

He says ... It's time for a real building moratorium

By [Joe Croley](#)



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When life is fair, all the municipalities and counties in the Lowcountry will heed and expand on the rationale given by one local elected official when voting against rezoning amendment that would potentially allow additional hotel rooms on Hilton Head Island. He said it made no sense to make allowances to build more rooms while so many remain vacant. Fair enough.

But let us apply that reasoning to another situation: Why should we allow additional commercial and residential rezoning when hundreds of thousands of square feet of empty space is spread in virtually every nook and cranny of the Lowcountry?

Is there any commercial development along U.S. 278 or S.C. 170 that appears even 75 percent full? Is there any existing residential development where every house is sold or at least occupied? I think not. What additional stores do we need that cannot be accommodated by existing impervious space. What necessitates paving more wetlands and riverbanks?

Yet we sit around and pontificate on what a wonderful job we are doing in passing a revision to the existing stormwater ordinance that will affect new development. Why not just halt new development, commercial or residential, until we solve the problem of too much stormwater running into our rivers and streams?

We know we are perilously allowing too much impervious surface to be built, but we continue to plan for ways to allow more. Are we more committed to new ways to develop than we are to maintaining the quality of our rivers and streams?

Now I know the town of Bluffton passed a "moratorium" on new development until these new stormwater ordinances take effect, but it wasn't really a moratorium since anything under consideration regardless of where it was in the approval process could still move forward to approval. That made for a good press release, but it's just a momentary bump in the road.

Besides, at the same time they are contemplating running a contest on how best to pave under one of the last remaining pastoral parcels south of the Broad River along 278 and the impaired Okatie River and giving out prizes for it to boot. Some commitment to cleaning up our rivers.

Moreover, the land is not even officially part of the town yet, but when did we ever say no to an annexation request? That is just an opportunity to receive a zoning classification that probably would not be allowed by the county.

Maybe it is time to have a referendum question for the entire county: Would you rather see more impervious development or should we concentrate on saving and restoring our rivers? What harm is there to asking? Besides, it may mean additional funding to the Rural and Critical Lands Program, a win-win situation.

In the mean time, you can contact **Joe Croley** at close to the disaster point of Whenlifeisfair@hargray.com