

Why Growth Management Matters

What has “growth” to do with an organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of the Apalachicola River and Bay? Isn’t “growth” synonymous with economic development and surely we need that in the counties of the Apalachicola Basin? Fair question and glad you asked. For the record, your organization has been for “managed growth” since the Fall of 2001. At the annual Strategic Planning Conference of the Director and Staff in August 2001, the Conference identified “explosive growth” as one of the top four threats to the health and productivity of our River and Bay. So what is meant by “explosive growth”, and why should our organization care? “Explosive Growth” was defined as that rapid and unmanaged growth that by its nature would exceed the capacity of the resources to sustain it - Overwhelming available roads, potable water supply, waste treatment; outstripping schools, fire protection; overwhelming the River and Bay with polluting storm-water runoff inherent in developments densely packed along the coastlines of both River and Bay.

Well-managed growth does none of these things. It consciously seeks to preserve existing natural resources and protect, rather than disrupt, communities and their quality of life. A Land Use change preceding large developments should, in turn, be preceded by competent assessment of the impact of that land use change and development on resources and the community. Well-managed development seeks to collaborate effectively with the community’s vision and to plan jointly for its long-term future. There is a hard-nosed business sense that, in the long run, what’s really beneficial to the community will be best for the developer and his investors, not the other way round. There is a dispassionate realization that property values are directly tied to the amount of open, green spaces that are preserved. And that the “crown jewels” of bay front and riverfront properties are and forever will be the health and productivity of the Bay and Rivers that bring people here in the first place, be they full-time or part-time residents.

So as one wise man once said, “To save the water, you must first save the land.” We will continue to be the advocate for this, because it’s true, whether in meetings of our County Commissions in the Basin, or in the State Legislature in Tallahassee. Dave McLain

GOVERNOR BUSH ENCOURAGES THOUGHTFUL GROWTH

Jeb Bush met with members of the Miami Herald and Orlando Sentinel editorial boards to share his vision for Growth Management in Florida on March 28, 2005: *“Reform will give communities and local economies the opportunity to grow, while protecting our quality of life and natural resources. There is still time to avoid many of the systemic problems that have occurred in some parts of Florida. We must act now.”*
