

CITIES AT CROSSROAD

Join Today

More than ever before, our environment, neighborhoods, traffic mobility and taxes are under attack.

While developers control far too many politicians, there's more of us than them. We can win if we work together.

Join or renew in Control Growth Now today.

Return
Card
Enclosed

Sarasota, Venice at Risk of Overgrowth

First they got uncontrolled urban sprawl from the Sarasota County Commission. Now developers, working through City staff, seek to cut the reins on growth in the cities of Sarasota and Venice as well.

With good leaders like Susan Chapman, Willie



Susan Chapman

CGN Citizen of the Year

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SEE YOU AT THE PICNIC

Saturday March 18



Please see pages 7 and 8 for details and return the enclosed card for your reservation. **Free to members and guests.**

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Control Growth Now News

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Are Very Welcome***



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President's Message



Take Back Our Community

As I speak with groups and individuals throughout our area I am struck with a growing awareness that vested interests have far too much influence in the development of our community and a resolve to take back control to rescue the quality of life which makes Sarasota County a special place to live, visit and do business.

Developers have been in the driver's seat for too long. They are bringing us urban sprawl, traffic gridlock, environmental degradation, threatened neighborhoods and the prospect of tax hikes and deeper debt to build needed facilities because growth has not been made to pay its own way.

This is perhaps a reflection of our national culture, in which citizens all across the political spectrum are demanding People Power and want to drain the swamp of pay-to-play politics which advance the interests of the few against the interests of everyone else.

We need to find and support candidates for public office who stand with the public, for mobility, neighborhoods, nature and the taxpayers — candidates like Susan Chapman and Jen Ahearn-Koch in the important Sarasota City Commission election. And two to take on Alan Maio and Paul Caragiulo for County Commission next year. It is time, certainly, for the people to take control.



President, **Control Growth Now**

Cities at a Crossroads - Continued from p. 1

Shaw and Shelli Freeland Eddie in Sarasota and Fred Fraize and Deborah Anderson in Venice, citizens do have advocates for sensible controls of growth. However, planning staff in both cities, and transportation staff in Sarasota, are pushing schemes to gut the cities' Comprehensive Plans and otherwise lift limits on development. They are not always being honest in doing that.

In Sarasota, citizens are outraged at development excesses which have resulted from policies put in place by previous Commissions, by pro-growthers such as Ken Shelin and Paul Caragiulo.

A citizens group called STOP! has formed to call for replacing "administrative approval" of development by staff (which is how The Vue got passed) with public hearings and official votes, as well as increased setbacks and wider sidewalks, maximum mobility impact fees, more accurate traffic impact studies and a City-wide traffic study and plan.

Under opposition from Control Growth Now, the Sarasota City Commission on November 21 defeated a rewrite of much of the City's Comprehensive Plan to benefit developers, on a bare 3 to 2 vote (with Commissioners Alpert and Atwell voting for it). The staff proposal would have repealed transportation concurrency requirements for many developers, including traffic impact studies, lowered the acceptable level of service for City roads and abandoned all road improvements on the premise that people should walk and bike wherever they need to go and take buses that get caught in traffic too. Despite that, the plan also would have relieved developers of present requirements to provide bicycle storage and bus stops.

City staff is also still pushing an insane scheme to reduce a stretch of Fruitville Road near US 41 from four to two lanes, called a "road diet." They are doing this to benefit developers north of Fruitville Road by connecting them closer to downtown. Amazingly, the staff is claiming that this road diet will improve traffic flow, by falsifying data. In projecting traffic, staff claims that there will be zero increase in traffic

in the area by 2038 except for that from just seven new developments. They also overstate traffic flow in roundabouts by reducing the national standard for space between vehicles in a roundabout, on the stated assumption that the older, transient drivers in Sarasota are more capable at driving roundabouts than people in the nation at large.

Because many residents outside of Sarasota travel to the City for business or recreation, all have reason to be concerned about Sarasota's mobility and quality of life.

The danger for Sarasota is that two of the five City Commission seats are up for election on March 14, with a runoff scheduled for May 9. One of those seats is held by Susan Chapman, who is seeking reelection, and pro-developer Suzanne Atwell, who is not. If both seats are won by candidates who oppose reasonable controls on growth (such as Martin Hyde, who answered a question about regulation of development at Tiger Bay by saying, "Government should not control free enterprise", and Patrick Gannon, who endorses the "road diet" discussed above and repeatedly votes for development interests on the City Planning Board), then there will be a Commission majority with Liz Alpert (who is not up for election until 2019) in favor of the developers' agenda.



