

## COALITION 4 RESPONSIBLE GROWTH, INC.

### ISSUE REPORT 7-27-06

*By Denise Layne, Executive Director*

Through emails, I have tried to keep you updated on the issues with which C4RG has engaged. A summary and current status of those issues are as follows:

#### **PLAN AMENDMENT - PEC ½**

This is a new land use category which allows for higher density in exchange for true environmental gain. It was originally crafted with one piece of property in mind in the northeast (Robert Thomas property), and therefore did not take into consideration its effects on the rest of the county. After the Planning Commission board voted this amendment inconsistent with the Comp Plan, C4RG offered to facilitate a meeting if anyone was interested in pursuing a truly beneficial amendment. On February 24, 2006 C4RG facilitated a meeting with all stakeholders, including government staff. Changes were then made to the amendment based upon the discussions and concerns stated at the meeting. From there, it continued revisions up to the transmittal hearing before the BOCC in June. A last minute amendment to this amendment allowing adjacent properties to “tag on” was presented and approved by the BOCC.

The Department of Community Affairs objected to this amendment based on sprawl issues and not thinking through all the properties that could be effected in the county. After last minute revisions once again, the final product is: the “tag on” issue was deleted; the criteria to apply for this amendment was mapped by Planning Commission to show only two properties (both in the northeast) would be able to apply at this time; and this land use category has to have a plan amendment and rezoning process before it could be used.

On the record at the public hearing, I described C4RG’s role in this issue. I objected to last minute changes not being conducive to allow for public scrutiny, but did not object to the amendment itself. Neither did C4RG promote it. The BOCC voted 5-2 to adopt it.

From C4RG’s perspective, I believe this amendment will be a very good example of how we should be developing around conservation and sensitive areas. The fact that this cannot be automatically used without at least two major public processes is a huge safeguard against abuse. However, although only two properties are affected right now, we need to stay vigilant as additional conservation and natural areas are purchased. C4RG will continue to monitor this amendment’s usage.

**Therefore, as C4RG we have successfully guided the stakeholders in this community to a hopefully beneficial land use category.**

#### **SCHOOL IMPACT FEES**

After almost two years of working on this issue both in Tallahassee and Hillsborough County, we FINALLY have a responsible decision made in our community. Our County Commission voted 4-3 to raise school impact fees based on a square footage of a home, with a \$2,000 increase to begin November 2, 2006 and another \$2,000 August 1, 2007.

On behalf of C4RG, I attended the majority of the Task Force Meetings and have spoken at every County Commission public comment for the last 3 months, including this week’s public hearing.

We supported the increase as responsible, and reminded all that this was just one piece of the funding sources...we will continue to work on the others.

**Again, a very successful result with C4RG right in the middle of this issue!**

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The community conversation on transportation is actually being done in different forums as we speak. Our coalition has been asked to be part of the regional transportation initiatives that are currently being discussed. The Tampa Bay Partnership is working on a regional plan...The FDOT is working on a regional plan...The regional MPO consortium is working on a regional plan.

Two bills filed the last week of session on setting up a regional authority versus regional MPO structure were both shot down for lack of time to study. Something will be back this next session, and we will be playing a part to make sure all the community stakeholders are involved.

So regional transportation will be our main focus for the next year both in Tallahassee and in Hillsborough County.

## **SUBDIVISION AND SITE PLAN PROCESSES**

As Executive Director of C4RG, I am sitting on a committee that meets every Friday discussing revisions to the above processes. Very interesting information on how our processes are working (or not), and I will get back to you once things are further along.

At this point, additional budget for staff to coordinate intake and distribution of plans has been requested at the budget workshops before the BOCC. Under-staffing is a huge part of the problem in these processes. Discussions will be taking place as to how and where citizen involvement should take place in future meetings.