

# Amendment 4 for livability

Sarasota Herald Tribune

By LESLEY BLACKNER Guest Columnist

Saturday, March 13, 2010.

Amendment 4 isn't on the ballot until November, but our opposition is already in overdrive.

The proposed constitutional amendment sponsored by Florida Hometown Democracy, a nonpartisan group of Floridians who are sick of unplanned, speculative over-development that wrecks a community's quality of life, depresses home values and sticks taxpayers with the bill. Amendment 4 is simple: It will require voter approval of local comprehensive land-use plan changes. Local commissioners will review and vote, as they do now, but voters will veto or approve their decision at the next regularly scheduled Election Day. It won't require special elections.

Amendment 4 opponents -- such as Rev. Donald L. Roberts, who wrote a guest column in the Herald-Tribune titled "Vote No on Amendment 4" -- are already blaming it for future job losses. A review of Florida's recent history reveals this to be nonsense.

The fact is that real estate gone wild took down Florida's economy. Real estate speculators, fueled with easy money, overbuilt many areas of the state, including Sarasota County. Real estate related jobs evaporated when the easy money vanished and demand collapsed. Now, Floridians are left with the consequences: depressed home values, foreclosures, rising taxes and a crippled economy.

Amendment 4 won't stop Sarasota County's planned growth, but it will help confine growth to where it is now allocated in the county's comprehensive plan. There is enough future commercial and residential development already approved in the comprehensive land-use plan to keep construction workers building for decades. That's what the Sarasota 2050 plan is all about.

Amendment 4 will let voters decide if a local comprehensive land-use plan change should be granted. Developers hate that. They like being able to build whatever they want, wherever they want, and now, under some circumstances, they only need three votes on the County Commission to do it.

Sarasota County is beautiful and livable. Go take a drive over to Broward County, if people want to see the Sarasota County's future under the current system. Vote yes on 4 in November. The hometown you save will be your own.

Lesley Blackner is the president of Florida Hometown Democracy:  
[floridahometowndemocracy.com](http://floridahometowndemocracy.com)