

Sir/madam,

On behalf of the **Volusia Flagler Environmental Action Committee, Inc.** I would like to reject publicly the recommendations of the **Smart Growth Report** as advocated. This report is fundamentally flawed if it is aimed at protecting the environment. This report is being referred to by stakeholders, developers and those politicians sympathetic to the developers cause as being the 'Smart Growth' way forward in Volusia County.

I submit the report is the 'Dumb Growth' way forward because it promotes clusters, which are sprawl.

Might I remind you that the recent controversial ballot initiative on boundaries to restrict urban growth in Volusia resulted in 73% of the electorate favoring the idea. The electorate rejected sprawl.

The Smart Growth Report advocates development throughout unincorporated Volusia via clusters. A developers utopia, I say. Their submission alludes to the idea that cluster development is good for the environment. In reality, **clusters of high density development** would have great detrimental effect on the environment. These clusters would develop into satellite towns, and eventually into cities because those clusters would have to be serviced by grocery stores and other service providers such as churches, schools, medical/emergency service providers, and of course water/sewer and road provision. Where water/sewer and roads-lead, more development follows.-This is not rocket science. The electorate knows this and demands curtailment of this policy. The developers, including their entourage of sympathetic stakeholders and Smart Growth Report advocates, seem to have missed the message.

The Smart Growth Report recommends that the Volusia Conservation Corridor in the center of our County be further endangered by weakening the provision of protection it presently enjoys. They propose including it in map "A" which **should** attract the highest degree of protection however not one immune to development. Might I remind you that the Volusia electorate approved to tax themselves twice through the provision of bonds to fund the purchase of this land so as to establish this Conservation Corridor. It must be protected and enlarged to function as a sustainable project administered by Volusia Forever.

It is further alluded that map "B" identifies where growth **must** be directed to appropriate areas. Would it be fair to say that those areas most suitable for development would be where developers have already purchased the land and are waiting for approval to develop? The Report does not take cognizance of the fact that within this area "B" there are presently comprehensive plans painfully developed over years with great debate and deliberation identifying Environmentally-Sensitive-Corridors in many neighborhoods including Deep Creek, Little Haw Creek, the Tomoka River system, Spruce Creek and Spruce Swamp, Turnbull Creek and Turnbull Hammock. Is this an oversight by the writers of the Report or are we to believe these protected areas are now fair game for development under the guise of Smart Growth?

The Report goes on to recognize the dilemma that presently exists between the cities and the County. The cities feel compelled to expand their tax base by annexing unincorporated land inside their boundaries. This has the same adverse effect upon the environment as developers advocating clusters because it inevitably leads to installing water/ sewer and roads to service those areas. This practice has to cease.

In order for it to cease there has to be agreement between the cities and the County to agree to a comprehensive plan and to regulate and enforce that plan. One possible way to resolve this dilemma would be to retain the zoning status of the parcel seeking annexation. The County Council Commissioners have pledged in section 202.3 of the Charter that they **shall** protect the environment. There is no purpose in compiling a comprehensive plan without enforcing that plan vigorously. Legislation has to be provided that is enforceable. Unlike today where the comprehensive plans that are in effect are abused through the provision of small scale amendments to satisfy the whims of supporters of politicians who refuse to stand up to the plate and exercise their mandate.

This is not going to be an easy task for any body to implement however it has to be achieved. Property rights of all those affected have to be protected and fair compensation offered for the advancement of any agreement, however, it is not a task that should be undertaken by a group of 3 County Council politicians and 3 mayors plus a school board member as suggested by the Smart Growth Report. This suggestion does not acknowledge that schools follow development. Providing school services to a

community already established is the job of the school board. It is imperative that the schools board be fully briefed, informed and involved where a need exists for establishing schools, however, they have no mandate to make decisions where growth will be directed. They ought not be directing such major policy creation.

It is also naive to suggest that the electorate will be swayed by the constant reference to the term **promises** throughout the Report. Have the stakeholders promoting acceptance of this Report ever been on a promise? Obviously not. There is no recourse when a promise is broken. Is that where the stakeholders want to lead us? To a mythical land called Oz, full of promises? No thank you. I will refrain from going there.

There are strengths and weaknesses in the current **VGMC** system. It might be possible do develop a more authoritative body from that concept that can regulate any arrived at agreement between the cities and the County. The more participatory involvement by representatives of the community is certainly the more democratic way of plotting our future. There is a definite need for checks and balances to provide greater protection for the environment. Environmentalists are presently not represented, however, they should be.

The lead/supreme authority in all these negotiations would have to reflect who we the electorate pay our taxes to for the administration of services within the County. That is the County Council. The County Council have more than adequate qualified staff to advise them and guide them through the problematic times ahead, however, that advice must be aimed at achieving sufficient sustainable and responsible growth in harmony with our environment, to enhance the living standards of the electorate and tax payer. A difficult mix to achieve, however one worth striving for.

What is sustainable and responsible growth? Might I direct you to the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development **AGENDA 21**. This web site illustrates what most of the rest of the World has been doing in this regard for the past number of years. Again it is not rocket science. It is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally between organizations of the United Nations system, governments, and major groups in every area in which humans impact the environment. Unfortunately the USA has not signed up for it. However there is no need for redeveloping the wheel. Volusia County can use these guide lines and proven successes in charting our future instead of blindly following the calls for Smart Growth as advocated by this flawed Smart Growth Report. Put one hundred lawyers in a room and ask them to define Smart Growth and you will end up with one hundred different definitions. The one that will prevail however is that one which will reflect the interests of those willing to spend the most dollars on the outcome, that will realize their investment. I will allow you to make your own call on who that will be.

