

[Back to article](#)



---

Printed on page A3

## **Amendment 4 opponent warns of 'permanent recession'**

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WINTER HAVEN - An opponent of Amendment 4, a Florida ballot initiative, said Friday that if it is passed this year, its negative impact would be felt in Polk County.

Amendment 4, also known as "Hometown Democracy," is an initiative that will go before Florida voters in the fall general election. If the initiative is approved, voters would have to vote "Yes" or "No" on every change in comprehensive land-use plans, possibly leading to several referenda on election ballots in some areas, opponents say.

Currently, county commissioners are responsible for voting on land-use issues in the county.

Ryan Houck is the executive director and campaign spokesman for Floridians for Smarter Growth, an organization that opposes Amendment 4. Houck was the guest speaker at the East Polk County Committee of 100 luncheon Friday at the Best Western Admiral's Inn in Winter Haven. The EPC 100 works to boost economic development on the east side of the county.

Houck has been touring Florida to tell residents what Amendment 4 is about, and who is backing the ballot measure, from the perspective of his organization.

"Amendment 4 would lead to the end to coordinating and functioning

planning," Houck said. "This amendment, in essence, could create a permanent recession to the economy in Polk County and the state of Florida."

Houck talked about St. Pete Beach, a small community in Pinellas County, that enacted a similar version of Amendment 4 locally in 2006. He described how growth on St. Pete Beach was halted and how businesses had to battle through the court system - sometimes as long as two years - to get approval for new construction.

"The residents tried to play within the rules of the amendment but had a suit brought against them by the same people who just wanted to give the people a choice in 2006," Houck said.

"It's not too hard to figure out the consequences of this proposal will be if it was taken statewide, and the only test case we have is St. Pete Beach."

According to Houck, groups that are funding the Amendment 4 campaign include special interests lawyers; the Sierra Club; adult entertainment interests, including strip clubs; and population-control advocates.

Local businessman Sam Killebrew is the Polk County co-chairman for Floridians for Smarter Growth. He also is the owner of Killebrew Inc., which handles underground utilities in Polk County, and he strongly opposes Amendment 4.

"If this amendment gets passed, then I'm about out of business and out of a job," Killebrew said. "It's just that simple."

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