

Florida Hometown Democracy Constitutional Ballot Amendment
Position of 1000 Friends of Florida
October 2007
From Floridians for Smarter Growth Website

After careful deliberation, the Board of Directors of 1000 Friends of Florida announces that it does not support the proposed constitutional ballot amendment known as Florida Hometown Democracy (FHD). Resulting from widespread dissatisfaction with the way this state is dealing with growth and development, this amendment would require voter approval of every amendment to a local comprehensive plan. *(Update: The amendment did not receive sufficient signatures to go on the ballot in 2008, but supporters are continuing to gather signatures in the hopes of getting the issue on the ballot in 2010)*

As this state's growth management watchdog, 1000 Friends of Florida has spent considerable time evaluating the merits of the proposed amendment. We have carefully reviewed the amendment language, spoken with leaders of this movement, and weighed the pros and cons of FHD in reaching our position. We applaud the leaders of this sincere effort to bring about change, and recognize the need to improve growth management and development decisions in Florida.

The Board of Directors of 1000 Friends of Florida cannot support Florida Hometown Democracy for the following major reasons:

High-Priced Media Campaigns--Debates on controversial comprehensive plan amendments would likely turn into high-priced media campaigns, favoring deep pocket large developers over homeowner associations and grassroots groups.

NIMBYism or "Not In My Back Yard"--Local governments would find it much more difficult to adopt amendments related to often controversial but much needed community projects such as affordable housing, schools, transit systems, landfills, and other public facilities, leading local governments to pursue either more costly or less desirable alternatives.

Piecemeal Planning--FHD would also remove the "comprehensive" from the comprehensive planning approach, resulting in a series of uncoordinated, piecemeal decisions driven by popularity rather than necessity.

Sprawl--This proposal could limit responsible new development in more populated, urbanized areas, forcing development out into rural areas which have fewer people to oppose the proposed plan amendment. It could also

limit efforts to pass plan amendments intended to lessen sprawling patterns of development.

Legal Gridlock--A series of legal challenges will likely be necessary because of the vague wording of the proposed amendment. Questions include: Will plan amendments be voted on individually or in a bundled package of many amendments? Will the amendments be considered at regular elections or will special elections be required? Who will pay for the new and increased costs associated with these elections? What happens if voters approve an amendment found "not in compliance" by the Florida Department of Community Affairs? What happens if changes required during the mandated 7-year update of the comprehensive plan are not approved by the voters?

Legislative Backlash--To avoid such legal challenges, the Florida Legislature could change the plan amendment process for the worse, reduce the ability of citizens to challenge plan amendments, or undertake other similarly drastic and counter-productive alternatives that would render Florida Hometown Democracy-and Florida's growth management process--moot.

1000 Friends of Florida instead supports a "Citizen Bill of Rights" to address the genuine and legitimate citizen dissatisfaction with the existing process.