, mounting an effective challenge will be virtually impossible.

Get copies of any official submittals on the project. These could include the developer's plans, requests for zoning changes or comprehensive plan amendments, planning staff evaluations, agenda items for the city or county commission, traffic, environmental, or other studies, or other materials. You might find some of these on line, while others might require a trip to the planning department (expect to pay for the cost of copying). Review these documents carefully.

Meet with Planning Staff

If you still have concerns after reviewing the documents, meet with the appropriate planning staff to discuss the project. You can ask them to help explain technical data in the submittals, describe the review and approval process that the proposal will undergo, and identify any concerns that the planning department might have about the project. Get copies of pertinent documents they may have, and offer to reciprocate as you learn more from other sources.

Dealing With Governmental Agencies

Start your contacts as high on the agency's organizational chart as you can comfortably reach. The level of assistance you get is often much greater if you're passed down from the top than if you're working your way up from the bottom. If an agency head turns you over to the staff planner, you get better service than if a receptionist introduces you to the staff planner over the intercom. Don't abuse this approach by always going to the head person; but when feasible, for first introductions, it is usually effective.

You can never have enough friends in this process. Establishing personal relations with staff through cordial meetings on your issue or outside activities of mutual interest is essential. You'll get more facts this way than with an antagonistic approach. If you treat staff fairly, and they learn to trust you, they become a great source of dependable information that you might not be able to get in any other way.

Identify the Impacts

Learn as many details as you can about the proposed development. For residential developments, find out how many units are proposed, how large the lots will be, how the streets will be laid out, how the development will link to existing roads, and what amenities (such as neighborhood parks) will be included.

For commercial developments, you might ask how large the buildings are, what they'll be used for, the number of parking spaces,

and plans for access to other roads. Looking at plans or a model showing the landscaping plans and architectural designs will give you an idea of the character of the development.

Ask for realistic estimates of impacts of the development on area roads, sewers, and schools. What additional traffic will the new development generate? Can existing facilities handle the new development, or are new facilities proposed? What cost will local taxpayers be expected to bear for the new facilities?

For any new development, ask about impacts on sensitive natural and historic resources. Are wetlands and archaeological sites being set aside for protection? Does the project negatively affect any endangered species?

Next try to determine if the use is compatible with its surroundings. A new residential development may be more compatible next to an existing one than in the middle of farmland.

In an objective assessment, does the development promote smart growth or sprawl? Does it incorporate compact development, mixed uses, and a variety of transportation options? Or does it continue wasteful patterns of urban sprawl and automobile dependency?

Perhaps the most important question is: Do the local comprehensive plan and land development regulations already allow this type of use on this property? If the answer is yes, opposing it will be an uphill battle.

Meet with the Developer

Arrange to meet with those responsible for the proposal, particularly if it is a private

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URBAN SPRAWL UPDATE: THE VILLAGES PLANS AN 11,000 HOME EXPANSION INTO SUMTER COUNTY ON 4,677 ACRES...

ESTIMATED WATER CONSUMPTION:

- APPROX. 22,000 PEOPLE AT 200 GAL. PER DAY: 4,400,000 GAL.
- FIVE 19-HOLE GOLF COURSES (APPROX.) AT 250,000 GAL. PER DAY: 1,250,000 GAL.
- TOTAL GALLONS DRAWN DAILY FROM THE AQUIFER: 5,650,000 GAL.

3,877 ACRES FOR HOMES AND COMMERCIAL SPACE.

700 ACRES FOR GOLF COURSES. (EQUIV. TO 5 COURSES)

100 ACRES FOR WILDLIFE.

NOT TO WORRY, SAYS THE VILLAGES. "WE'RE NOT PREDICTING A SHORTFALL THROUGH 2020."

THANKS A LOT!

So...DUH... WHERE DOES THE WATER COME FROM AFTER 2020?

developer. If you don't like those seeking the changes that you oppose, put your feelings aside. To be effective, you need to know what they want, why they want it, and what it will take to move them to a position that will be more favorable to your interests. (The same holds true if you support the project, and you want to spend energy supporting it.)

You may find that the developer is unaware of your concerns and is willing to make some changes. Or you may learn things that could ultimately make your case stronger. On the other hand, if you discover that information

you were relying on is inaccurate, be sure to adjust your position to reflect the truth.

Whenever possible, identify workable compromises. You might try crafting a "win-win" solution with the developer. In some cases, adjusting the site design or applying planning strategies such as clustering development or providing buffer areas can alleviate your concerns and save the developer from headaches and costly delays.

Regardless of the outcome, such meetings are always worthwhile. It will always in-

crease your personal credibility if you appear before a public body and are able to say you met with those proposing the item and were unable (or able) to solve the problems.

Ask the Experts

Growth management issues are increasingly technical and complex, and you may need help from experts in a variety of fields to interpret the plans and documents and identify specific concerns. Finding good technical help can be as simple as canvass-

Examine Your Objections

When opposing a project, it is important to consider your reasons. Is it because you view it as undesirable and do not want it near you? This is known as NIMBYism—the “Not In My Back Yard” syndrome. Projects often perceived as undesirable include affordable housing, schools, and waste management facilities, all of which are essential for every community.

Be honest in evaluating your negative reaction to a proposal. If you can articulate a valid community concern, go ahead. If the only real reason you don't like it is because you would rather it be somewhere else, and you cannot factually sustain your reason, think about reconsidering your opposition.

ing your neighborhood for a land planner, transportation planner, biologist, water chemist, or other expert, depending on the issues raised. Your local university or community college is another excellent source of technical resource people. Some larger environmental groups have scientists on staff or know how to find them. If all else fails, every large city has private consulting firms available for hire.

Once you have the basic facts, you may determine that the project is better than you had anticipated. Perhaps it contains measures to protect the most sensitive natural areas and provide important community amenities. If you still have concerns, however, keep working.

Maintain a Contact List

As you contact various people and organizations, keep a list that includes names, mailing and e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and a brief note or description about them or their role in the process.

Group them by organization, interest, or any convenient method that works for you. Consider entering them in a database so you can access them quickly. Keep your list up to date, and you will find it's a great timesaver. There is nothing more frustrating than starting from scratch to find a way to contact the housing or water quality expert you met last week who offered some valuable information.

Prioritize and Organize

In many situations, there will be too many issues for which to organize effective pro and con positions. Choose the two or three where you think you can be the most effective, and devote most of your energy to those. Once you feel comfortable with what you've put together on these core issues, take on additional ones to the extent time, energy, and funds permit. You will be most effective when you speak from personal knowledge about meaningful specifics. When you start dealing with abstractions, you risk losing your audience.

Understanding the Growth Management Process

If you still have concerns about the project, you need to know when and how you can express those concerns to shape a better outcome. Make sure that you understand the review and approval process that the proposal will undergo. In Florida, it is also necessary to have your opposition on record if you decide to mount a legal challenge down the road.

This section provides a cursory overview of Florida's growth management process. *Please note that the italicized text found throughout this chapter indicates when members of the public may participate in the process.*



Growth Management 101

Florida's 1985 Growth Management Act provides an important tool to help Florida's communities "grow smart." In a nutshell, the growth management process requires each level of government (state, regional, and local) to adopt a comprehensive plan that envisions its future, and then to implement the plan with appropriately consistent goals, objectives, and policies. Local governments must also adopt implementing land development regulations. It also includes sanctions, should local governments fail to carry out the requirements of the law.

The Growth Management Act includes two requirements for local governments to ensure public participation in the process. First, a local government must give adequate public notice of each intended action, such as publishing notices in the local newspaper regarding most meetings and hearings before the local planning agency and the local governing body. Second, the public must be allowed to participate in a meaningful way at these meetings and hearings. Other laws, such as Florida's Sunshine Act and open records laws, provide even greater access to documents and public officials.

For a more detailed description of Florida's growth management process, local comprehensive plans, land development regulations, and development orders, see Community Stewardship II: A Citizen's Guide to the Nuts and Bolts of Florida's Growth Management Process, available at 1000friendsofflorida.org under "Publications."

Local Comprehensive Plans

Under Florida's Growth Management Act, each city and county must adopt a local comprehensive plan consistent with state and regional plans. This plan is used to guide and control future development, deal with problems associated with the use and development of land, promote public health and safety, and protect human, environmental, social, and economic resources.

Local comprehensive plans cover a wide variety of matters, called "elements." For

example, these deal with capital improvements, future land use, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water and natural groundwater aquifer recharge, natural resource conservation, recreation and open space, housing, coastal management, and intergovernmental coordination. Additionally, there are goals, objectives, and specific policies that outline how the local government will accomplish the intent of the element. Each local government also must adopt a future land use map that shows the "proposed distribution,

Public Participation and Standing

Remember, public policy is shaped by those who participate in the process. To participate fully in Florida's growth management process, ideally you should:

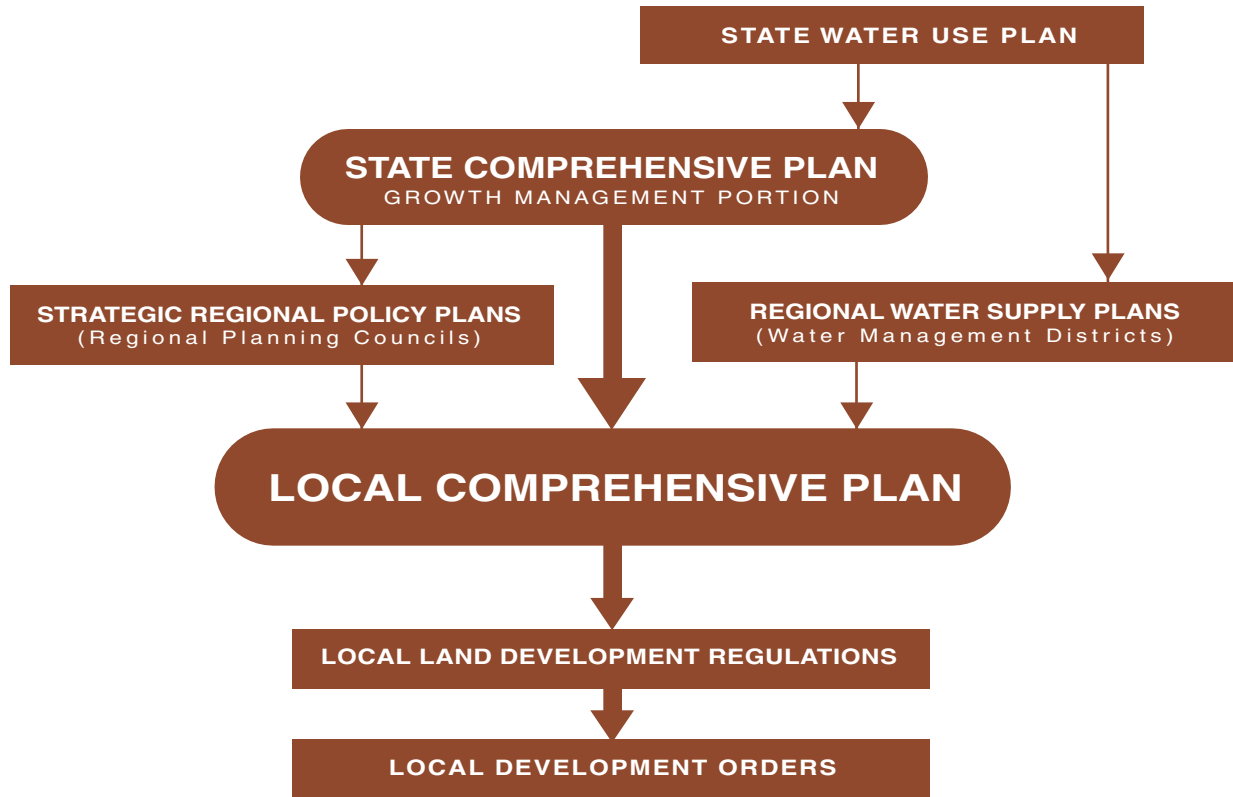
- Obtain copies of the application (i.e., plan amendment, development of regional impact, land development regulation change, permit, or application for a development order).
- Read and understand the comprehensive plan and land development regulations as they apply to the application.
- Meet with and/or call planning staff and local elected officials to discuss your concerns. Be aware that, under Florida law, it is not usually permissible to call or meet with elected officials to discuss development orders.
- Meet with the developer to discuss your concerns and explore possible "win-win" solutions.

- Prepare a written statement on your position and send it to each agency that will consider the matter.
- Attend the related public meetings and hearings, and sign in, if possible. For comprehensive plan amendments, be sure to sign in on the official Department of Community Affairs form.
- Speak at a meeting or hearing, and give a copy of your written statement or correspondence to the presiding officer for the official record. Be sure to keep a copy for your records.

Some of these steps may help you establish "standing" (i.e., the legal right) to challenge a local land use decision or strengthen your case if you go to court. For more details, see Community Stewardship II: A Citizen's Guide to the Nuts and Bolts of Florida's Growth Management Process.

Florida's Comprehensive Planning Process

Chapters 163, Part II, 186 and 187, Florida Statutes



location, and extent of the various categories of land” that the county has included in its local comprehensive plan.

If a proposed development is inconsistent with the local comprehensive plan, the plan must be amended before the development can proceed. Comprehensive plans also are routinely updated every seven years through the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process. Before proposed comprehensive plan amendments can be approved, most are reviewed by the Local Planning Agency (LPA), city or county commission or council, and in some cases the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Opportunities for public input on proposed amendments include meeting with or sending written comments outlining your concerns to the appropriate local governing body, and sometimes the LPA and/or DCA. Citizens also may speak at public hearings on proposed amendments. See pages 24-31 of Community Stewardship II for more information on local comprehensive plans.

Land Development Regulations

Land development regulations (LDRs) are the local ordinances needed to make the goals, objectives, and policies of the local comprehensive plan work. At a minimum,

these include ordinances dealing with the subdivision of land, land use (zoning), compatibility, well fields, flooding, drainage and stormwater management, environmentally sensitive lands, signage, and concurrency management of public facilities. These ordinances are the “laws” governing implementation of the local comprehensive plan.

Opportunities for public input on these ordinances include meeting with or sending written comments outlining your concerns to the LPA and appropriate governing body. Citizens may also speak at public hearings held on the proposed LDRs. See pages 32-37 of Community Stewardship II for more

WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO IS CREATE A VISION-BASED, CONSENSUS-DRIVEN PLAN, WITHIN A PERFORMANCE-MEASURED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK, THAT BALANCES PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR VALUES WITHIN OUR DECISION MAKING AND SETTING OF POLICIES.



"WHAT HE SAID IS YOU DON'T HAVE A SNOWBALL'S CHANCE IN HELL OF GETTING YOUR REZONING."



information on the land development regulation process.

