

# Florida Trend

Reprinted from March 2007

## Hometown 'Is Already Here'

Patrick Slevin, a Tallahassee-based public relations consultant who specializes in overcoming neighborhood opposition to new projects, has a message for builders, developers and businesses worried that Lesley Blackner's Florida Hometown Democracy amendment will come to be: "Hometown Democracy is already here."

Death by a thousand cuts is in the offing for developers, Slevin says, citing eight Florida cities that held referendums last year over building heights, densities or other development issues; 10 of the 13 anti-development initiatives passed.

Hometown Democracy has "kind of metastasized," says Wayne Bertsch, political affairs director for the Florida Home Builders Association. "We have a huge concern the way it's spreading around the state."

Slevin says Blackner's effort is inspiring local growth

opponents statewide. To combat the trend, Slevin counsels early intervention — well before initiatives secure enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. He also encourages elected leaders, land-use professionals and businesses to conduct grass-roots outreach and communicate better with the public.

Hometown Democracy and the local referendums indicate a "growing dissatisfaction with the way we're dealing with growth," says Tom Pelham, Florida's new Department of Community Affairs secretary and a lawyer who represented St. Pete Beach, one of the referendum cities, in its losing fight against anti-development referendums. "It behooves everyone around the state in a decision-making role to be sure they do a better job with dealing with growth ... and improve how we deal with public participation."



**STEMMING THE TIDE:** Public relations consultant Patrick Slevin says the Hometown effort is inspiring local growth opponents statewide. He advises developers to communicate better and conduct grass-roots outreach.

Patrick Slevin is one of the few corporate consultants in North America who specializes in winning community and political support for real estate projects. His innovative approach to community outreach has received national acclaim. Mr. Slevin, who is a former mayor of Safety Harbor, Florida, offers more than 11 years of public relations experience, representing national trade associations, Fortune 500 companies, and special interests. Mr. Slevin has produced an accomplished portfolio of strategic development, integrated communications and campaign management.

Call Patrick Slevin for a confidential consultation. He can be reached at 850.906.9888, or go to [www.SlevinGroup.com](http://www.SlevinGroup.com) to find out more about Mr. Slevin and his firm.

