

Hialeah officials campaign against controversial Amendment Four

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The Hialeah Council voted Tuesday on a measure urging Florida voters to vote down the proposed citizen-led Amendment Four that will appear on the 2010 ballot this fall.

The Florida Hometown Democracy initiative aims to curb development interests from influencing the local political process by asking voters to adopt any changes to the comprehensive land use plan, also known as the growth blueprint, of cities and counties.

The proposal would need to receive 60 percent approval at the polls.

Siding with Floridians for Smarter Growth who oppose the amendment, Hialeah officials fear the "Vote on Everything" amendment -- as it's called -- would undermine the actions of local government, complicate the planning process and frustrate voters.

"It has tremendous drawbacks. Financially, it has an enormous impact on this community on the progress of being able to create jobs and invite new development," Hialeah Mayor Julio Robaina said. "That the people need to be listened to, absolutely. But to create a process that will eliminate, stall and prevent good growth is a problem."

Amendment Four advocates blame rising taxes, falling home values, gridlocked roads and dwindling water supplies on politicians who rubber stamp development plans.

"They control the politics of Florida from the governor on down," Lesley Blackner, who co-founded Hometown Democracy, told The Miami Herald in June when the amendment received the necessary amount of signatures to make it to the ballot.

The Hialeah resolution argues that there are already adequate checks and balances to protect the public's right to voice concerns over changes.

“There's a good process in place and if the public doesn't like the decision they're going to vote out those people.”

The resolution states: “The proposed amendment seeks to gain an indiscriminate veto power over decisions made by elected officials. A veto power. . . assails the central purpose of a representative democracy, would besiege any growth whatsoever.”

For more information on both sides of the matter, visit Floridians for Smarter Growth at www.florida2010.org or Florida Hometown Democracy at www.floridahometowndemocracy.com.

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