Jen Ahearn-Koch

As such, Control Growth Now is strongly supporting Susan Chapman and candidate Jennifer Ahearn-Koch in the Sarasota City Commission election. We urge our members and supporters to contribute to their campaigns, at www.susanlistens.com and www.voteforjen.org. Although only Sarasota City residents can vote in the election, anyone can contribute (up to \$200 each) and we all have reason to care if we work in or visit Sarasota.

Growth control is also at a tipping point in the City of Venice.

Venice City staff, led by Development Services Director Jeff Shrum, is pushing a dangerously pro-growth rewrite of the Venice Comprehensive Plan. In the process they are seeking to deceive residents that the rewrite will instead reduce future development

Although Mr. Shrum got big Fake News press by alleging that the revised Plan would reduce the growth capacity in Venice from 58,502 dwellings and 94 million square feet of nonresidential development to 32,200 dwellings and 80 million square feet, he has been unable or unwilling to show how he reached those calculations. The data he has provided is unintelligible and do not support his conclusions. His comparison of capacity in the current and proposed Plan does not match up, with discrepancies in acreage and the omission in the new Plan of some land use areas which are carried forward in the New Plan, as well as an apparent overstatement of the capacity in the Current Plan. Under this criticism, Mr. Shrum has promised a new analysis by March 7.

The blast about these numbers is intended to obscure the real heart of the proposed changes. That is stripping restrictions on development out of the Comprehensive Plan. Although Mr. Shrum says that these provisions will be added to the City's Land Development Regulations, where he says they "belong", no parallel effort to do that has even begun. The proposal is to adopt the new Comprehensive Plan and then expect that some day and in some form the deleted restrictions on development will be added to the lesser regulations.

There are several problems with this, all of which benefit developers and hurt neighborhoods, the environment, mobility and other presently protected public interests.

First, in the interim between adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan and adoption of the regulations, it will be a Wild West for developers, with none of

the repealed protections of the Comprehensive Plan in place. When this was noticed by the Venice Planning Commission, they decided that a handful of limits, on building heights and appearance, site plan design and just one of several neighborhood compatibility policies, should be kept in the Plan in the "interim". But dozens of other controls would be repealed.

The other problem is that later rules cannot be stronger than the much weakened policies that staff would put in the revised Comprehensive Plan. For instance, present strong neighborhood compatibility policies would be replaced with one that merely says that when certain types of commercial land use changes are proposed near homes, "buffers" will be

required. Current policies also limit high density residences next to lower density, as well as other types of nonresidential incompatibility and actually prohibit incompatibility rather than merely call for buffers.

Other examples, to cite a few, include weakening of environmental protections, eliminating the policy to ensure that growth

pays its own way and eliminating traffic concurrency, and with it the requirement that developers produce studies to show how they will impact available road capacity. Also, state law gives stronger rights to residents to challenge a land use change that violates the Comprehensive Plan than one that violates mere regulations.

Another scary part of the revised Plan is the scheme for "Mixed Use Districts" which give developers more right to change residential land uses to commercial, even next to homes, with only overall limits over decades rather than limits at particular sites.

This revision has the paw prints of developer attorney Jeff Boone all over it, not surprising given his political influence in the City. We are working with Venice residents to see that the public interest prevails, not just Mr. Boone and his developer clients.





Susan Chapman To Be Honored at Picnic

Control Growth Now is very pleased to honor Sarasota City Commissioner Susan Chapman as our Citizen of the Year for 2017. She will be recognized at our March 18 annual

meeting and will share remarks with us at that time.

Susan is a twenty-three year resident of Sarasota. She has spent thirty-five years as a practicing attorney, in downtown Sarasota since 1990.

Susan and her husband, Jack, moved to Sarasota from Kansas City, Missouri, in 1989. They were drawn to the City by the warmth of the Florida sun, the crystal white sand beaches, the lovely bay and the arts and cultural amenities.