Development Orders

The final step in the local growth management process is the local government's approval or denial of a development order (DO) for a specific project. Development orders include zoning changes, variances, and subdivision plat approvals, all of which require public notification and a public hearing before a decision is made. Development orders also include building permits, sewage and septic tank permits, and the like.

It is more difficult to provide input on development orders. Some are not subject to public hearings, and for the most part “ex parte” communication (i.e., private meetings and conversations) with elected officials is not permitted. See pages 38-43 of Community Stewardship II for more information on the development order process.

Permits

Technically separate from the growth management process, permitting decisions are based on the impacts of a specific development on a specific location. For example: zoning allows the location of an automobile manufacturing plant on a parcel of land, but the city requires an environmental permit showing that its anticipated pollution emissions are at a permissible level.

Typically, public input is allowed on federal and state permits but not on local government permits. See pages 19 and 52 of Community Stewardship II for more information on permits and permitting agencies.

Notify State and Regional Agencies

Don't wait until the local government public hearings have occurred and the documents have been transmitted to the various agencies. If you think that a regional or state agency will or should become involved (as in local comprehensive plan and land development regulation amendments), establish agency contacts either to get—or give—specific factual information.

Staff of these agencies like as much lead time as possible if a controversial item may be coming their way. If providing knowledge in advance can get the agency involved informally early on, it may help eliminate some of your problems or facilitate settlement discussions.

Keep a Growth Management Calendar

The growth management process has numerous legally significant time windows and deadlines. Maintain a calendar of events and keep it updated. Missing workshops, hearings, and submittal deadlines can seriously impair your ability to affect the process. If you fail to show up at a hearing or are late in submitting written comments on a project you are interested in, you may not be able to participate in later legal actions.

Being Proactive

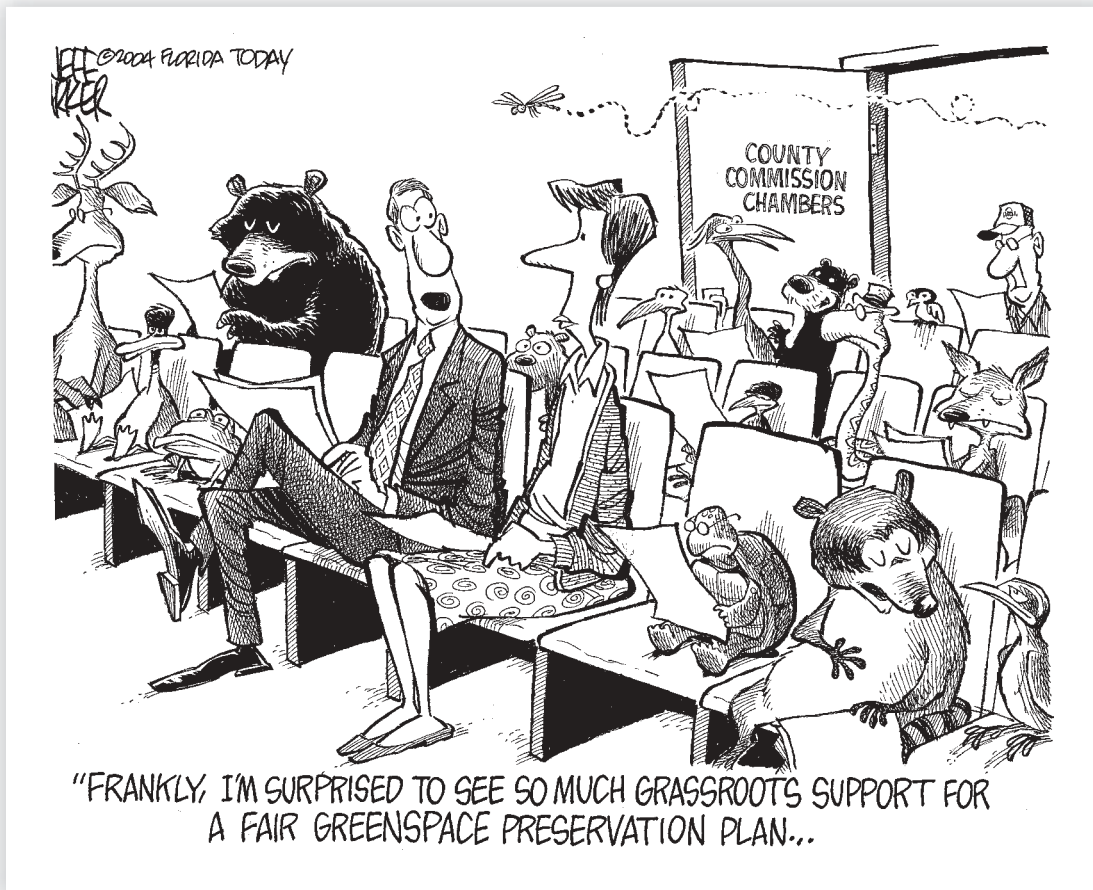
Parts of this handbook are geared toward those wanting to challenge a local government development decision. Actually, there's a smarter way to ensure smart growth: Get involved in shaping your community's local comprehensive plan and land development regulations in the first place.

Be proactive. All of the steps outlined in this handbook apply equally well to working toward securing the adoption of favorable provisions in local plans and regulations. Don't wait until it's too late. Challenging development decisions that are consistent with approved comprehensive plans and land development regulations is an uphill battle.

Building Support

You've done your homework. You've met with planning staff and experts to determine the scope of the proposed development and its impacts. You've met with the developer to explore some possible win-win solutions. You understand the planning process and are preparing for some key upcoming meetings and hearings. You are now convinced that the new development proposed for the woodlands adjoining your neighborhood is inappropriate and inconsistent with local plans and regulations. What's next?

It's time to bring others into the process. Many citizens expressing well-founded concerns have a better chance of drawing support than one lone voice. Also, to raise your chance for a positive outcome, you also must begin organizing your efforts.



Identify Possible Supporters

Where you start depends on your issue. Since the woodland development will affect your neighborhood, you might start close to home. Arrange to have your neighborhood association bring the issue up at its next meeting. Outline the problem in the neighborhood newsletter and take a position.

The broader your base of support, the better. Appeal to as many residents and organizations as possible. Will the new development further clog already congested roads and overload crowded schools? Will it affect nearby neighborhoods in the area? Will it affect individuals and groups that hike or bird-watch in the woodland? Is the woodland an important aquifer recharge area, providing clean drinking water for residents throughout the community? Will the project affect any significant archaeological resources? Identify area residents and organizations that care about these issues. These are the kinds of constituents you want to reach.

Develop Your Message

To convince others of the need to act, you will need to develop a clear and concise message. An effective message is one that identifies the project's impacts, outlines solutions, and includes a request for action.

Impacts

How will the proposed project affect your supporters? Typical concerns include traffic, air and water quality, schools, natural resources and open space, historic and archaeological resources, wildlife, and impacts on other community assets. Be factual, and be as specific as possible.

Solutions

Identify some possible win-win solutions. For example, could development be clustered on part of the property with a wooded buffer between adjoining neighborhoods? Could there be a mix of homes, stores, and offices on the site as a way of alleviating traffic concerns? Could a space be left open to protect a significant archaeological resource? Or, if development is totally inappropriate, could the parcel be purchased using state and local funds for environmentally sensitive lands? Whatever the solution, be sure to state it clearly, concisely, and in plain language.

Provide evidence to show that a solution is possible. Give one or more examples of similar situations where your suggested solution has worked well. If residents in a neighboring community succeeded in protecting a sensitive natural area from inappropriate development by clustering development and establishing a buffer, tell about it.

Request for action

Include a request for action in your message. Ask the recipients to do something: call local elected officials, attend a public hearing, write letters to the editor, distribute flyers, or make a donation to assist with your effort. Make the request simple but complete. If you want people to make calls or write letters, give them the appropriate phone numbers or addresses, and include some talking points.

Get the Word Out

Citizen Public Meetings

A citizen public meeting can solidify public and political support for your issue. The purpose is to alert potential supporters to the project and to discuss its impacts, identify solutions, and generate action.

Secure a meeting space that is large enough and conveniently located. Try to choose a date and time that do not conflict with other community events (e.g., city or county commission meetings) that might attract the same audience. Schedule the meeting for one hour maximum (e.g., 45 minutes for a presentation and 15 minutes for questions and answers), as most people have busy schedules and can't devote untold hours to meetings, no matter how fascinating the subject.

Invite potential supporters to attend using flyers (hand-delivered, mailed, or posted) and e-mails. Many organizations (neighborhood associations, environmental groups, historical societies, etc.) may be willing to forward your e-mail to their lists of supporters. Send a press release to local media, and follow up with phone calls to encourage advance publicity as well as coverage of the actual event.

At the meeting, post someone at the door with a sign-in sheet. Get names, home and e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of everyone attending. Start off the meeting by distributing a one-page fact sheet that clearly states the issue, impacts, solutions, and needed actions. Have one or two articulate spokespersons present your position—clearly and concisely. If possible, have someone speak about a similar campaign that was successful. Prepare strong visuals (photographs of the impacted woodlands, plans for the proposed development, etc.) to help tell your story. Allow time for a few questions and answers after the presentation.

Before ending the meeting, make your request for action, be it to make calls, write letters, distribute flyers, or whatever. You may have a sign-up sheet for people wishing to contribute in a variety of ways. Include name, phone numbers, and e-mail address to simplify follow-up after the meeting.

How to Win Land Development Issues

In developing this chapter, 1000 Friends relied heavily on *How to Win Land Development Issues* by Richard D. Klein, Community and Environmental Defense Services. This paper and sample flyers, petitions, surveys, and other useful materials are available at www.ceds.org.

If you plan to ask for money, ask several supporters to stand up and announce their donations to get the momentum going. Circulate a donation basket, and distribute pledge cards to those who did not bring their checkbooks. Soon after the meeting, send thank-yous to those who donated and

reminders to those who pledged money but haven't sent their checks yet.

You now have a list of supporters you can call on. Keep them informed and involved. Notify them if you want them to make calls or turn out for key hearings or meetings. You may wish to provide them with regular updates as the development proposal moves through the process.

See Appendix C for a sample letter to the editor, op ed, newspaper ad, and other useful information.

Web Sites

More and more, advocacy groups are using web sites to inform the public and engage their constituencies on key issues. You may be able to find a volunteer willing to take on

this responsibility as his or her contribution to your cause.

Even a simple web site can be an important tool. Useful content can include:

- a brief overview of your issue
- frequently asked questions and responses
- dates and times of important meetings
- phone numbers and e-mail addresses for contacting key elected officials and others
- links to media coverage
- photos and maps that illustrate concerns
- how to donate money and volunteer services to the cause
- background and contact information for your organization.

Less is often more. The simpler the site's de-

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sign and content, the easier for you or your volunteer to manage it and keep it updated. Remember to stress your clear and concise fundamental message throughout the site. See the Citizens for Tree Preservation web site (www.treemendment.org) for an exemplary and effective site for a grassroots effort that took place in Jacksonville.

E-mails

Consider sending periodic e-mails to keep supporters informed. Keep messages brief and to the point. Don't send an overabundance, as no one wants superfluous e-mails.

Make sure you read over the content carefully to make sure it cannot be misinterpreted or used against you. (Imagine your message being forwarded to someone not sympathetic to your cause.)

Consider developing several folders within your e-mail address file for sending out mass messages when appropriate. For examples, compile a list of grassroots supporters to send general updates and another of group leaders who may need more technical information.

Under certain circumstances, you may wish to send timely e-mail updates to reporters who are covering your issue. Follow up with a personal phone call whenever possible and appropriate. Avoid mass mailings to elected officials; personal e-mails are more appropriate, and only if the individual is responsive to that approach.

Media Coverage

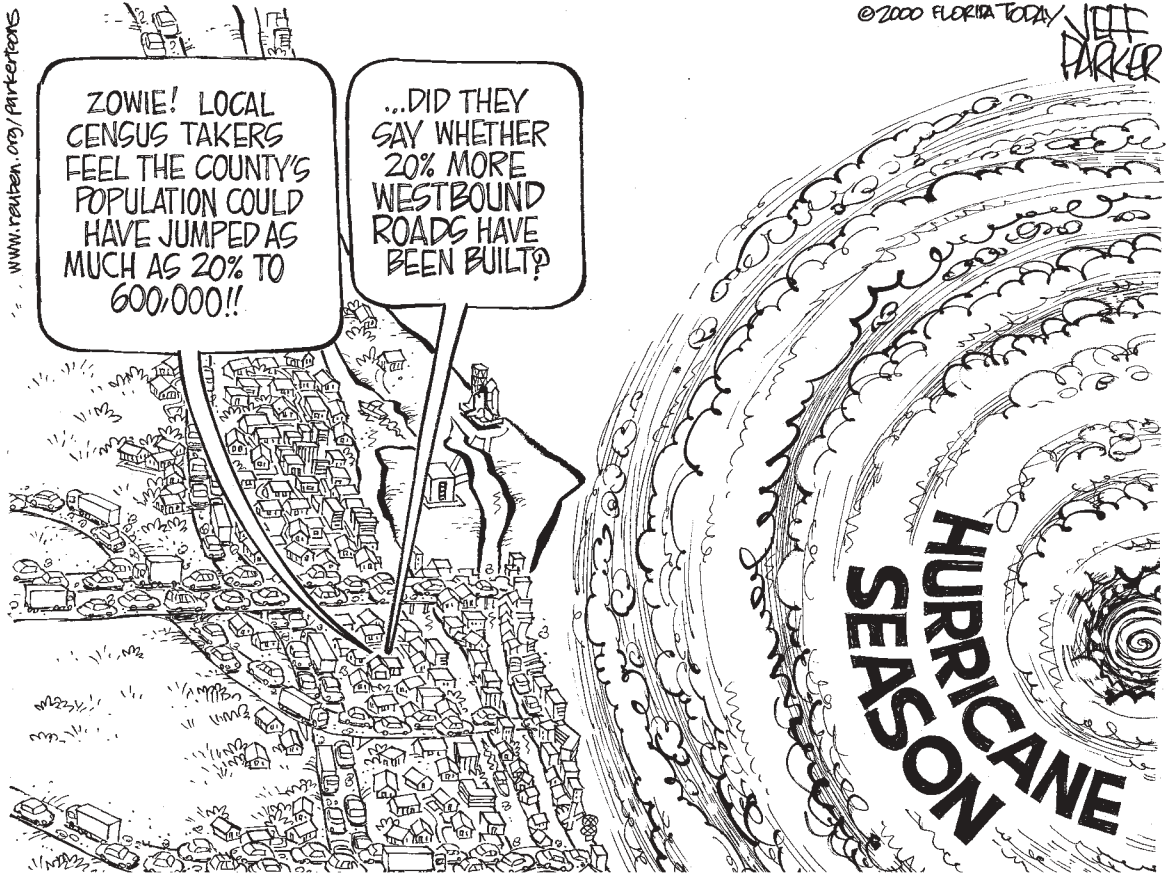
Getting the local newspaper, radio, or television to cover your issue in a favorable manner can give an important boost to your efforts. Letters to the editor and op eds

www.reuben.org/parker/poons

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JEFF PARKER

ZOWIE! LOCAL CENSUS TAKERS FEEL THE COUNTY'S POPULATION COULD HAVE JUMPED AS MUCH AS 20% TO 600,000!!

