



On April 14, 1989, an organization was born with the mission of controlling growth and development in Sarasota County in a way that protects residents, taxpayers and the environment.

Originally formed as GEO, the Growth-restraint and Environmental Organization, in 2003 our name was simplified to Control Growth Now.

For over 30 years, Control Growth Now has had a major impact on the growth and environmental policies of our community.

We led the way in defeating several bad referenda, from a \$100 million tax hike and bond to build roads for developers to a blank check sales tax extension to Charter amendments to repeal limits on County borrowing and taxes.

In 1990, we obtained the signatures necessary to place our own growth control initiative on the ballot. Because the County was facing a water shortage crisis and other problems, the measure called for a two year moratorium on construction other than renovations and expansions, public works and affordable housing in appropriate locations. It also would have required a supermajority Commission vote for land use changes and would have required that growth be made to pay its own way. Although a severe recession and a million dollar campaign against it contributed to the measure's defeat at the polls, the effort greatly increased public awareness of the need to better control growth to serve the public interest.

In response to our advocacy, for many years Sarasota County largely kept the I-75 barrier on urban sprawl and maintained most of the strong environmental and growth restraint policies of the 1980's, despite attempts to repeal them.

Control Growth Now then actively opposed the action by the Sarasota County Commission to open up the eastern county to intense urban development in the Sarasota 2050 scheme. At the same time, however, we actively engaged in the process and rallied other community groups to obtain changes in the plan to better make the new development pay its own way, protect the environment and adhere to a better form.

We have strengthened the County's neighborhood compatibility policies and protected them from efforts by County staff to severely weaken them.

We have worked to make growth pay its own way, including participation in every adjustment of the County's impact fees since the mid-1980's, shortly after they were first adopted. After many years of trying, in 2003 and 2004 we finally helped to persuade the School Board and County Commission to adopt a school impact fee and in 2009 persuaded the County Commission – at least for a time -- to reject a School Board attempt to suspend it. We have then worked to have it restored. And to be kept at a sufficient level.

Recently, we have been working to increase the appreciation of the public and public officials for the need to maintain traffic concurrency standards, so as to not let developers overcrowd our roads. We also worked to preserve the public interest protections in the Sarasota 2050 Plan, particularly environmental protections and the requirements for fiscal neutrality, with some minor successes.

In the City of Sarasota, we have had in 2015 good reception from the City Commission to our pleas to restore road and utility impact fees and to reject an attempt to repeal traffic concurrency standards

Our first 30 years have had significant successes as well as challenges, in balancing the strong push by development interests for weaker and less effective controls on growth. While we presently face unprecedented challenges, we eventually hope for even better progress in our second 30 years, to protect and enhance Sarasota County as a desirable place in which to live and work, now and for generations yet to come.

