



Martin County Taxpayers Association: Seven50 could undermine authority of local governments in Martin County

*By Richard Geisinger Jr
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In 2009, the U.S. departments of Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency created an interagency partnership and Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program that supports regions committed to work collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries.

The purpose? To create “regional plans for sustainable development.”

This was done under Presidential Executive Order No. 13575, previously called the “President’s Council on Sustainable Development.”

The grants supported metropolitan and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that better integrate housing, land use, economic development, community development, social development, water, environmental protection, transportation, energy conservation and infrastructure.

The term Seven50 refers to seven counties in South Florida for the next 50 years. The counties are: Monroe, Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River. In 2010, the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning councils assembled 200 organizations, which comprise the South Florida Regional Partnership. They then

proceeded to apply for and were awarded a grant in the amount of \$4.25 million to begin Seven50.

In essence, 200 unelected organizations or individuals, "The Partnership," would drive the Seven50 agenda. The idea of a regional partnership planning our community sounds benign at first glance. However, when terms such as social development, zoning and regionalism are used, we begin to be concerned.

Martin County is different than our southern neighbors. The majority of our residents chose to live in this area because of that difference. It is hard to imagine Dade County residents voicing opinions on the future development of our county.

Seven50 also could place one more layer of bureaucracy and expense on our residents. As it stands, residents who reside in Stuart, Sewall's Point, Jupiter Island or any other municipality in the county already have three layers of government and taxes to pay: city, county and state. Additionally, we all have federal government oversight and taxation. The Martin County Taxpayers Association believes local governments should maintain control over their respective areas and not be directed by a partnership that is not elected. We also believe the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council already does an effective job bringing counties together and assisting with regional issues, such as water quality, transportation and coastal development.

However, when terms such as community development and social development are used, we believe these issues are the sole responsibility of our elected officials. If we do not agree with the direction of our elected officials, there is always the voting booth, where we can be heard.