...DID THEY SAY WHETHER 20% MORE WESTBOUND ROADS HAVE BEEN BUILT?



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(opinion editorials) in your local paper and participation on local radio or television talk shows can raise awareness. See pages 30 to 41 for much more on how to generate media coverage.

Depending on the funds you have available, you might consider running an ad in the newspaper outlining your issue and identifying major supporters (with their permission). You may also consider buying ad time on a local radio or television station.

Choose an Organizational Structure

Decide how you want to organize early in the process. Do you want to act alone or with others? Do you want to work with a single group or with a coalition of organizations? The following sections contain some information to help you decide.

There are three basic structures to choose from. You may act alone as an individual, join an association, or incorporate as a Florida not-for profit. Following are the pros and cons of each approach.

Individual Action

The simplest, easiest, least time consuming, least aggravating—and least effective—method is to work alone, as an individual. You can say what you want without checking with anyone. You can appear or not appear at hearings and meetings without explaining your absence or presence. You don't have to organize bake sales, phone trees, or car pools.

If you do decide to act on your own, you may find yourself exercising the power of one in a system with more respect for the power of many. That doesn't mean you can't succeed, particularly if you can interact well

with the press. If they portray you as a David against Goliath, or a gallant knight in a sea of mean barons, you may still be effective.

Unfortunately, you're more likely to be portrayed as a local gadfly or disgruntled citizen getting in the way of progress.

Being out there all alone with no cover can be problematic. You will be legally liable for all of your actions and subject to lawsuits by those who feel you have misused the process. That's not to say you should abandon your efforts if you can't find a group to attach to. Many individuals have succeeded on behalf of smart growth in their communities with great accomplishments to their credit. However, if it can be done within parameters that are acceptable to you, acting with a group is preferable.

Associations

If you are an active member of an interest group or neighborhood organization, bring it into the process. Or form your own group. Working as a representative of a group is almost always more effective than working as an individual citizen.

If you want a local organization or affiliate of a statewide group to become involved in your local planning process, get active. Join, attend meetings, speak out, prepare a program and handout to provide facts about your issue. If the issue you're concerned about meets the group's goals, some of the group's resources may be made available to you. At the least you may be designated as its spokesperson on your area of interest, so that when you get up at the next commission hearing to make your presentation, you can state that you represent the group.

An unincorporated association has its pros and cons. You'll get a great deal more support than you'd have on your own, and the members may help with the workload, pro-

vide sounding boards to bounce ideas off of, and give other assistance with your efforts.

On the other hand, you won't be protected from personal liability if sued, and it's difficult to use as a conduit for tax-exempt contributions. Creating an unincorporated association is not recommended; however, if one already exists, working with it could save you time and effort until you can form a more protective organization.

Incorporation

The safest and most convenient form of organization in Florida is the nonprofit corporation. It is easy and cheap to form, can be made flexible enough to work under almost all conditions, and doesn't need a lot of maintenance if set up properly.

The nonprofit corporation has many benefits. Unless you are personally irresponsible, it will insulate you from personal legal liability for actions of the corporation and protect you from some personal harassment. You will give the impression of having a substantial organization behind you, even if it's only you, your spouse, and a friend.

If you file the appropriate papers with the Internal Revenue Service (and are approved), the corporation can accept contributions that are tax-deductible for the giver. A nonprofit corporation pays no taxes (including sales tax under the proper circumstances) and can pay reasonable salaries to its officers for work performed out of the donations it receives.

There can be problems, too, of course. You might even lose control of your corporation if the board of directors is not happy with your actions. You can prevent this by keeping the board happy (or forming a new corporation if they remove you from your position).

Be aware that if you decide to become a federally approved, tax-deductible corporation (Section 501[c][3] of the Internal Revenue Code), the corporation will be prevented by law from supporting or opposing individuals running for office and certain other political activities.

To incorporate, you must choose a corporate name, file Articles of Incorporation with the Florida Department of State, and pay an initial filing fee of around \$80.00. More information on incorporation in Florida is available at www.1000friendsofflorida.org.

Forge Alliances

Your ability to influence decisions, once all the facts are known, is usually a product of your actual or perceived power. Having a number of allies helps build that perception and thus the power. Once you have enough basic, reliable facts on hand to determine

what the issues are going to be, it is time to look for allies. The perception of strong public support will enhance your power in the electoral processes.

Besides giving the impression of broad community support for your issue, the support of a number of groups also can provide the eyes, ears, and energy to cover more ground as well as provide contacts for areas of expertise you don't have. Alliances tend to be less formal than coalitions, which may involve a written agreement.

Members of an alliance can substitute for each other at public meetings when someone's child gets sick; help circulate petitions and write letters; maintain data bases; take over if your energies hit a low ebb and you need to take a break to recharge. The more allies you have, the greater the resources available to work on an issue, and the better the chances of success (within the limits discussed below).

“Unnatural Allies”

Don't make assumptions about who your allies will and won't be. You might be surprised to discover that a person or group you considered a “natural enemy” agrees with your position on this issue. Though you may have reached your positions from different goals and objectives, joining forces with such “unnatural allies” can prove effective in any public process. The fact that you can present a diversity of community interests on your side of the issue often gives your position greater weight.

If, for example, when environmental groups join with the local chamber of commerce to accomplish a particular goal, elected officials will sit up and take notice. This type of coalition signals broad-based community support that may not otherwise be apparent. It's possible and effective to form coalitions with local civic organizations, schools-based groups, or garden clubs that support this particular issue, even though they may not agree on other issues.

Possible Allies

Forming effective alliances usually begins with a little research and a few phone calls. What other individuals and groups that might support your point of view are active in your area?

If you don't know where to start, pull out your contact list and ask for help. You've probably heard about some groups and can locate them in the phone book or through the local planning staff. Calling the statewide organizations will often help you reach local groups with similar interests. Be creative in using keywords related to your area of interest to search on the net for likeminded local groups or individuals.

Always keep one thing in mind: Growth management disputes are led by individuals, not groups. When you locate the name of a group that's a likely ally, find one or more group members who are willing to become active in your issue. If you are successful in this, the group will follow along. Getting the group as a whole interested often fails unless one of its members is willing to educate the others and secure group support.

Don't form alliances just for the sake of having more names on a petition or handout. Alliances take energy to maintain, from communications to determining group positions. If the energy to maintain an alliance seems to exceed the benefits it brings to the table, carefully consider whether the effort is worthwhile.

If you don't find allies to help but feel you are on firm ground factually, don't lose heart. Once you become a vocal and active part of the process, allies may start to appear. And if no one shows up to help, don't give up. Florida's history contains plenty of examples of one or two determined individuals making a big difference.



“Here’s the want ad for the new county manager: Looking for an economic development visionary with prior experience as a group therapist.”

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Establish Coalitions

Coalitions are generally formal (often written) agreements among several organizations, compared with more loosely formed alliances. If a number of groups with a shared interest want to become involved, it helps to have one person or group in a leading role. The “lead” organization would be responsible for notices and plans for coordinated action.

The strengths of coalitions are in the numbers of people working together and the multiple resources that become available. The weaknesses stem from problems of logistics such as keeping the coalition together on positions to take, and the time-consuming process of keeping all of the individual groups informed.

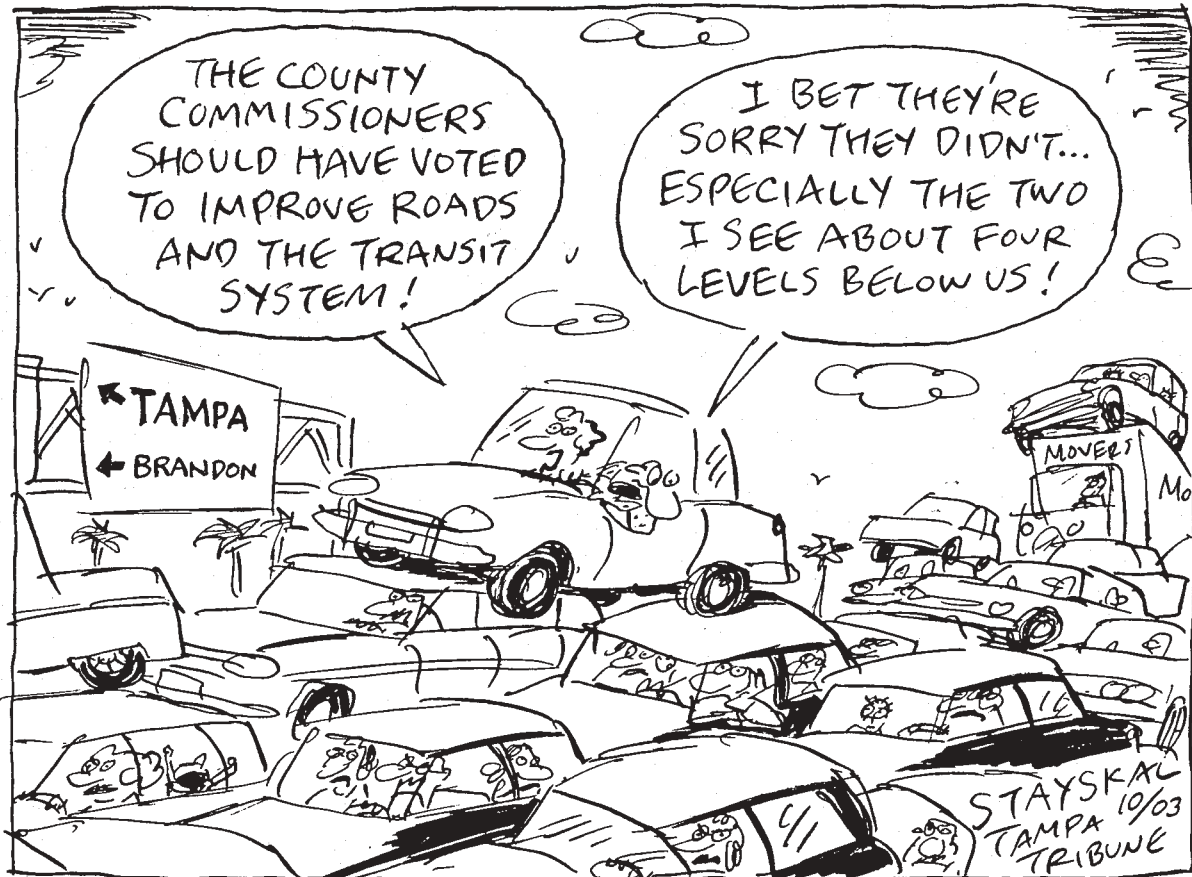
As a general rule, coalitions work better if each member group maintains a strong

individual group identity within the coalition. Problems arise when individuals start joining the coalition instead of one of the groups, or the coalition continues to be active on issues well beyond those behind its formation. This can result in a general weakening of the individual groups, because when the coalition disbands, the groups have difficulty restoring themselves as separate entities.

Making Your Case With Elected Officials and Staff

There are several ways to influence development decisions in your community. One is to elect officials who support your point of view. Another is to convince elected officials and their staffs that your view is the correct one. This next section presents some tried and true methods for influencing decision-makers in your community.

Once you are confident about working within the process, you'll be ready to begin the task of influencing decision-makers using four basic strategies: presenting written materials, meeting with elected officials, encouraging supporters to speak out, and speaking at public hearings.



Understand the Local Process

Come into the proceedings with as much knowledge of your subject matter and the process as possible. Familiarize yourself with the local government's land use codes and designations and the process for implementation. Attend a meeting on other issues to get a feel of how business is conducted.

Learn who the “players” are on both sides and meet with all parties. Know the entire history of the proposal in question. Who stands to win and lose by the decision to be made? Has the issue come before the local government before? Who voted on what side in the previous considerations of similar issues? Is there a hidden agenda involved? Talk to the old hands in the hallways.

Keep in mind that all local land use hearings are recorded, and copies of the tapes or transcripts should be available. If you are having trouble getting the information you need by asking around or doing research, get copies of earlier tapes that refer to your specific areas of interest.

Prepare a Written Statement

It is always a good idea to write down any position you intend to take in a well-organized, well-thought-out document. Don't wait until the last minute. If possible, always have someone else read what you wrote, or at least reread it yourself after a day's rest. Revise your document to reflect changing facts or ideas. Use this document to develop an outline for your oral presentations, and after you've spoken, hand it in for the record.

Written materials have a longer, more lasting

impact than most oral presentations and are important to help you create a record that is legally important in the future. Remember, all written communications to a government agency are public records and can be read by anyone.

Meet with Elected Officials

Establishing a personal trust relationship with an elected official (as with agency staff) can be important for your cause. Meeting privately with an elected official (when the time and type of process allow) may let you get a better understanding of his or her position without the posturing that can sometimes occur at a public meeting. Such meetings give you opportunities to address sensitive issues that you may not wish to address in public, and to become more than just another presenter in a sea of faces.

When you are fortunate enough to get a meeting scheduled, consider bringing a few selected members of your organization, alliance, or coalition. Keep the number small, to include only those individuals who un-

derstand how the system works—you don't want to worry about your own people becoming too belligerent or talking too much.

Meet with your own folks in advance to discuss how the meeting will be handled, who will do most of the talking, what you want to find out, and what you don't want the other side to discover. This gives you the best chance to figure out who should go and who to leave at home.

At the meeting with officials and staff, be prepared to listen. You will learn more by listening than by talking. The most persuasive advocates turn out to be the best listeners. Your ability to listen and empathize is your ultimate tool for influencing opinion. It helps you sense whether you should keep talking or shut up and leave. It helps you decide whether the approach you're using is the right one or you should change tactics.

Watch for facial expressions, nervousness, continual clock-watching. When the words, “I know you're busy, so I don't want to take up any more of your time,” are spoken by an official in his office, that's a polite way of telling you it's time to go. The more you can

A Word on Public Hearings

It is surprising how many people still think that most major decisions are made based on public hearings. This is simply not true. Not that decision-makers plot behind closed doors on how to vote on the issues, it's just that public officials receive a lot of information well in advance of the hearings. To prepare for the hearing, they read widely and discuss the issues with people on all sides. By the time the hearing occurs, they may already have made up their minds on how to vote.

