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**Floridians interested in this wonderful place the Spanish called
La Florida**

In November of 2010 Floridians will have the opportunity to vote for or against **Amendment 4** (Florida Home Town Democracy). As a planning professional for well more than thirty five years, and a Floridian for well more than seventy five years, I am in love with my home state. However, I do find that discussions for and against **Amendment 4** to be a mixed bag. There is considerable confusion among generalities and specifics regarding our historic growth management system, local land development proposals, land use planning objectives and land development regulations. In Florida, we have more than 30 years of history with a statewide intergovernmental system of planning enacted by the Florida Legislature in 1975 and technically improved and legally empowered in 1985.

The point is simple; with **Amendment 4** proposed changes in local comprehensive plans affecting land use only, will be subject to voter referendum within the local political jurisdiction. An adopted comprehensive plan and the land use element are prepared, data analyzed and projected to be embodied in the plan goals, objectives and policies, set on a future land use map, and adopted. This process includes mandatory local and regional public hearings. When the plan is adopted by the local governing body and found in compliance with state law by the Department of Community Affairs, it becomes local law. At the end of seven years the plan is subject to evaluation and appraisal by the local government. If the assessment determines changes are necessary, an amended plan may then be locally adopted and reviewed by the Department of Community Affairs. If it is found in compliance it becomes the new law.

It is unfortunate that **Amendment 4** is necessary, but the movement is driven by very recent history of state legislative actions and sprawling developments in Florida's rural and urban areas. In Florida, for at least 30 years, we did have ongoing citizen study groups (ELMS I, II, III, State Comprehensive Plan Committee and others) composed of stakeholders and citizens of Florida who met throughout the state. They engaged in public and noticed meetings thoughtfully deliberating growth and planning issues and then held noticed public hearings. Intended and unintended consequences of legislative changes to state growth management were understood before changes in laws were recommended. These thoughtful public processes have disappeared in recent years. Now the pattern is to operate on the whims of knee jerk reactions, hurriedly, and secretly enact changes, and just see what might happen. The impetus seems to be found in such silly observations that Florida's growth management system inhibits economic growth. These observations are wrong headed. If the market for growth existed, there is far more land for development by right than would be needed for the next 50 years. And Florida is already over-populated, unable to provide

adequate urban services, education, law enforcement, and transportation, housing and essential water and sewer systems.

It is my conclusion that Florida's growth management is working, but the political process needs a serious shake-up. **Amendment 4** may just bring Floridians to debate our future with vision, organized, intelligent, and unselfish planning at the state, regional and local levels.

For reasons suggested above, I do recommend folks study **Amendment 4**, the history of Florida's unique intergovernmental growth management system, and think through the provisions of **Amendment 4** in regard to your local planning and growth issues. If you resolve in favor of the amendment, join with my endorsement and support of **Amendment 4** in November of 2010.

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(Dr. Starnes has served as Director of the Division of Mass Transportation in the Florida Department of Transportation and the Director of State Planning in the Florida Department of Administration in the early 1970's. He then served as the Chair of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florida. Dr. Starnes co-authored with Professor Richard RuBino "*Lessons Learned? The History of Planning in Florida*", Sentry Press, Tallahassee, FL, 2008.)