



April • 2009

## Land Use Compatibility - One of the Keys to Our Quality of Life

Have you ever seen a residential neighborhood right next to an industrial warehouse and wondered why this is allowed? Unfortunately, many examples of these situations can be found throughout Broward, particularly on the older, East side of the county. In planning jargon, we refer to it as "land use compatibility."

In 1981, when Broward County implemented the Land Development Code, our county was a different place. Most of Broward was unincorporated, and zoning decisions were made by the County Commission. Today, most of Broward County has been annexed into one of the 31 cities we have. These cities have sole zoning and site planning authority within their boundaries. The good news is while the County is not allowed to weigh in on those issues, we do have the authority for the guiding principles of land use and changes to types of land use plus density.

### Plat Amendments

There are only a few times when land use issues are brought before the Commission.

### Power of One

If every American collected 1 gallon of water once a week while waiting for the shower or bathwater to get hot (use it to water your houseplants!), the total saved would be 15.8 billion gallons of water a year—enough to fill the Reflecting Pool at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., 2,338 times.



One is when the owner of the property requests a change in the existing restrictions on use of their property. This request is referred to a plat amendment. A plat amendment has nothing to do with the permitted use of the land. That has already been established by the city zoning.

In the Land Development Code, there are a set of requirements that must be met in order for a plat amendment to be forwarded to the County Commission for approval. There are times when the Commission does not want to support the proposed changes. However, if the requirements are met, the County Commission has no choice but to pass the amendment. If we don't, we expose the County to a possible lawsuit from the owner of the plat, one which we would likely lose. To expose the County to such risk goes against the fiduciary responsibility we have to you, the taxpayer.

### Changes- What we can do

The system needs to change, and there are steps we can take right away to help preserve the quality of life we have come to hold dear in Broward.

First, we can continue to work with land owners by requesting that they voluntarily restrict the uses of their property, identifying the greatest concerns that the residents in neighboring area may have, and then try to come to a compromise that meets everyone's needs. Solutions such as building a barrier wall, asking for buffers and setbacks, and restricting the hours of operation can do much to preserve the quality of a neighborhood.

The County also needs to work more closely with municipalities. One way to draw more attention to the impact on the surrounding areas affected by a proposed change would be to ask the city for a special report. That would discuss how the land owner would address issues of incompatibility with the surrounding area. The County would then add this report to the list of requirements needed

## Privatization of Our Roads

Last December, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) postponed the date for submission of bids for the 75-year lease of I-75 Alligator Alley. This delay gives Broward County residents a great opportunity to organize a campaign to oppose the privatization, and join with our neighbors in Collier County to protest proposed leasing. The Collier Citizen's Transportation Coalition, a group of citizen activists, has a great website to go to for more information, [www.ctcnaples.com](http://www.ctcnaples.com). I urge you to share your opinion with Governor Crist. E-Mail him at [Charlie.Crist@myFlorida.com](mailto:Charlie.Crist@myFlorida.com) or call his office at 850-488-4441. Time is running out, so please contact the Governor as soon as you can and let him know we do not want our public roads privatized.

for a plat amendment to be brought before the Commission.

I am currently working with County staff to initiate a cooperative study with municipalities (primarily in eastern cities) to identify areas where industrial and residential land uses are compatible. We would use this information to develop model zoning districts and site plan regulations that could be used as guidelines by cities throughout Broward. I will keep you updated on our progress.

### The Power of One

Recently, I found an interesting article written by Jim Hackler, the Urbane Environmentalist, called "The Power of One." He gives readers simple ways that each of us can have an impact on the environment. We'll share his suggestion in future newsletters. Check out this month's idea! I encourage you to take these small steps, which collectively, can have a tremendous impact on the environment and our sustainability. 🌱