It makes sense, therefore, to meet with these officials ahead of time, so they can digest your points along with those from the opposition. If you can't do this, go ahead and make your presentation. But accept the fact that it may be too late to influence their vote.



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pick up on these signals, the more effective you will become.

Encourage Your Supporters to Contact Elected Officials

In most cases it takes a simple majority to approve or deny a project. Have your supporters contact key elected officials about your issue before the commission is slated to take a key vote on the proposal. Commissioners who have firmly stated that they oppose or approve the project are unlikely to change their position. You may, however, have a few supporters contact these officials to verify their stands.

Count your votes! If you are absolutely sure you only need one or two more votes, you may wish to focus most of your efforts on swing

Quasi-Judicial Hearings

“Quasi-judicial” generally refers to a process that concerns a development order for a specific property. In quasi-judicial issues, such as reviewing development orders, the local elected body is acting, in essence, like a court, with “evidence” offered in support or opposition of the development order application.

Generally, “ex parte” communication—discussing these proposals in writing or in person with the elected officials—is not allowed. (If you talk to a city or county elected official or appointed zoning board member about a pending development order, that person must be willing to disclose the entire conversation on the record at the hearing.) If a board member or other official tells you this as a reason not to discuss matters, accept his request and make your presentation in public at the board hearing.

votes—those commissioners who have not yet made up their mind and could be convinced by new arguments and widespread support. Err on the side of caution, as compelling testimony or a large turn-out at a hearing may sway some officials to change their mind.

Make a Public Statement

Effective testimony at a public hearing can help influence the final outcome. Here are some tips for you and your supporters.



Effective Communication

There are a number of ways your supporters can make their views known to elected officials.

FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT—This is almost always the most effective type of communication. However, most commissioners prefer fewer meetings with articulate spokespersons over numerous meetings with people reiterating the same arguments. An ideal spokesperson may be one of your supporters who has been a contributor to the elected official's campaign and is willing and able to meet with commissioners.

PERSONAL LETTERS—Personal, handwritten letters are more effective than e-mails or postcards in conveying simple messages. The time involved in composing a personal letter, as well as its increasing rarity, reflects a deep concern on the part of the writer and may be given more serious consideration by the recipient. However, not to dilute their importance, these should be reserved for important messages. Typed letters are the next best form of communication and are most appropriate for lengthy communications.

PHONE CALLS—Phone calls can be effective, particularly if the supporter is able to talk personally with each commissioner. In most instances, however, an aide takes the call, conveying to the commissioner only whether the caller supports or opposes the project. A supporter can ask the aide to write down one or two key points to support his or her position.

TELEGRAMS—Night letters or telegrams sent to each board member the night before a hearing can add a dramatic sense of urgency and receive attention.

E-MAILS—E-mails are an easy and popular way to communicate information quickly, but can be fraught with danger. No matter how good a wordsmith you are, there are times when your emotions will lead you to write something on the spur of the moment that others may interpret differently than intended. Always reread e-mail before sending, and, if possible, have someone else read (and edit) it. E-mail becomes public record when submitted to an elected official or someone who works for a public agency. Though it is hard to tell whether e-mails have much impact, there may be times when no other option is available. E-mails expressing interest in a project and conveying factual information are better than no communication at all. Don't, however, make e-mails your communication of choice, unless it's clearly understood that your e-mails are being accepted and expected by the person(s) to whom they are sent.

FORM LETTERS AND PETITIONS—Form letters, postcards, petitions, and identically worded e-mails serve a purpose. They provide a general sense of how many support and oppose an issue or proposal. Because they are easy to generate without a real personal commitment, they may be greatly discounted by the receiving parties. These should only be used if no more effective forms of communication are available, or as a backup when additional support seems useful.

Reading a prepared statement is only slightly more effective than sending it in the mail. If you don't feel comfortable presenting it any other way, then read it without apology. Delivering your message from an outline and submitting the full statement for the record is much more effective.

Most public meetings and hearings have time limits for speakers, usually somewhere from one to five minutes. Find out the limits in advance, and tailor your comments accordingly. You can still be effective in a short time if you explain the reason for your appearance and present your facts and arguments in an orderly sequence.

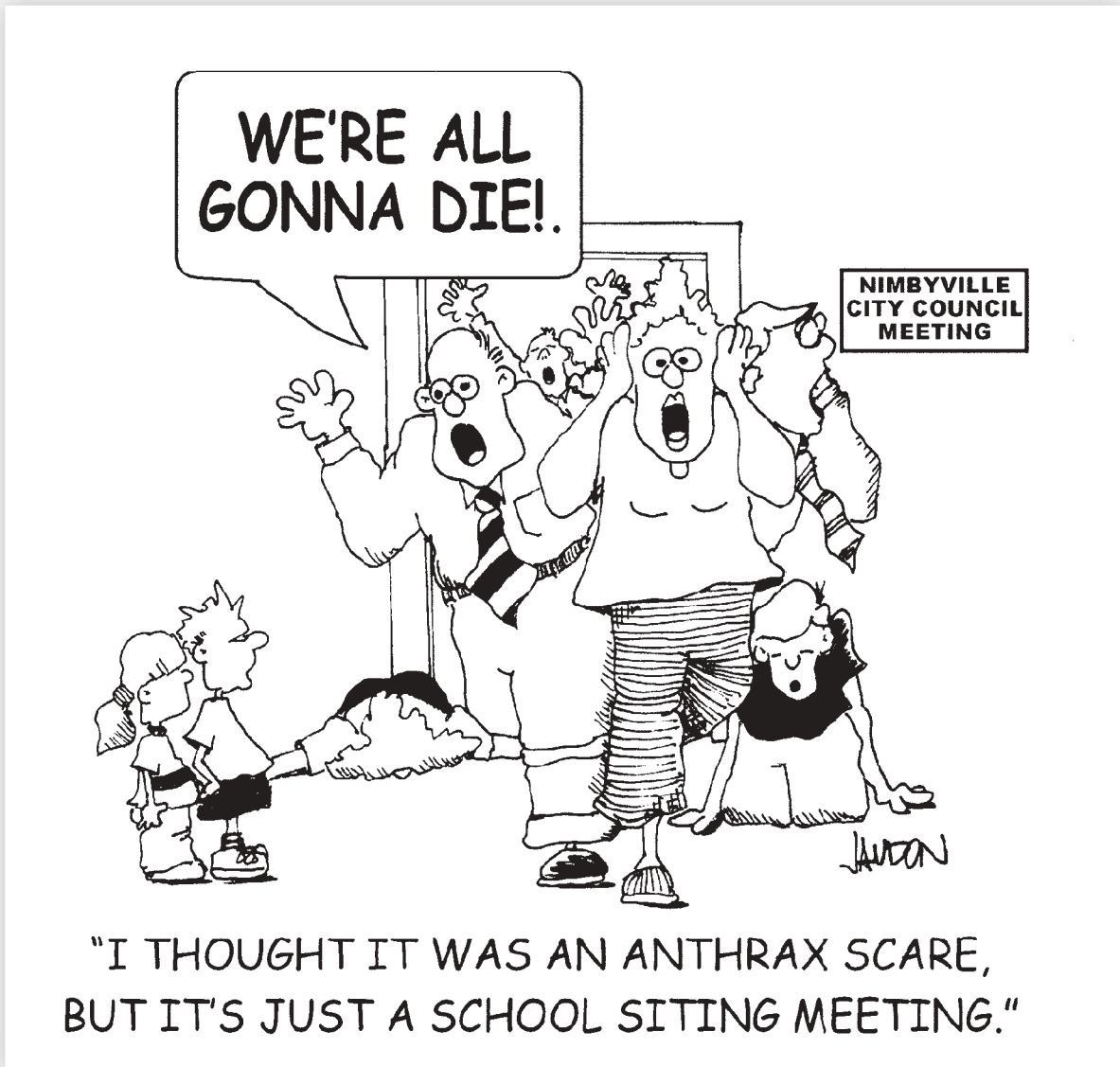
It is almost always best to start with your bottom line, so if you get cut off, the board or persons you're talking to will at least know where you stand. For example, after stating your name and the organization you represent, you might lead with: Our organization supports (or opposes) the proposed plan amendments for the following [number] reasons. First, [state reason clearly]. Second, [state reason clearly]. (Etc.) You may expound more extensively on each reason as time permits. No major point should take more than two minutes to present, and minor points substantially less.

If you haven't been able to make all of your points in the time allotted, arrange to send them in writing or come back later and talk with board members or staff. On rare occasions, especially if your presentation has been interrupted by extensive questioning, you might ask the board for additional time to finish a point or refute something said by another speaker. If you ask, be ready to comply with the answer.

Use your time to focus on points that have not been made previously. Don't spend your precious time repeating what prior speakers have already said. You might begin, though,



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by mentioning that you agree with such and such points (clearly identify) made by the previous speakers (possibly identify).

Your credibility and effectiveness will increase substantially if you can raise your opponent's points, ideally before he or she does, and explain why they are not valid under the circumstances. If you can't explain them away, you should probably reexamine yours. If your opponent speaks first, take good notes, and, if at all possible, allow some time to refute the opposing arguments in your presentation. Consider replying to your adversary's points first and then proceeding to your main points, or use your adversary's points as a springboard to each of yours. Try concentrating first on those points that seem to grab the attention of the board members or staff.

Answering questions properly is an important part of any oral presentation. If you quickly understand the question and can answer intelligently and accurately, it shows you're listening and have a good grasp of the facts. If you don't know the answer, say so, and offer to get back to that person with the answer as soon as you can. If the question is unclear, gently try to get it clarified. You can say things like, "I'm not sure I understand your question. Did you mean?" Don't say "That was really a dumb question," even if that's what you are thinking! You might find it a good idea to end your presentation with "Thank you for your consideration. I'll be happy to answer any questions."

Public officials are presented with hundreds of pages of materials before each meeting. They rarely have time to read it all. If you submit a lengthy written document, prepare an executive summary no longer than a page or two, so that busy officials can get to the meat of your argument without going through lengthy explanations and examples.

Civil Conduct

Whether you are meeting a person face-to-face, talking on the phone, speaking at a public or private meeting or sending a personal communication, be sure to follow these basic rules of conduct.

Make a good first impression. Appearances matter. Look neat, clean, and professional. If you're not sure, wear business clothes. Later in the process you can dress more casually if appropriate.

Tell the truth. Lies or inaccuracies will catch up with you sooner or later, usually by an opponent. If you are caught in an untruth, you might as well pack it in. You are allowed an occasional mistake, but not a lie. Apologize for mistakes when you know you've made them.

Control your emotions. If you can't keep from shouting and arguing, your cause will be better served if you sit down and say nothing. Though a show of emotion at various times in a presentation can give a sense of your sincerity, generally speaking, keep your emotions under wraps. Shouting, personal attacks, and angry exchanges are not only unproductive but can seriously undercut the factual parts of your presentation.

Be courteous. If someone disagrees with you in a public forum in an emotional manner, don't retort. When he or she finishes, reply in a courteous fashion if you're allowed, and proceed with your statement. You might defuse a charged situation by responding, "It looks like we'll just have to agree to disagree." If you find yourself getting emotional in response, the safest thing to do is to get control and sit down, even if you have more to say.

Don't make threats. Refrain from threats such as, "We will vote you out of office" or "I'll see that you never hold public office again." Threats rarely accomplish anything, and only serve to burn bridges to an official whose help you may need on other issues. Every bridge severed means wet feet at some time in the future.

Provide helpful information. Find out what public officials want, and try to give it to them. Make sure the information you provide fits some need of the person or group you want to influence. Being helpful is always a first class road to friendship and trust. Besides, if you give the elected official what he or she wants, maybe you'll get what you want (or more of it than you had).

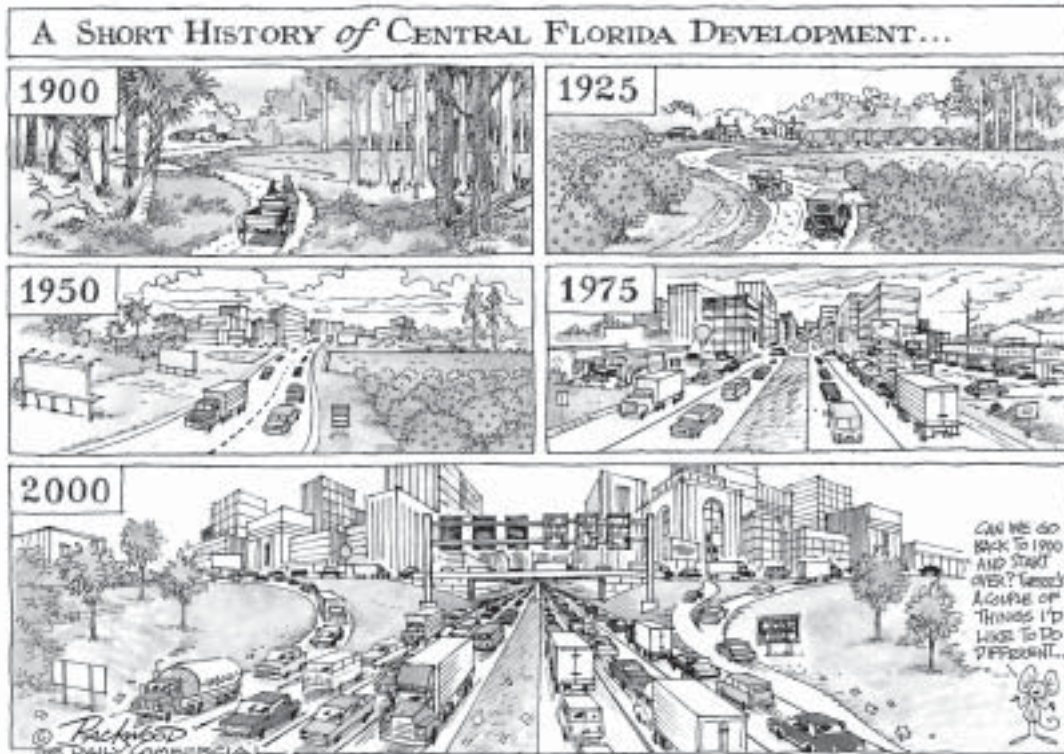
Working With the Media

If a developer cuts a tree in a protected forest, and the newspaper doesn't cover it, does it still make a sound?

If a lake is polluted by run-off from a new shopping center or plans for an apartment complex in the middle of some wetlands are submitted to the county commission, and no one—especially the local media—notices, how can people fight it?



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Knowledge is Power

Knowledge is power, especially for watchdog and advocacy groups who need to get their message out to function effectively. You need the media to publicize your goals as well as alert current and potential supporters to your campaigns. You need the media to counteract the popular idea that all growth, no matter how egregious, environmentally insensitive, or just plain illegal, is inevitable and unstoppable.