Finally, the Smart Growth Report advocates put great importance upon their belief that the Charter Review Committee are considering various ways to implement their smart growth. This is not the remit of the Charter Review Committee. The remit of the Charter Review is to review the Current Volusia County Charter. Not to consider ways to implement this ill conceived and flawed Smart Growth Report.

I offer you this critique as a instrument to stimulate debate in ways we all in Volusia County can enhance our environment. By getting involved in protecting our environment and offering possible solutions. It is not an exercise in politician bashing either. As an environmentalist I wish to distance our movement from the often heard cry that environmentalists are always screaming no, no, no to everything involving growth and development. I support sustainable, responsible growth that is in harmony with our environment and leads to a better quality of life here in Volusia. I support our elected representatives in the difficult choice of public service they have chosen. I also pray that they will be blessed with wisdom and courage in the exercise of their mandate.

Thanking you,

**Aiden Magee -- Volusia Flagler Environmental Action Committee, Inc.**

Volusia Growth Management Commission (VGMC) is a 21 member representative advisory board funded by the residents of Volusia County . It discusses and possibly illuminates resolutions to conflict incurred when adjacent comprehensive plans from adjoining local governments negatively impact in their long term plans. It has no enforcement powers, just advice and influence. Neither is it a mediator. Some folk may say it is a 'talk shop' with no teeth however I wish to incite you to develop yourselves, or at least suggest to broaden your present remit and seek a greater sphere of influence by going where only brave members dare.

The advocates of the Smart Growth Report suggest you pack your bags.  
The cities are not happy with your role because they want to be in control of their own development destiny in fast developing Volusia.  
The media continually refers to you as the 'ghost of Christmas past' because you have outlived your use fullness.  
My oh my folks. I look at you all and I am acutely aware of the meaning of 'endangered species'.

My submission this evening might be interpreted by some as a wake-up call. Like Robin Williams in "Good morning Vietnam". Others of you might choose to ignore what I pose, some claim it's not your remit and others of you attempt to shoot the messenger.-However I wish to state briefly my concerns for VGMC and the current rash of development taking place in Volusia. I trust you will be reactive afterwards.....when I am far from here.

You **must** advise the political masters in the County that you wish to broaden your remit to that of an honest broker in the current climate of run-a-way development within the County. It is what is lacking when the 'players' sit down to carve the fast disappearing carcass of beautiful Volusia. There is no honest broker, honest enough and strong enough readily available, willing to put their head above the parapet. There **has to be** a reputable honest broker available to exercise common sense between the 'players' when they attempt to achieve financial gain at the cost of us all.

The cities are on a frenzied diet of annexation to satisfy their addiction to fill their tax base with as much unincorporated rural Volusia as they can grab before the neighboring city gets there first. They think they are playing 'Texas hold 'em', and the first to blink loses. They claim they are annexing to provide good places for the baby boomers to relocate here when they retire to have a good quality of life in sunny Florida. However, when they run these service lines of water/sewer/services/schools-etc.-into rural Volusia they exercise fiscal prudence. In lay men's talk that means get as many subdivisions on your system as possible to maximize return on your financial investment. Another terminology might best describe them as developers. Service developers. That fact inadvertently leads to the cities advocating smart growth as touted by the Smart Growth Report. The Smart Growth Report was funded in no small measure by the home builders of Volusia.

The home builders of Volusia want to provide new homes for the masses of arriving baby boomers. Little houses ( or should I say large houses) built in rows and they all look the same. Their idea of utopia is, clusters however let me remind you that clusters are sub-divisions and sub-divisions are sprawl no matter how you dress it up. The home builder developers prefer green field sites rather than brown field sites because of the greater return of profit through greater building density and low costs. They are not interested in building 'ranchette' homes in the rural community. Economies of scale are not easily available there and anyway only 2% of rural Americans earn their living on the farm now. Not a market the home builders see as a priority.

There are winners/losers in every form of development however the biggest loser of all is the fast disappearing Florida wetland environment and wildlife.

This apocalyptic trend has to end. Someone has to call halt. We have to develop a common interest that satisfy's all the players. We have to develop TRUST. I submit VGMC must present itself as a candidate for this roll. VGMC will have to reconstitute itself to do so however, it must present itself. There is no more important cause in Volusia County at the moment. However, is VGMC brave enough to respond to the call and is VGMC willing to enter the fray?

What can VGMC do?

I submit you can;

1. Advise Volusia County that it needs a **new comprehensive plan** agreed between all the local governments. One that identifies growth boundaries' agreeable to most We do not have one.
2. Advise everyone that the new comprehensive plan **must** be adhered to and enforced. It would help to have all the comprehensive plans in the County/cities running on the same time scale along side this new plan.
3. The new plan must be **amendment resistant** by 'seekers of variances'.
4. Land change use applications for annexed properties that choose to jump boundaries **must** retain the land use the property held before application.
5. Presently there are 5 governing agencies with at least 5 different ordinance standards pertaining to the rural environment and wetlands in Volusia County. They are:
  - US Army Corps of Engineers
  - St Johns River Water Management District
  - Florida Department of Environmental Protection
  - Volusia County Environmental Management Division
  - Local city/town governments.Our agreed new County wide Comp. Plan has to reflect **common standards** in ordinances to achieve a common goal.
6. Environmental mitigation credits must be exercised **on-site** and not shuffled off to Alaska or deepest everglade cross roads ,Florida.

VGMC members, I do not wish to infringe further upon your advisory role so I will conclude and allow you to exercise your minds.

However, I will conclude by reiterating:

- We need a plan
- We need a comprehensive plan
- We need a comprehensive plan that is agreed.

VGMC has a role to play.....**Start playing.**

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28 January 2006