Susan opened her law practice in 1990. She immediately immersed herself in community affairs, serving on numerous Boards of Directors of human service organizations including Prevent Blindness, the Sarasota Mental Health Resource Center, and the Volunteer Center. She served on the team that created the Women's Legal Fund, which provided free legal services to working poor families and was its first chair. Her participation on not-for-profit boards led to her being asked to serve on "Compass," an early community-wide needs assessment. In 1995, the Sarasota County Commission on the Status of Women recognized her as a "Woman of Impact" in the area of law.

Susan has used her professional expertise in family law to advocate against domestic violence and for the legal rights of children. In 1996, the Florida Bar honored her with its Pro Bono Service Award for her advocacy on behalf of permanence for children in foster care. The Florida Supreme Court recognized her, as well, for her service to the Guardian Ad Litem Program.

The Sarasota County Commission appointed Susan a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate in 1991. In that capacity, she heard and decided cases as diverse as instances of derelict property, land use and zoning, tree protection and environmental matters, and the maintenance of package sewage treatment plants.

While When Susan was President of the Sarasota County Civic League that organization joined in a national election year project with PBS on voter engagement called "By the People." She also worked with a team to create a Good Government Campaign School to encourage potential candidates to run for office by providing practical campaign skills training. The emphasis of the campaign school was the encouragement of civility in campaign conduct.

The Sarasota City Commission appointed Susan to the Planning Board in 2008 (chaired in 2011), where she served until her election to the City Commission in 2013.

Susan was founding President of the Hudson Bayou Neighborhood Association and was elected to several positions in the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations, including as Chair.

Susan understands and reflects the values of the community. She has been a voice of common sense and knowledge on planning and development issues. She engages in diligent preparation and study of the issues. She responds to constituent concerns. She attends community meetings to listen to and understand the pulse of the community. Susan's core aspiration is to preserve and to promote a high quality of life for all citizens of the community.

Susan Chapman has consistently been a leading advocate for sensible controls on growth in Sarasota, including making growth pay its own way, seeking to promote mobility in all forms and protecting neighborhoods and other residents. She has always adhered to principle and service to what she has seen as the best interests of the people. Control Growth Now is proud to recognize Susan Chapman as our 2017 Citizen of the Year.



Bits and Pieces

- Thank you to NACA, the Nokomis Area Civic Association, for a warm welcome to our message of reasonable controls on growth, at their February 7 meeting. See a video of the meeting at www.naca-nokomis.com. NACA leaders say they will take a new approach to working with others in Sarasota County for a better future for us all.

- Control Growth Now received a major victory on February 21 when the Sarasota City Commission voted unanimously on first reading to raise mobility impact fees on developers to the full amount allowed by law, to make growth pay its own way for transportation improvements needed to serve new growth. This would replace the fees which were slashed in 2014 to “encourage development,” which have cost the City many millions in revenue needed to combat gridlock. We are still working to eliminate before second reading an exemption of almost all of the impact fees for development on the Quay, based on buildings demolished there 11 years ago, a break that even the County does not give developers in its impact fee.



Forward For a Better Future

- The Sarasota County Commission is considering selling public land and changing land use limits, for politically influential developer James Gabbert and others, to allow intense industrial development on two properties east of I-75 by Palmer Boulevard. Amazingly, this is adjacent to the Celery Fields, a nationally renowned wildlife refuge and birding site. Control Growth Now joins with the Audubon Society and many others in opposing this irresponsible scheme. The first of the County Commission public hearings is March 1 at 9 am.

- Two important changes in County ordinances are getting our attention and involvement. One will determine whether staff will present road capacity impact studies, based on data from developers, at the time the County considers land use changes. Those studies used to be required from developers, until the County Commission eliminated that in gutting the Comprehensive Plan. They are still needed from staff so that Commissioners and the public have the information timely before land use changes are made. The other ordinance is the creation of a Uniform Development Code and the extent to which important environmental restrictions may be stripped from the more important Comprehensive Plan in the process.

- On January 10, the County Commission voted to authorize for later public hearing a Comprehensive

Plan amendment to move the Urban Service Boundary to add 18 acres at River Road and US 41 for a Commercial Center. Seriously? Move the Urban Service Boundary for even more urban sprawl, a move which Commissioners have resisted for many years, even while gutting Sarasota 2050? Add more traffic on River Road, a narrow, congested death trap already? The vote was 3 (Moran, Maio and Caragiulo) to 1 (Detert) with Hines absent. Hopefully Commissioners will have better sense when this comes back for a public hearing and final vote.