In Florida, there's often this rather resigned sense that developers—the ones with the money and the political clout—will always win. But it's not true. Environmental organizations, growth management watchdogs,

and advocates of responsible development can have a profound effect on what does and does not get built, how our remaining wild lands are treated, and what projects get approved on the local and state levels, if they learn to communicate with newspapers, radio and television stations, and other journalistic outlets. Well-placed stories can inspire developers to back off of controversial projects or at least work with you rather than against you.

Be Aware of Timing

It's best to alert the press before the beach is compromised or the ecosystem destroyed or the wetlands drained. Things ruined, places irreparably damaged, will probably make the

news automatically, but you, the group trying to monitor and influence growth issues, have lost a battle by that time. You want to be in on the front end, stopping the bad policy before it starts. Publicity can obviously help you win public, even political support.

Don't contact the media until you are fairly sure of what you have. If you think a building is going up in the wrong place, or a county comprehensive plan is being violated or a waterway being polluted, get the goods, chapter and verse. Reporters are not (unlike you) advocates. They are not going to help you fight every battle. They are not scientists, either, so try to present data in a form digestible by the layperson.

Know Your Stuff

Before you ever think of calling a reporter, you need to know your stuff. Only the largest newspapers have reporters with the time and leisure to do a lot of background work. You should have a great deal of information—from experts, neighborhood associations, activists, whatever is appropriate to the issue—to present to a reporter before you ever go looking for one. The reporter, however overworked, will (one hopes) do even more research, making for a stronger story. The better the documentation, the more effective the story.

And remember, reporters do not have the time or the patience to entertain half-baked ideas.

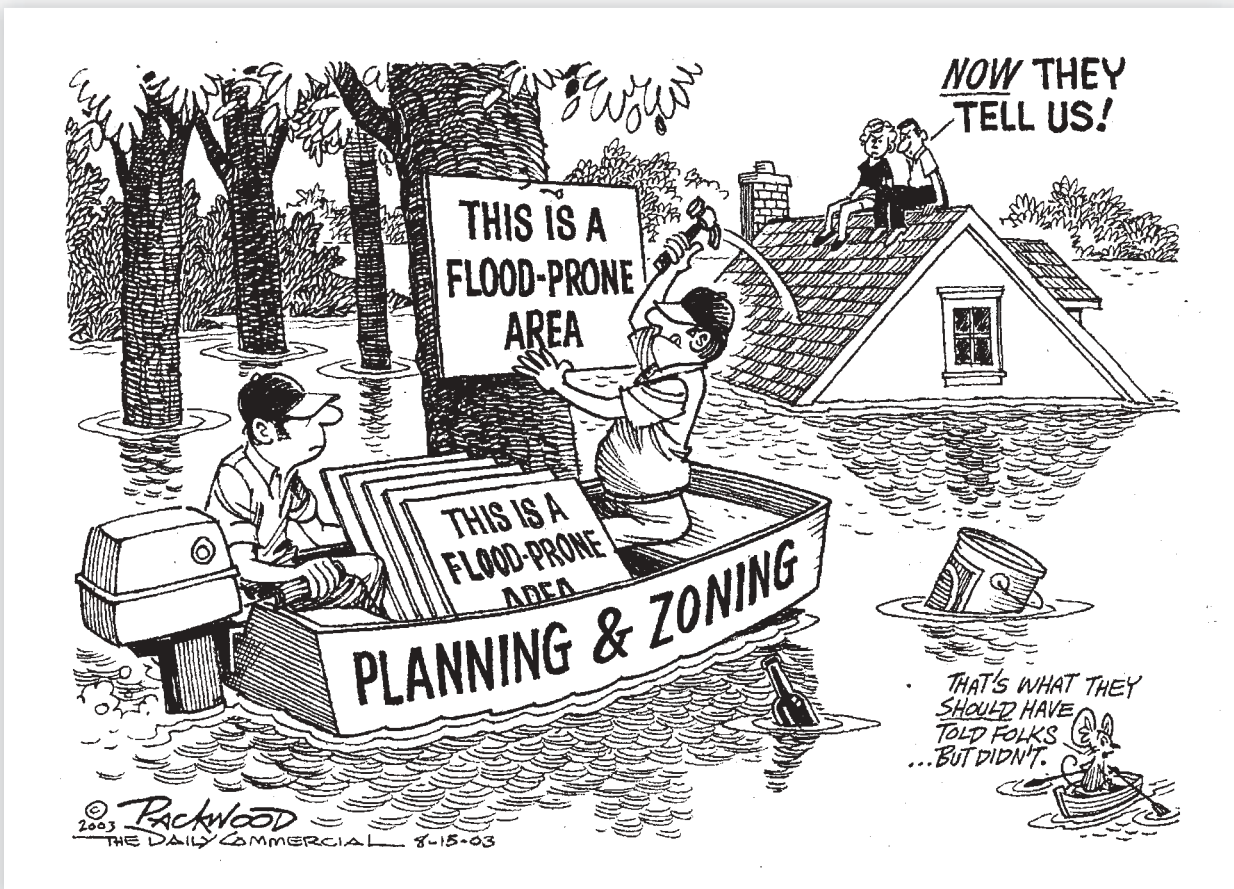
Ask yourself how your concern will affect the community/the county/the region/the state. Ask yourself why anyone should care.

Don't overdramatize or sensationalize. Don't claim that the herbicides and fertilizers from a proposed golf course near a pristine spring will poison the whole Floridan aquifer: present information on how chemicals adversely affect ground water not just in your backyard but in other people's, too. Use previously published newspaper and magazine articles, reports from other advocacy groups, etc. Show how a troublesome project might impact a wider segment of the population. Aesthetics and quality of life are powerful factors if presented effectively (and concisely).

Anticipate objections. Play devil's advocate with yourself: what is the other side to the issue? Is it that the new mall will bring in needed jobs and revenue and so is more important than the turtle habitat it will be built on top of? Is it that developers have the "right" to do whatever they like with their property?

How do you counter such points? Anticipate what your opponents will say. And be ready to give the reporter names of people prepared to be quoted (yourself included), experts with useful data, and evidence of what you say is going on.

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Decide What Medium Best Conveys Your Message

Deciding which outlet to call first will depend on the story and what you think best suits your needs. If you need a big, loud visual splash, television's your best bet. For depth, radio or print may work better.

It's a good idea to find out who owns or controls the media outlets in your area and statewide. Sad to say, most media are now owned by large corporations that are often far more interested in profit than great journalism. Some newspapers make a lot of money from advertisements placed by builders, developers, and similar companies, and so might feel a little nervous running negative stories about their projects.

Television stations also have owners who may be antipathetic to controls on growth (more people in an area mean more profits from commercials). Same with radio stations, though the commercial ones often have very little in the way of real news.

Public radio and television, such as the Florida Public Radio Network, which emanates from Tallahassee but goes statewide, and its PBS equivalent, receive funding from universities, the public, and in some cases, the legislature. Be sensitive to the reluctance of stations to run pieces critical of their funders, be they commercial or government sources.

It's up to you to connect the dots; figure out who owns what, the general editorial attitude towards your issues, and how you think your story will play. If there's an oil spill or an egregious example of illegal clear-cutting or something visually spectacular like that, calling the local TV news

Understand Media Strengths and Weaknesses

Different media have different strengths and weaknesses. Employing each wisely can give you the advantage.

TELEVISION—Television can be the most powerful, and, at the same time, the most superficial media. Television news has large audiences but tends to sensationalize stories and reduce issues to sound bites. Sound bites are not necessarily bad, but beware of the oversimplification that a one-minute piece on TV inevitably carries with it. Still, video footage can sometimes do in a few seconds what a hundred inches of print copy cannot.

RADIO—Radio, especially public radio, can have comparatively small audiences, yet those listeners tend to be the best informed and most likely to take action over issues that concern them. Florida Public Radio is useful in that it has reporters all over the state who are always looking for news features, which can be quite in-depth (sometimes up to ten minutes long).

NEWSPAPERS—Newspapers and magazines use both the power of prose and photos to create an impact. Television and radio often follow investigative stories in print, since newspapers usually have more resources in terms of specialized reporters, news space, etc. Good newspapers will cover a story in greater detail than any medium (except, perhaps, certain magazines) but long, involved pieces can have a limited readership.

WIRE SERVICES—Wire services such as the Associated Press do stories that are specifically about Florida but also move on their national network. Wire stories can have a huge reach and are often what other news media use to figure out what to cover in depth.

WEEKLY PAPERS—Don't forget about weekly papers, often found in less populated, more rural, counties all across the state. Just because their circulation may be only a couple of thousand souls (or less) doesn't mean they can't have an impact on an issue. People in small counties often get the news they care about from their local paper, not the Miami Herald or the St. Petersburg Times. If you want to rile up the activists on the ground over a particular problem and get them to a county commission or planning board meeting, these small papers can be highly effective. They are usually run and staffed by people who care passionately about their area.

MAGAZINES—A word about magazines: getting a story in Mother Jones, Harper's, or Time about a Florida growth issue can make a huge impact. But magazines are slow—even the weeklies—and a story would have to have some kind of national implication. If a story has statewide implication, Florida Trend has a long history of covering growth and development issues.

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BEAT



“Before we decide on a mascot, make sure this location isn’t ruining the last of its habitat.”

department may be your best bet: pictures of blackened birds or ravaged trees may convey the most powerful message.

If it's something less obvious, more subtle (or something that hasn't happened yet and you want to try and prevent) radio or print might work best. Research will aid you here in deciding whom to call, and figuring out where you could be wasting your time and where you'll get a positive response.

Work Effectively with the Media

If you think you have a hot story, NEVER simply call a general newsroom and leave a message for “whoever”—unless, of course, you are standing there watching the chairman of OmniPave Developers Inc. beating a Florida panther to death with a nine-iron. That would get any reporter's attention.

In general, however, what you think is a burning issue—say, 15 matriarch oaks cut down to make way for a new shopping center—may or may not seem that way to the hassled editor on the city desk of your local paper. If you don't get through to the right person, your burning issue will be snuffed out and disappear among the detritus, inertia, and sensory overload of the newsroom. Only use e-mail if you absolutely have to: reporters get tons of messages every day and may not notice your brilliant tip among all the rubbish.

Appropriate Contacts

Identify what reporter you want to talk to at what media outlet and why. This will require some research on your part, checking to see who covers issues like yours, and what the editorial policy toward growth is (see above). If it's your local paper or television or radio station, you probably already have some idea. If you are going for one of the

larger papers outside your area, you need to have read the paper enough to figure out to whom your call should be addressed.

The Internet is a useful research tool to help identify good targets for your message. If you have access to Lexis/Nexis (available in many university and some public libraries), you can look up stories by byline, subject, or medium (magazine, newspaper, radio, television). Or do a search on Google. If you type in “storm water run-off, Florida” or “army corps of engineers,” you'll be amazed at the range and volume, not just of news stories, but of editorials and features you also get.

Think laterally. For example, larger papers may have reporters who cover environmental issues. But reporters in other sections of the paper—Business, Features, the local news section called “Neighborhood Times”—may also be useful to you, depending on the story.

An Annotated List of Reporters

Develop a list of reporters, including contact information, and the issues of special interest to them. If you can get hold of a reporter's direct-line number in the newsroom (this is usually pretty easy), use it. If you can get a cell phone number out of a reporter, even better. If the issue is a large and ongoing one, working up a computer database of journalists and relevant information might be a good idea.

It's important to maintain a professional and cordial relationship with reporters. While they are supposed to be fair and “objective” (unlike editorial writers who should be fair but opinionated—see below), you should do your best to persuade them to your point of view—subtly.

Do not assume they agree with you on everything. It may be perfectly clear to you that putting up yet another strip mall would

be an affront to God and Nature, but it might not be so clear to the reporter. Many will be on your side (especially if you provide compelling information) but that does not relieve the reporter of the responsibility of putting the other side of the case as well. Do not take this personally!

Deadlines

Reporters have deadlines. If they don't make their deadlines, their stories will not appear in print or on the air. Bear this in mind when promising to provide them with information. Promptness and thoroughness are helpful.

This may seem wildly obvious, but when you talk to reporters, remember that no matter how friendly they seem, first and foremost they are reporters. They want to get information out of you, even information you don't want to give them.

If you want to provide deep background off the record, say it's “off the record” before you launch into your speech. NEVER assume a reporter “understands” what should be off the record. If you don't say it's off the record, it isn't. And when you provide on-the-record responses, be pithy, concise, and to the point. Do not ramble. Do not rant.

Exclusives

If you have a really big story (you've stumbled across evidence that top legislators have hatched a plan to fence off all beaches) and you talk to a reporter at a newspaper, that reporter may want you to make it an “exclusive,” that is, not talk to any other reporters from any other news organs.

The advantage to this is that you will get a lot of serious attention from that one paper (or TV station or radio outfit). The disadvantage is that other media might be annoyed and not return your phone calls on other stories.

If you are giving an exclusive, screen your calls. Don't tell other reporters you are only talking to the AP, Florida Public Radio, the *Palm Beach Post*, or whoever it is. Just be unavailable. Conversely, if you are trying to get everybody to notice your issue, be very available. Be free with e-mail addresses and phone numbers, home and cell.

