

Guest column: Ask City Council to oppose 'status quo' on development

STORY UPDATED AT 1:01 AM ON THURSDAY, AUG. 20, 2009

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PRICES INCLUDE YOUR CHOICE OF FRAMES!

City Council Member Daniel Davis has proposed that the Jacksonville City Council pass a resolution (ordinance 2009-586) opposing Amendment 4 on the November 2010 ballot and asking citizens to vote "no."

Davis is also executive director of the Northeast Florida Builders Association, which opposes the amendment.

Amendment 4, Florida Hometown Democracy, would enable voters to vote on changes to our land use plan (comp plan) after the council approves such a change. So, citizens could vote on changes for a strip mall, Wal-mart or commercial office space in a residential neighborhood.

The amendment is needed because we taxpayers endure the congested traffic, overcrowded schools, higher taxes and lower property values.

'The status quo of sprawl'

Davis is a developer, and he wants to continue the status quo of sprawl and overdevelopment that has crashed Florida's and Jacksonville's economy, caused the loss of so many of our jobs and reduced home values.

Taxpayers cannot afford to continue subsidizing developers' irresponsible projects. Please contact your council members before Tuesday, Aug. 25, and ask them to oppose the bill.

Here's why:

New developments reach into the pockets of established residents to finance additional schools and services; and the traffic and pollution they generate reduce property values.

'Pyramid scheme'

The Cedar Swamp study was conducted by Arthur Anderson on behalf of John Delaney's administration in 2000. It found that for every \$1 in tax revenue, it would cost \$2.45 to provide services.

In other words, development would cost almost 2.5 times the tax revenue generated. And there is nothing unique about that parcel of land that would make these conclusions not applicable to any other develop-able land in Jacksonville.

Given all the evidence to the contrary, it's amazing how many still believe the myth that growth reduces taxes.

In *Better Not Bigger*, Eben Fodor quotes Oregon environmentalist Andy Kerr, who calls urban growth "a pyramid scheme in which a relatively few make a killing, some others make a living, but most [of us] pay for it."

As long as there is a killing to be made, no environmentally concerned tree huggers are going to stop overdevelopment.

Developers win; we lose

Developers make the money. They're playing the game according to the rules, which rewards whoever is clever enough to put any cost of doing business they can onto someone else.

They get the profits. We build the roads.

They hire the workers. We sit in traffic jams and breathe the exhaust.

They get jobs building the subdivision. We lose open lands, clean water and wildlife.

Then, we subsidize them with our taxes. Taxpayers are stuck trying to figure out how to pay the bills long after the developer has taken his check to the bank.

How much growth can our roads, land, waters and air, our neighborhoods, schools and community support?

Shame

Shame on our city officials for allowing this, but, sadly, local governments are controlled by political contributions from the growth machine. For example, over 60 percent of Davis' contributions are from the development/builder/real estate industry.

How do citizens compete with that kind of financial firepower?

Do not believe the myth that all growth is good. Ask hard questions. Who will benefit and who will pay?

Lesley Blackner, president of Florida Hometown Democracy, says, "The first thing I suggest you do when you read a letter, column or blog in opposition to Amendment 4 is to Google the name of the author. Chances are he makes his living off sprawl or works in government (which is often the same thing.)"

Contact your City Council members (630-CITY) and tell them "no more welfare for the developers".

Tell them you understand what's going on, you support Amendment 4 and want them to vote "no" on Davis' irresponsible resolution.

Janet L. Stanko of Jacksonville is an Amendment 4 campaign organizer.



T-U editor screwed up

Submitted by [Gadfly](#) on Thu. 8/20/2009 at 5:53 am

How could the T-U editor allow this to go to print? There will be heck to pay for letting someone print the truth.

Sadly, if Amendemnt 4 passes City Council will still do what the greedy developers want. It will just cost the developers a lit more to pay them off.

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Sad to say

Submitted by [ElJefe](#) on Thu. 8/20/2009 at 7:02 am

This Amendment is on the ballot simply because politicians serve contributors and not their constituents. For years Comprehensive Plan changes have been made over the objections of adjacent land owners and neighborhoods. Roads became clogged, communities ruined and taxes raised - all for the profit margins of developers and builders.

Gadfly, if A-4 passes (as I think it will), the only thing payoffs will get the developers is their proposed change onto a ballot (contrary to opponents misinformation only those changes approved by local officials will make the ballot, not all). If the community sees the change as a good thing, they'll approve it; otherwise, they won't.

This is what happens when representative democracy doesn't work. The voters will take the power away from their representatives. Maybe this situation should be heard on a national scale.

On another note: Why would the City Council as a governing body take a position on a ballot issue? I'm sure this is pandering by Councilman Davis to curry favor like the good littl lapdog he is. I don't care if individual Council members take a political position, they are after all, politicians. Next they'll be passing resolutions in support of individual candidates, etc.

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Laws are optional to elected officials

Submitted by [Gadfly](#) on Thu. 8/20/2009 at 5:46 pm

Amendments are only laws to taxpayers, they are optional to elected officials.

For example the class size amendement was to passed by the taxpayers to force the politicians to reduce class sizes. Although it is part of the state constitution the politicians ignore the law and granted DCPS waivers. DCPS got over 1/2 billion dollars to build new schools and hire more teachers yet they blew the money and no one is holding DCPS accountable.

City Council has laws restricting overdevelopment. Yet, the main business of City Council is to grant wavieres to greedy developers who do not want to obey the zoning laws.

Gadfly has said it many times, why pass laws when the politicians have no intent to obey them and the executive branch refuses to enforce them?

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