- Here's to Good Growth: growth in membership in Control Growth Now. 2016-17 ended as a recent record year for our group and we hope for another record in the membership year that begins in March. Please be sure to fill out and return the enclosed card to renew or join and to register for our March 18 picnic if you can!

We Look Forward To Seeing You At Our **Annual Meeting** and Potluck



Picnic

Saturday, March 18
11:30 to 2

Colonial Oaks Park
Sarasota

Free to
Members and
All Guests!



Please mail in your reservation with the
enclosed card and envelope

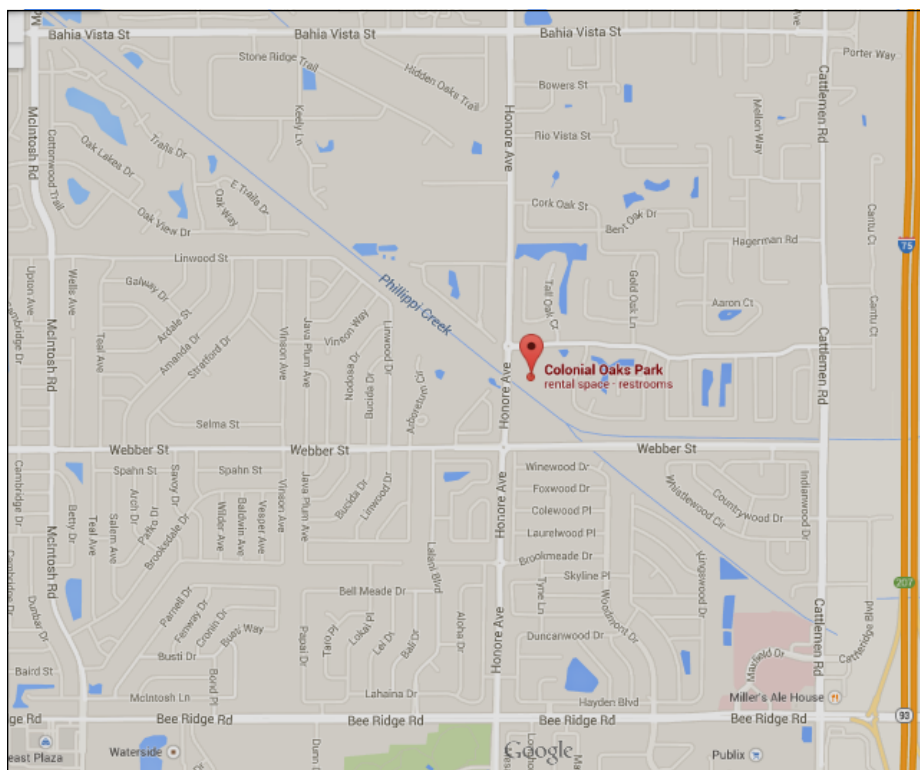
Directions to Colonial Oaks Park:

(5300 Colonial Oaks Boulevard, Sarasota 34232):

Go east from US 41 on Bahia Vista St. (which is between Fruitville and Bee Ridge), past the light at McIntosh Rd., take a right at the light at Honore Ave. and follow Honore to Colonial Oaks Boulevard. Turn left to the park.

OR - Take I-75 to the Bee Ridge Road exit, go west (left) on Bee Ridge, turn right (north) on Cattlemen Rd. Turn left on Webber Street then right on Honore Avenue — or just come straight north on Honore Avenue from the south — then right on Colonial Oaks Blvd. to the park.

Park and walk past the buildings to the picnic structures next to the open lawn area. We look forward to seeing you there!



Saturday

March 14

11:30 - 2

Join Us for Our

**CONTROL
GROWTH
NOW**

Picnic



Again at the
beautiful
**Colonial Oaks
Park**

**5300 Colonial
Oaks Blvd.,
Sarasota**

See map and
directions on
prior page



Free To
Control Growth Now
Members And All Of
Our Welcome Guests

**We Provide The
Burgers, Hot
Dogs, Veggie
Burgers and
Drinks.**



**Bring a Side
Dish or Dessert
to Share, If You
Can**

Reservations Required — Please Return the Enclosed Card