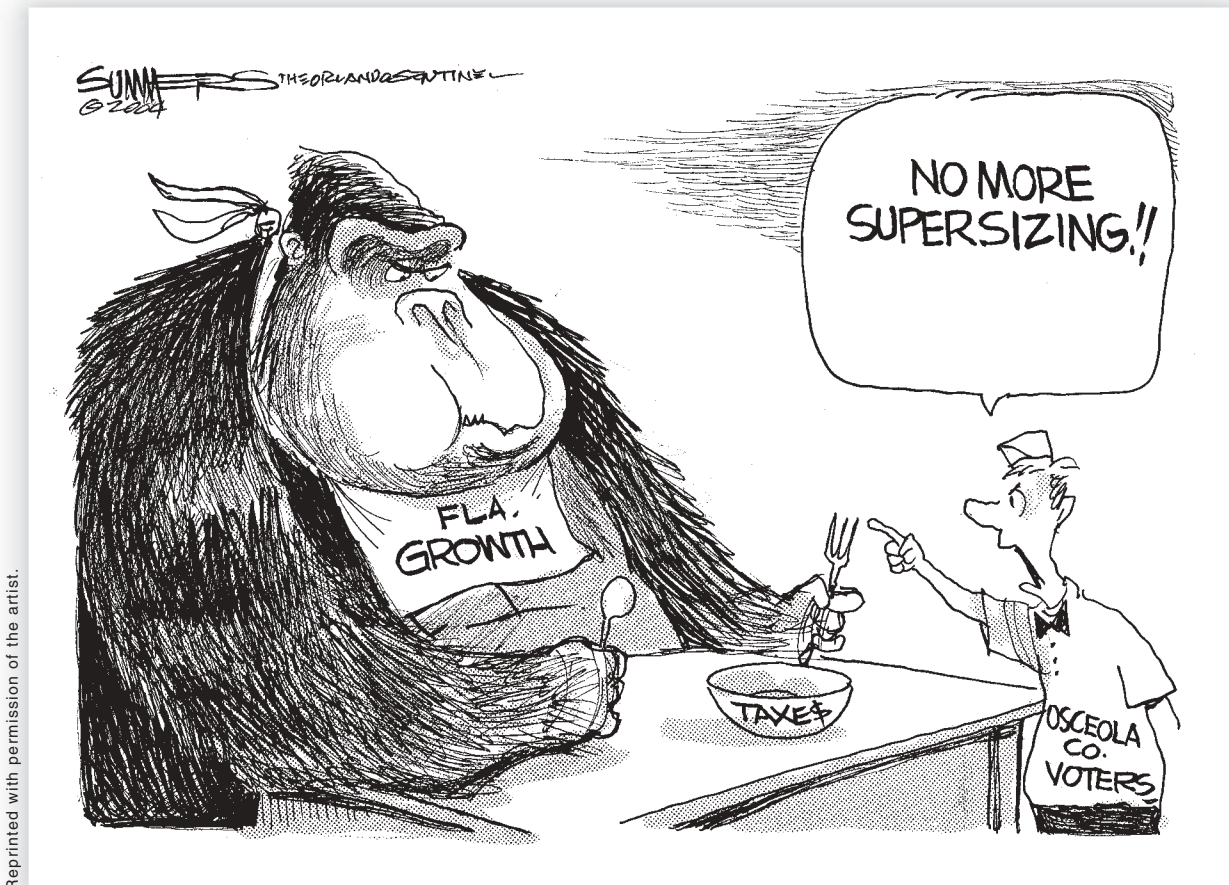
There may be certain aspects of an issue that you and your group are not comfortable

discussing or might compromise some other media project you have planned. You may say "No comment" or, even better, be cordial and say something like "I'd rather not comment on that right now since we are concentrating on groundwater issues here in Aqua County and want people to be aware that New Town will compromise the drinking water in a 100-miles radius." It's a good idea to surround any necessary "no comments" with a lot of information on things you want to stress.

In disseminating information, you may occasionally come across a reporter who seems unimpressed with your side of the issue (see researching who owns what medium above). Do not be defensive. Offer the reporter information that supports your position. You may not get a favorable story but the straighter you play it, the better off you may be on the next story.

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Use Press Releases and Press Conferences Effectively

Press Releases

Press releases, usually faxed or mailed to newsrooms, are not necessarily the best way to communicate with the media. Reporters get tons of them and give most only a cursory glance before filing them or throwing them out.

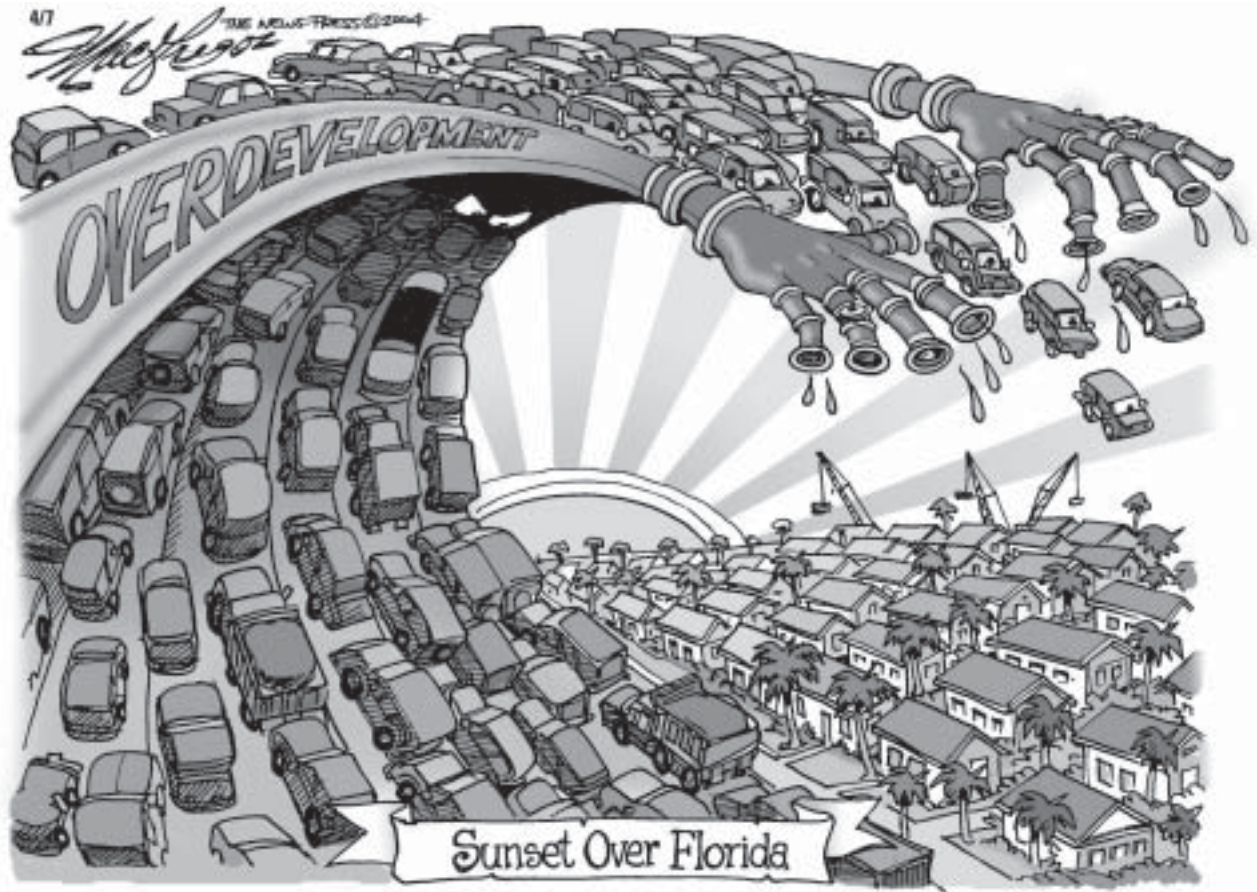
To be effective, the press release should be as attention-getting as possible. It's OK to send a press release for mundane occurrences such as regular meetings, but remember that the law

of diminishing returns applies; if a reporter feels inundated by paper from you, he or she may not respond when you are announcing something really significant.

Keep the press release short and to the point, no more than a page. If there are supporting materials, summarize them. Don't send anyone 20 pages of stuff unless it's a major scandal likely to bring on high-level resignations or something equally seismic. Reporters can always get your boxes of smoking-gun evidence later, if they're that interested.

The press release should tell who is giving the information out, what it's about, why it's important, and when and where if it's an event. Make sure there's a name and at least one contact number (two is better) plus an e-mail address on the press release. Whoever's name is on the press release should be prepared to return all calls promptly. Those reporters' deadlines are not flexible. If you miss your chance to be quoted, that's just tough.

If a reporter says, "Yes, absolutely we'll cover your event/issue," it's also a good idea to do follow-up calls that at least sound help-



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ful (Can we get you any more information, numbers of people to call, etc.?) but which everyone understands are a form of chivvy-ing the reporter along.

Press Conferences

Press conferences can be dramatic and effective, but rarely are if they are held in some beige room with someone reading a position paper in a monotone. For the purposes of addressing growth management issues, it might be more striking and memorable to take reporters to a site—an endangered wetland, a fragile habitat menaced by overbuilding, etc.—and show them what you’re talking about. This makes things real in a way somebody in a suit under florescent light never can be.

However, if you’re stuck with a traditional press conference setting, have some visual aids—pictures of the endangered wetland, fragile habitat, or godawful concrete, high-rise hurricane magnet—maybe even a video. You can have charts and graphs full of impressive-looking numbers, but they are not as attention getting. Find a way to illustrate your statistics in a jazzier fashion. Let reporters know they will have access to pictures you have. Again, showing is better than merely telling.

Work with the Editorial Department

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor can be a cheap, pithy, powerful way to get a community dialogue going or present information or respond to misinformation. Any citizen, whether affiliated with an advocacy group or not, can write a letter to the editor of his or her local paper, or any other. The paper, however, can decide whether to print it or not. So pay

attention to the stated policy of the paper (usually found on the opinion page) as to length and format.

Do not indulge in ad hominem attacks or slanderous statements. Be sure of your facts. Some newspapers will call letter writers to: 1) see if they are real people really living where they say they are; 2) work with them on problematic content; and 3) verify assertions made in letters. This is not to imply that all letters should be nothing but a recitation of data.

The letter should be crafted to fit the situation. If erroneous information has been presented by a developer, a government official, or a news organ, you can present information correcting the mistake. But sometimes a well-written, passionate, more thematic letter is called for.

Often one letter to the editor will generate a response from an opponent, which might demand a response to the response, and so on. At some point, the newspaper will get tired of this and call a halt. It is often best to present your most powerful argument in response to a response, and then let it alone. Too much tit-for-tat compromises the strength of your message.

Opinion Pieces

Another more sustained way to present an argument is in an opinion piece (see Appendix C). Many newspapers encourage submission of outside columns or op ed pieces on newsworthy subjects. This can be a personal sketch illustrating an issue, a persuasive essay presenting useful information, even a sardonic or angry sermon.

Almost anything is permissible if it’s well-written and well-argued. A sense of humor is recommended. Remember, too, that most papers not only have a daily page of columns

and op ed pieces, but Sunday sections called everything from “Comment” to “Perspective” to “Ideas and Issues” with even more space for longer, thoughtful opinion pieces.

One strategy might be to get a well-known person outside of your advocacy group (well-known as a good writer, especially) who you know sympathizes with your point of view on a growth management issue to propose a piece to the editorial page or Sunday opinion section editor. They’d love to get a Peter Mathiessen piece on resort encroachment on the Everglades or Connie May Fowler on overbuilt beaches.

Failing that, identify the columnists at a particular paper who are most likely to agree with you on growth management and pitch a column idea or at least an issue (with back-up information) to them. Carl Hiaasen at the *Miami Herald* comes to mind. Be warned, however, that columnists hate having subjects foisted on them, so be both tactful and prepared to be turned down.

If you want to write something yourself, call the editorial page editor of the paper you’re interested in to find out if he or she would be interested in what you have to say (everything about concision, precision, correctness, and significance discussed in the previous sections of this guide applies to an opinion piece).

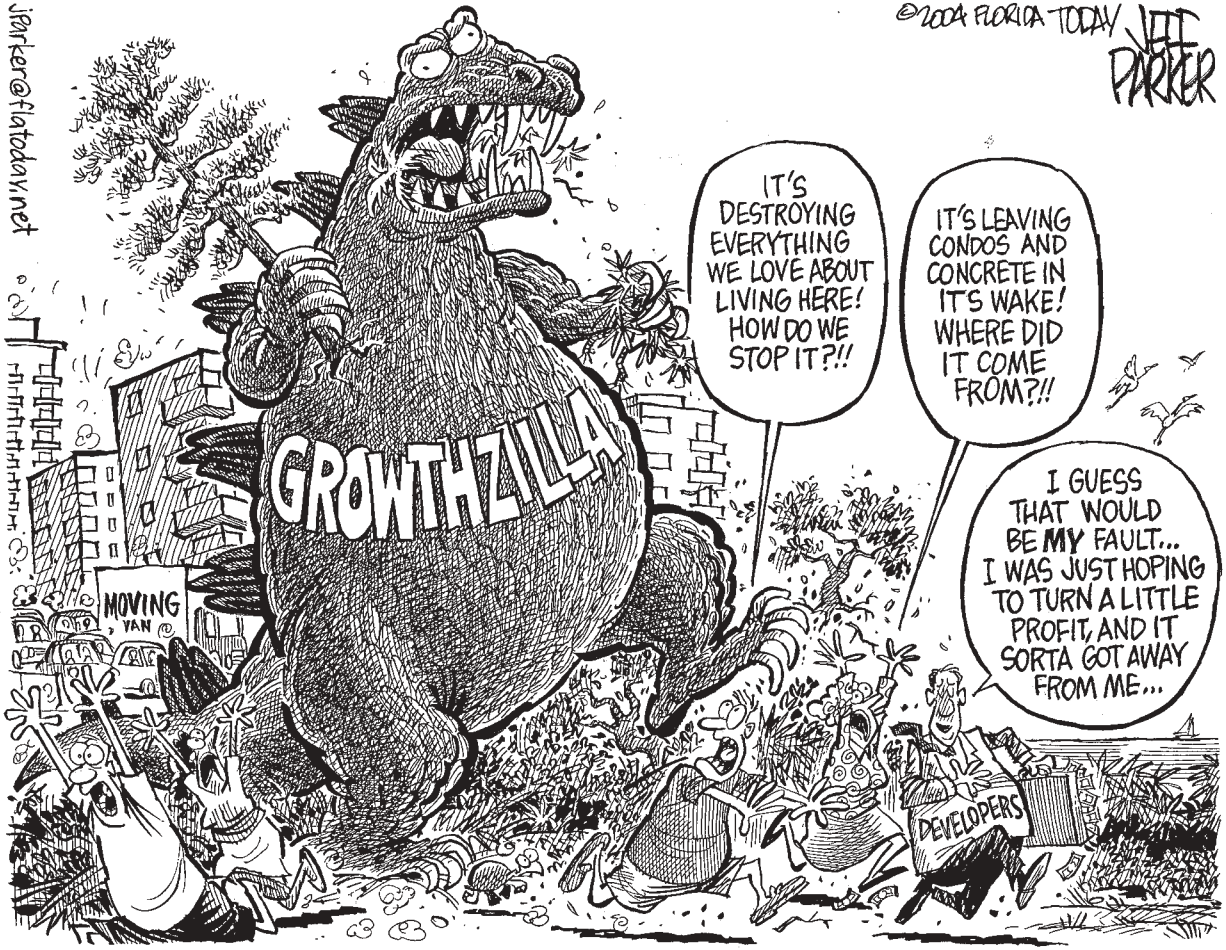
Stick to the word-length you’ve been given. Be prepared to work with an editor—they live to alter people’s prose. However, also be prepared to argue with an editor if you feel he or she is substantially altering or watering down your point. You might even win.

Editorials

Speaking to editorial boards of newspapers is yet another way to provide editorial writers with material. This is difficult, since

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editorial boards are always overstretched and tend to reserve most of their meeting time for election endorsement interviews and office-holders. They do not want to meet with you just because you are fascinating people and have many interesting things to say about growth management.

