



Citizen Planning Bill of Rights

Please take a few minutes to complete a brief survey.

on Florida communities that have adopted provisions of the Citizen Planning Bill of Rights.

Rampant growth and uncontrolled development are forever changing the face of Florida. Elected officials, business leaders and others need to take action before our state's quality of life and rich natural resources are damaged beyond repair. 1000 Friends of Florida is calling on elected officials to empower Floridians to play a greater role in planning for the future of their communities. 1000 Friends recommends a Citizen Planning Bill of Rights, which would give citizens in Florida's communities:

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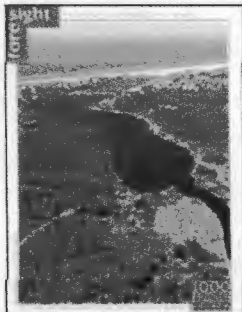
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1. The right to shape changes to your neighborhood, community and region. Developers should be required to prepare a citizen participation plan, notify impacted property owners and neighborhood associations (using formal lists compiled by the local government), and conduct workshops with citizens to identify all issues of concern prior to any public hearing. The developer must then present to the commission a list of all issues raised, and indicate if and how they were resolved. Unresolved issues then become the focus of discussion, rather than an afterthought covered in two or three minutes of public testimony.

2. The right to a process free of last-minute changes. Comprehensive plan amendments should not be changed in the seven days prior to the advertised public hearing. This allows citizens, commissioners, and others to fairly evaluate the document with data and analysis and not be subject to an endless "shell game" of last-minute changes. If the plan amendment is revised within that period, the hearing should be postponed unless all affected parties agree otherwise.

3. The right to a supermajority vote on major decisions. In order to protect the integrity of the comprehensive plan, a "super majority" vote should be required for proposed changes that directly affect the community's unique sense of place. For example, a community may define itself through certain policies that direct building heights, urban boundaries, environmental protections, etc. Changes to such important policies should have the highest level of support and require the consent of more than a simple majority of elected officials.

4. The right to more easily challenge decisions made by your local government. Current citizen standing and legal review standards should be improved to make the process more equitable, quicker and less costly. In particular, standing provisions should be consistent throughout the appeal process such that a citizen qualifying under Chapter 163 is automatically given that same status in the court system.

5. The right to be free of fear of unwarranted legal retaliation. In order to promote more active involvement, private citizens and organizations shall be shielded from any developer-initiated SLAPP (strategic law suits against public participation).

In addition, 1000 Friends is advocating that the conversion of rural land to urban density – in the form of compact, walkable, mixed-use communities in appropriate locations – shall only be undertaken in fair trade for significant public benefit. This shall include the permanent preservation of natural and agricultural lands and *open spaces*.

As we recover from the economic downturn, Florida's population and developed lands are projected to almost double over the next 50 years, and the state faces many uncertainties because of the impacts of rampant sprawl, the loss of rural lands, and sea level rise. Citizens must be allowed to have a meaningful say in how their communities grow in the future. Improvements to public participation through programs like the citizen planning bill of rights are needed now, more than ever. We know that Florida needs a visionary and workable planning process that relies on an informed and active citizenry.

The following communities have adopted all or some of the provisions included in 1000 Friends' recommended Citizen Planning Bill of Rights: [Gadsden County](#), [St. Johns County](#), [City of North Miami Beach](#), [City of Hallandale Beach](#), Martin County, Sarasota County, City of Sarasota. Please contact Vivian Young at vyoung@1000fof.org if you are aware of other communities with enhanced citizen participation provisions.