However, if you have a growth management issue that is urgent and timely in a news sense, say, the county commission is voting on whether to rezone a section of wild land to allow a housing development, then you may have better luck getting in to present your side of the issue (this is especially true at larger newspapers). If you get in, you might bring some short, direct, vigorous materials supporting your case. Do not overload editorial board members with brochures, pictures, position papers and statistics. They do not have time to read all that.

If the board is skeptical (sometimes they can be downright hostile), make your case calmly and politely, but don't belabor it. Some newspapers in Florida have never met a condo, golf course, high-rise hotel or high-density development they didn't like. See above for more tips on anticipating the opposition to your position and countering it. Most importantly, do not take up more than 15 or 20 minutes of the board's time.

Work Effectively with Television

Don't get complicated in your interviews with your local television outlet. Most local stations do "shallow interviews." This means that they do the surface glossy job with pictures and only a little substance.

In advance of your interview, think up some "sound bites" that describe what you're supporting or opposing in as positive or negative light as possible. Use phrases like "This project is what smart growth is all about." "This is the most damaging change to our community's plan that I've ever seen." "Say Yes to this amendment, say Yes to a strip mall on every block." "If we pass this amendment, we'll be on our way to a cleaner lake and better fishing."

Because television is such a visual medium, think about your backdrop. If you have a choice, choose a setting that will illustrate your points and catch viewers' attention during the broadcast. Interviews next to water or historic buildings usually work well. Also, if possible, bring large visual images that complement your presentation that can be displayed beside or behind you. They should be relatively simple with a lot of color.

Connect the Dots

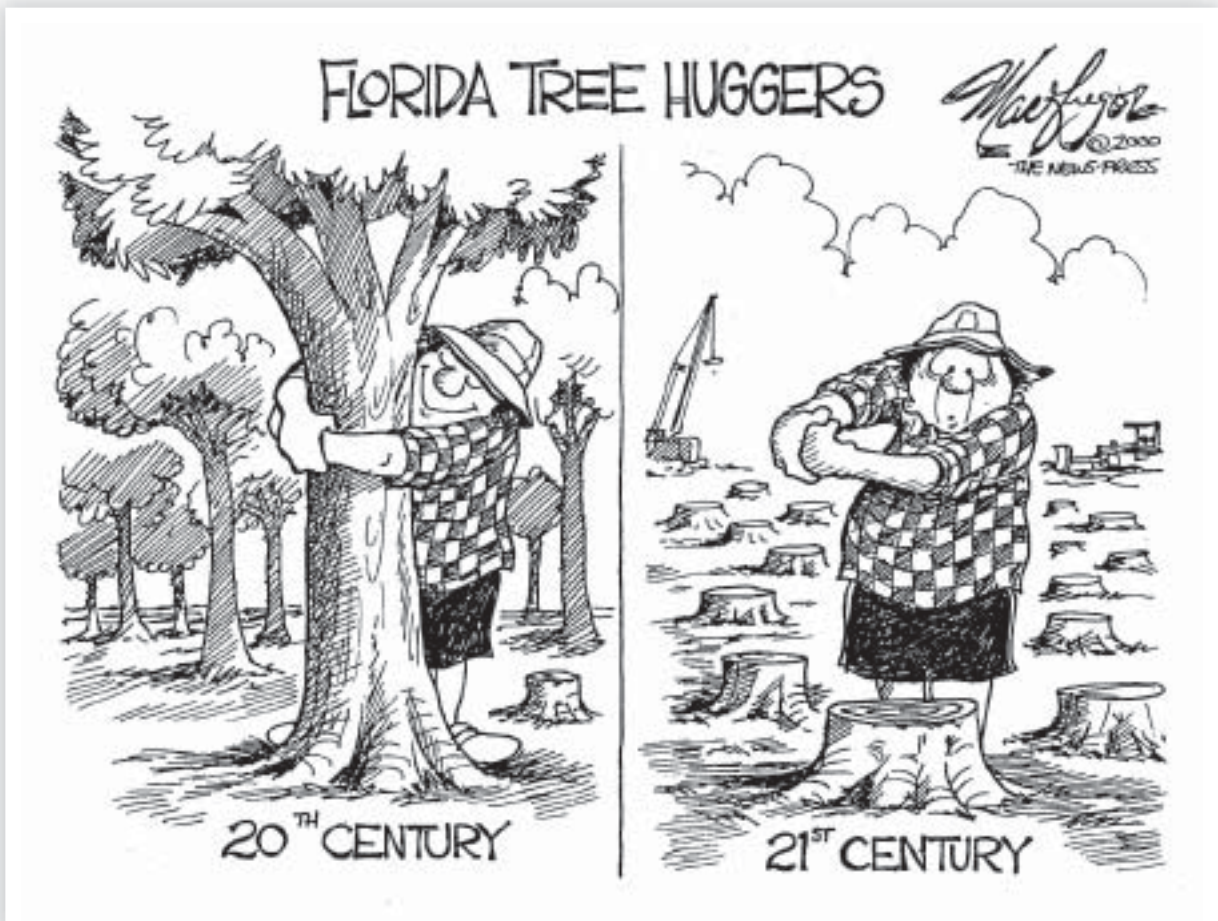
People wanting to help publicize their issues must help reporters connect the dots. It's not just that this bunch of NIMBYs don't want the Wal-mart breathing down their necks, but that the County Commission or City Council or legislature or whatever does not seem to care about stormwater run-off, bad air, congested roads, polluted waters, wrecked wetlands--whatever it is. No matter what your story is, spin is everything.

Preserve or Replace

For years, Jacksonville residents had sought stronger tree preservation measures, but to no avail. A 1988 ordinance to protect trees three feet in circumference or larger was rarely enforced. Over the next decade, residential and commercial developers destroyed thousands of trees that should have been protected.

To make matters worse, despite appeals by hundreds of residents for a stronger ordinance, in 1999 the city council responded to pressure by builders and passed a new law that further weakened the protections. Now only trees roughly six feet in circumference were protected, but with no financial penalties for removing protected trees or provisions requiring replacements, even this law was all but meaningless.

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Some outraged residents took matters into their own hands. Led by a former city council member and a prominent attorney, a coalition of community leaders created Citizens for Tree Preservation, Inc., and a five-member Petitioners' Committee.

With input from professional planners, land use lawyers, landscape architects, and neighborhood leaders, CFTP drafted a charter amendment to protect hardwoods 12 inches or more in diameter. Both residential and commercial developers would need to protect such trees and, when not feasible, mitigate by replanting trees or contributing to the city's tree fund. To get their amendment on the November 2000 ballot, CFTP needed about 21,000 registered voters to sign a petition to set these minimum standards for tree preservation, mitigation, and conservation in the city charter.

The group undertook a masterful public relations campaign with a straightforward message: "Preserve or replace." They established a web site (still operational at www.treemendment.org) to keep supporters informed, and updated it regularly with links to the latest media coverage. They posted photos of clear-cutting in various parts of the county, and responses to frequently asked questions. They made certain that their distinctive phone number (722-TREE) and e-mail address were included in newspaper reports on their progress. One leader carried a distinctive prop—cross sections of large tree trunks that were not protected under the 1999 ordinance—to media events and meetings.

CFTP launched its petition drive in February of 2000. With media present, they staged a kick-off at Hemming Plaza, a historic downtown park filled with magnificent

trees. Driving their message home, CFTP showcased that under the recently passed ordinance, all but two of the plaza's trees could be razed by developers. A cadre of volunteers went out to begin gathering signatures from supporters.

At the March presidential preference election, CFTP held a major signature drive. Standing outside of polling places, volunteers gathered thousands of signatures. Over the coming months, volunteers gathered signatures at various community events. Support was broad-based and bi-partisan, with endorsements and signatures coming from dozens of civic and neighborhood groups as well as some sitting council members, state representatives, and other dignitaries.

Support was far from universal, however. The media repeatedly reported on builders' claims that the measure would drive up the costs of homes and commercial projects. Some builders discussed mounting a legal challenge, should the referendum effort prove successful.

By early September CFTP had secured about 15,000 signatures. They held another media event under the branches of the massive Treaty Oak at Jacksonville's Southbank. Standing by a table piled high with petitions, CFTP outlined their plans to secure the remaining 6,000 votes at the following week's primary elections.

Returning to Hemming Plaza on September 12, a parade of referendum supporters wheeled ten handcarts loaded with brightly colored boxes to the Office of the Supervisor of Elections. CFTP had secured more than 30,000 signatures. With signatures to spare, the Supervisor of Elections announced that the amendment would be on the November ballot.

In early October, CFTP faced a setback. The local builders association filed a legal challenge to the referendum, claiming in part that it imposed an “unconstitutional tax” on new home buyers. The builders also noted that the city had passed a new tree protection ordinance the previous year, and that residents should first give it a chance to work.

When the November election results were reported, supporters were thrilled to learn that the referendum had passed by a whopping 76 percent. It carried in all 268 precincts, with almost 197,000 votes. No other issue or candidate in Jacksonville had ever received so many votes. Later, the builders association’s legal challenge proved unsuccessful.

Several important factors led to CFTP’s overwhelming success. Members of the Petitioners’ Committee pro-

vided strong leadership for the new nonprofit. CFTP had a clear, decisive message and repeated it consistently to anyone who would listen. CFTP developed a devoted grassroots constituency and at the same time actively sought broad-based support for their cause from a range of civic groups and neighborhood associations. They made effective use of their web site and e-mails to keep their supporters informed and engaged. By staging effective media events, they kept their issue in the public eye, garnering extensive positive coverage from the local daily and weekly newspapers and television stations.

Although Citizens for Tree Preservation, Inc., achieved its goal, it has continued its valuable advocacy role. They receive calls from people across the country, seeking advice on passing tree protection measures in their own communities. The work of CFTP has enabled Jacksonville to move a step forward in protecting its distinctive character.

Appendices

Appendix A

Glossary

Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

The state land planning agency, as established by the Growth Management Act.

Development of Regional Impact (DRI)

Large-scale developments which, because of their character, magnitude or location, would have a substantial effect upon the health, safety, or welfare of citizens of more than one county (see Section 380.06, Florida Statutes).

Development Order (DO)

A formal order of a local government that allows or denies a particular development to occur.

Element

Sections of a local comprehensive plan that deal with capital improvements, future land use, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water and natural groundwater aquifer recharge, natural resource conservation, recreation and open space, housing, coastal management, and inter-governmental coordination, and other topics at the discretion of the local government (see Section 163.3177, Florida Statutes).

Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)

Report on local comprehensive plan provisions needing updating and amending, prepared every seven years (see Section 163.3191, Florida Statutes).

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

Map showing categories of land included in a local comprehensive plan, often serves as a basis for plan amendments (see Section 163.3177(6)(a), Florida Statutes).

Growth Management Act

The popular name for the 1985 Local Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulations Act which establishes Florida's process for adopting and amending local comprehensive plans and land development regulations (see Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes).

Impact Fee

An optional fee that a local government may levy to require a developer to pay some or all of the costs of providing public services and facilities (such as roads, schools, and parks) to maintain the adopted level-of-service standards.

Infrastructure

The roads, sewers, parks, schools, stormwater facilities and other structures that are needed to support community growth.

Land Development Regulations (LDR)

City or county ordinances which are adopted to implement the local comprehensive plan or later amendments.

Local Comprehensive Plan

The document that the Growth Management Act requires of every local government in Florida

to show where, when and how development will occur in its community and how it will finance specified infrastructure needs.

Local Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulations Act

The official name for Florida's 1985 Growth Management Act, this establishes Florida's process for adopting and amending local comprehensive plans and land development regulations.

Local Planning Agency (LPA)

The agency designated to prepare the comprehensive plan or plan amendments.

NIMBY

A development that is opposed simply because it is located near those opposing it, regardless of its value to the community. The initials mean "Not In My Back Yard."

Permitting

A state or local process authorizing development in response to an application for a permit.

Plan Amendment

An amendment to the local comprehensive plan.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

A staged plan for a parcel of land that is eligible for flexibility from zoning and subdivision regulations.

Public Notice

Mandatory notices published by

the local government in the local newspaper identifying intent to amend local comprehensive plans (see Section 163.3187(2), Florida Statutes) or land development regulations, or issue or deny some types of development orders.

Quasi-Judicial Process

A process that is similar to, but not the same as, a judicial proceeding. In the growth management context it refers to the process that a local government conducts when considering development orders.

Standing

The legal concept that determines who has the right to request or participate in a court proceeding or administrative hearing.

State Comprehensive Plan

The state plan adopted by the Florida Legislature (see Chapter 187, Florida Statutes).

Urban Service Area (USA)

The boundaries establishing where public infrastructure that supports urbanized development is to be provided over a specified number of years.

Variance

A development order loosening development standards if a parcel of land has physical characteristics that make it difficult or impossible to develop.

Zoning Ordinance

A land development regulation that identifies the allowable use for each piece of property within a community.

Appendix B

Key Contact Information

1000 Friends of Florida

www.1000friendsofflorida.org

This site contains information about growth management in Florida, legal advocacy, affordable housing, smart growth, links to other smart growth organizations, and other useful information.

Cities

See “Florida League of Cities”

Community and Environmental Defense Services

www.ceds.org

This site includes *How to Win Land Development Issues* and other useful information.

Corporate Forms

www.ralfbrookesattorney.com.

This site includes nonprofit corporation forms, public records requests and other forms of interest to the public interest practitioner.

Corporate Information for Neighborhood Associations

www.econa.org/services

Corporate Registration

www.sunbiz.com

This site of the Florida Department of State provides for online filing to incorporate.

Counties

See “Florida Association of Counties”

Environmental Land Use Law Center

www.elulc.org/site/main.html

The ELULC is a non-profit law firm dedicated to representing the public interest in environmental and land use matters in South Florida. This site includes useful links to other web sites, legal analyses, and other tools to help you become a better activist for the environment.

Florida Association of Counties

www.fl-counties.com

Use this site to find the web site of your county. Go to “visit county web sites” and choose your county.

Florida Department of Community Affairs

www.dca.state.fl.us

This site contains all of the rules of the department implementing the Growth Management Act, numerous articles of interest on growth management as well as pending amendments, charts, graphs and upcoming events.

Florida Government

www.myflorida.com

This site will tell you what the Governor is doing and link you to all state agencies, the Legislature and the courts.

Florida League of Cities

www.flcities.com

Use this site to find the web site of your city. Go to “Links” then to “City Links” to locate the web site of your city.

Florida Legislature

www.leg.state.fl.us

This site will give the Calendars and Journals of both houses, all pending bills, lobbyists lists and information about legislators.

Internal Revenue Service

www.irs.gov

You can use this site to get federal tax-exempt information and forms for 501(c)(3) designation for your corporation.

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To find your local newspaper, go to any search engine (Google, etc.) and type in “Florida newspapers.” This will give you a complete list of Florida papers that are on line and allow you to go to the one you want. You may find information on more local publications through your local government sites.

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Smart Growth Contacts

American Farmland Trust

www.farmland.org

American Planning Association

www.planning.org

Congress for the New Urbanism

www.cnu.org

The Conservation Fund

www.conservationfund.org

Growth Management Leadership Alliance

www.gmla.org

National Neighborhood Coalition

www.neighborhoodcoalition.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation

www.nationaltrust.org

Sierra Club

www.sierraclub.org

Smart Growth America

www.smartgrowthamerica.com

Smart Growth Network

www.smartgrowth.org

Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse

www.sprawlwatch.org

Surface Transportation Policy Project

www.transact.org

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Appendix C

A Public Relations Case Study: 1000 Friends of Florida's Campaign to Prevent the Development of Mecca Farms in Palm Beach County

ate in 2003, Gov. Jeb Bush announced a deal to bring to Palm Beach County a campus of the prestigious Scripps Research Institute of LaJolla, California. Unfortunately, the chosen site was Mecca Farms, a remote 2000-acre property in the headwaters of the Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River. Mecca Farms was in Palm Beach County's Rural Tier, an area designated for very limited development, and was surrounded on three sides by environmentally sensitive lands.

1000 Friends of Florida was concerned from the start. The Scripps proposal would bring development on the scale of downtown West Palm Beach to lands on the fringes of the Everglades. This development would violate Palm Beach County's award-winning comprehensive plan, flaunt state growth management regulations, and promote sprawl in this remote area. Additionally, close to one billion taxpayer dollars would be required to bring the project to fruition.

1000 Friends undertook every measure possible to inform the county and the public of the many legal, planning, environmental, traffic and other flaws with the site. 1000 Friends sent the county detailed legal memos, testified at county hearings, wrote letters to the editor,

provided information to reporters covering the issue, took out a newspaper ad and conducted a citizens forum to focus greater attention on the many problems associated with Mecca Farms. 1000 Friends also contacted Gov. Bush, incoming Senate President Tom Lee, and the board of Scripps offering to assist in any way possible with the selection of a more appropriate site in Palm Beach County.

Despite these efforts and the availability of at least two appropriate alternative sites, the Palm Beach County Commission voted to amend the local comprehensive plan and land development regulations, and issued the development orders necessary to start construction on Mecca Farms. With no other recourse left, 1000 Friends partnered with other concerned nonprofits and individuals to file three lawsuits in opposition to the Mecca Farms site.

As this handbook goes to press, the final location for the Scripps Research Institute remains unresolved. However, we thought the following newspaper ad, letter to the editor, op ed piece, and press release might provide some useful guidance for local efforts to halt inappropriate development.

Letter to the Editor— This letter to the editor ran in the Palm Beach Post in December 2004, in response to negative comments regarding 1000 Friends and others filing a lawsuit over the proposed Mecca Farms site for the Scripps Research Institute.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We at 1000 Friends of Florida were shocked to hear Gov. Jeb Bush call those of us who oppose putting the Scripps Research Institute next to the Everglades “legal terrorists.” Some of the state’s most prominent citizens have served on the 1000 Friends of Florida board, including governors, an Assistant Secretary to the U.S. Department of the Interior, secretaries of the Florida Department of Community Affairs and Environmental Protection, state senators, business leaders, university presidents, environmentalists, architects, developers, and community leaders.

We are upholding Florida law in the face of a head-long political rush. Remember: Florida passed the Growth Management Act 20 years ago to make sure that infrastructure keeps pace with development and that the state doesn’t bulldoze its natural resources for profit.

Palm Beach County is allowing Scripps and its associated developments—which will eventually total the area of 13 shopping malls sprawling over an area the size of downtown West Palm Beach—at the edge of the Everglades, a resource that taxpayers are paying \$8.4-billion to restore. The project

sits at the National Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River headwaters. Even if you don’t care about the environment, you should care about the enormous bill that this sprawl will leave for taxpayers.

The decision to go to court was a last resort. We are not anti-Scripps. We tried to steer this project to more suitable sites, including the Briger Tract, near Florida Atlantic University’s Abacoa campus, and Parcel 19, in Jupiter.

We choose to stand and fight. We urge the citizens to join us. Let history show that our courage will have benefited future generations in Palm Beach County and in all of Florida.

Charles Pattison, AICP
Executive Director
1000 Friends of Florida

Op Ed—The controversy over Scripps was covered by major papers across the state. 1000 Friends prepared and distributed this Op Ed to explain its reasons for opposing the Mecca Farms site. It ran in the *Miami Herald*, *Tampa Tribune*, *Orlando Sentinel*, *Stuart News*, *Vero Beach Press-Journal*, *Jupiter Courier* and *Fort Pierce News Tribune* in early December 2004.

My View

Imagine a city the size of downtown West Palm Beach perched on the edge of the Everglades, a natural jewel that taxpayers are spending \$8.4-billion to restore. Imagine new developments sprawling out to the size of 13 shopping malls there, in a part of Palm Beach County that residents and planners wisely designated as rural lands years ago. Thirteen shopping malls at the headwaters of the Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River, one of the last free-flowing subtropical rivers in the nation.

This is the reality of the Scripps Biomedical Institute on Mecca Farms.

Florida wants Scripps, and the jobs and prestige that it will bring. Palm Beach County wants Scripps. Even the conservation organizations want Scripps. But the simple fact remains that it is being planned for the wrong location. This part of Palm Beach County was never intended for intense growth. It has no infrastructure. This site contradicts every sound planning, land use and environmental principle that Florida's Growth Management Act is based upon.

Remember, the Growth Management Act is supposed to ensure orderly growth that protects everyone's quality

of life. It requires some hard choices.

That's why 1000 Friends of Florida, the Florida Wildlife Federation, the Loxahatchee River Coalition, Audubon Society of the Everglades, the Palm Beach County Environ-



Charles Pattison,
AICP
Executive Director
1000 Friends of Florida

mental Coalition and several individuals have gone to court to challenge this ill-sited project. That's why the 35 groups in the Everglades Coalition passed a resolution opposing putting Scripps on the Mecca site.

It isn't easy going against the tide. Incredibly, Gov. Jeb Bush has called us "legal terrorists." The truth is that we are upholding current law—anti-sprawl law that came from intense deliberation from the Capitol in Tallahassee to every local government in the state.

We are not some wild-eyed

spoilers. Some of the most prominent men and women in Florida have served on the board of 1000 Friends of Florida, including governors, an Assistant Secretary to the U.S. Department of the Interior, a secretary of the Florida Department of Community Affairs and founder for Florida's growth management process, a secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, state senators, business leaders, university presidents and other renowned academics, environmentalists, architects, developers, and community leaders.

The decision to go to court was a last resort. We tried to steer this project to more suitable sites—and there are more suitable sites, including the Briger tract, near the Florida Atlantic University Abacoa campus and Parcel 19, inside the town of Jupiter. But the Scripps political juggernaut has had its way. Now, the public can expect extensive litigation, and—if we don't win—a spoiled Everglades, clogged roads, and the expensive sprawl that Floridians decided was bad public policy two decades ago.

We choose to stand and fight. We urge the citizens to join us. Let history show that

our courage amid this headlong political rush will have benefited future generations in Palm Beach County and in all of Florida.

Charles Pattison is Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Florida, a bipartisan, nonprofit growth management watchdog group. For more information on 1000 Friends, visit www.1000friendsofflorida.org.

Newspaper Ad and E-mail Alert—1000 Friends of Florida ran an ad in the *Palm Beach Post* on October 3, 2004 to encourage citizens to call county commissioners to deny the Mecca Farms site, and choose instead a more appropriate site closer to existing development and infrastructure. 1000 Friends also sent this out as an e-mail alert to its Palm Beach County members.

Say “NO” to the Mecca Farms Site for the Scripps Biomedical Research Institute in Palm Beach County

Last year, plans to locate a branch of the renowned Scripps Biomedical Research Institute in Palm Beach County were announced. Unfortunately, the remote and inappropriate Mecca Farms site was selected. **On October 5**, beginning at 9:30 a.m., the Palm Beach County Commission is meeting to approve the comprehensive plan amendments and zoning changes needed for the Mecca site. Please take time to **Attend the Meeting, Write, or Call In!**



- Because of the many serious problems with Mecca Farms, **Numerous Legal Challenges** could tie the project up for years.

- There are **Many Other Opponents** of the Mecca Farms site, including the Florida Wildlife Federation, Audubon of Florida, Environmental and Land

Use Law Center, Palm Beach County Environmental Coalition, Everglades Coalition (which represents 39 organizations), and others!

Ask the Palm Beach County Commission to:

1. Deny the Mecca Farms site.
2. Choose a site closer to existing development and infrastructure.

What is Wrong with the Mecca Farms Site?

- Mecca Farms is the **Wrong Site** for a good project! A site closer to existing development and infrastructure should be chosen.
- Mecca Farms is in the headwaters of the “Wild and Scenic” Loxahatchee River. Opening the door for additional development in this area will **Threatens Everglades Restoration** and harm efforts to restore the Loxahatchee.
- It will cost more than **One Billion Taxpayer Dollars** to bring this project to fruition on this site.
- Even after roads leading to Mecca Farms have been widened and improved, planners admit the **Roads Will Still Be Clogged!**
- Development on Mecca Farms will **Threaten the Rural Character** of the area.
- This project will **Promote Urban Sprawl** by placing a community as large as downtown West Palm Beach beside the Everglades.
- The project will **Violate Palm Beach County’s National Award-Winning Local Comprehensive Plan**, including its urban services boundary, and provisions to limit development in rural areas and locate new development in eastern parts of the county.

How Can I Express My Opposition?

Attend the Palm Beach County Commission Meeting and Speak!

9:30 a.m., Tuesday, October 5, 2004

Palm Beach County Commission Chambers

301 N. Olive Avenue

West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Send a Letter to the Palm Beach County Commissioners!

The Honorable (names and districts are listed below)

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

301 N. Olive Avenue

West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Call the Palm Beach County Commissioners!

Commissioner Karen T. Marcus (District 1) 561-355-2201 or 877- 930-2201 (Toll Free)

Commissioner Jeff Koons (District 2) 561-355-2202 or 877-930-2202 (Toll Free)

Commissioner Warren H. Newell (District 3) 561-355-2203

Commissioner Mary McCarty (District 4) 561-355-2204 or South County 561-276-1220

Commissioner Burt Aaronson (District 5) 561-355-2205 or 877-930-2205 (Toll Free)

Commissioner Tony Masilotti (District 6) 561-355-6300 or 877-930-2206 (Toll Free)

Commissioner Addie L. Greene (District 7) 561-355-2207 or South County 561-276-1350

**Say “NO” to Irresponsible Development
You CAN Make a Difference!**

For more information or to join 1000 Friends of Florida, visit www.1000friendsofflorida.org.

1000 Friends of Florida is a statewide (501(c)(3) nonprofit smart growth advocacy organization with an office in Palm Beach County.

Press Release—On December 10, 2004, 1000 Friends held a press conference and distributed this press release to announce it was filing another law suit over the proposed Mecca Farms site for the Scripps Research Institute.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 10, 2004

Contact: Charles Pattison or Janet Bowman at 850.222.6277

1000 Friends of Florida Files Suit Over Improper Siting of Scripps Biomedical Institute in Palm Beach County

TALLAHASSEE—1000 Friends of Florida, the Florida Wildlife Federation, Audubon Society of the Everglades, Loxahatchee River Coalition, and Maria Wise-Miller filed suit at the Florida Department of Community Affairs today to block the proposed siting of Scripps Research at a far-flung location at the edge of the Everglades in Palm Beach County. The Environmental and Land Use Law Center is serving as counsel.

The groups are taking this difficult step because Palm Beach County has committed numerous violations of Florida's Growth Management Act, the state's anti-sprawl law, in approving land-use changes that will allow Scripps to build on Mecca Farms, on the edge of Florida's Everglades and at the headwaters of the Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River.

The Scripps facility, along with nearby proposed developments, will be the size of 13 shopping malls over an area the size of downtown West Palm Beach. The Palm Beach County comprehensive plan has won national awards, but now its principles are being tossed out in favor of expensive sprawl next to a natural resource that taxpayers are paying \$8.4-billion to restore.

"This sprawl will cost Palm Beach County taxpayers millions," said Charles Pattison, Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Florida. "We think future generations will look back at this crossroads and thank us for stopping the County from doing the wrong thing."

Specifically, the complaint cites:

- The county concluded that no alternative sites existed, when there are alternative sites available, including the Briger tract, near the Florida Atlantic University Abacoa campus, and Parcel 19, inside the town of Jupiter.
- The county has violated the requirements for traffic concurrency—which is supposed to make sure there is enough road capacity for new development. The county is also setting a precedent for other private developers to exploit.

- The county has improperly located electricity infrastructure for Scripps on land within a wildlife management area, setting a dangerous precedent for swapping conservation lands for development.
- The Mecca Farms location for the Scripps project is inconsistent with the Urban Sprawl Rule, Florida Administrative Code, Rule 9J-5.006(5)(g)8.
- The Mecca Farms site is also inconsistent with Rule 9J-5.006(5)(g)2, which prohibits a land-use change that "Promotes, allows or designates significant amounts of urban development to occur in rural areas at substantial distances from existing urban areas while leaping over undeveloped lands which are available and suitable for development."

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush recently called us "legal terrorists" for going to court over Scripps. Our decision to go to court was a last resort. We tried for over a year to steer this project to more suitable sites with no success.

1000 Friends of Florida believes that the Scripps Biomedical Institute, located properly, will bring great benefits to the citizens of Florida and Palm Beach County. And Palm Beach County has identified at least three sites on which we would support a well-designed Scripps project (the Briger tract near the Florida Atlantic University Abacoa campus, Parcel 19, inside the town of Jupiter, and the Florida Biotech Park formerly known as the Palm Beach Park of Commerce which has already been approved for industrial development).

Even as we file this suit, we remain willing to work with the Governor, Scripps' Board of Directors, and the Palm Beach County Commission on an agreement that would bring the Scripps Institute to one of these sites, or an alternative acceptable Palm Beach County site, with our support. We hope that the Palm Beach County Commission will take the lead and appoint a community leader, such as Frank Brogan, to work with us, Scripps and the County to develop a win-win solution to bring Scripps to an alternate site in Palm Beach County without destroying our natural resources and our quality of life.

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1000 Friends of Florida thanks the following editorial cartoonists who graciously permitted the use of their artwork in this publication:

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Ron Jaudon, *FAPA*

Chan Lowe, *Sun-Sentinel South Florida*

Doug MacGregor, *Fort Myers News-Press*

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