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Policy: Moratoria

A moratorium is a halt on development to protect or enhance the public health, safety and welfare of a jurisdiction. Although a legitimate tool of local government in certain discrete instances, building moratoria are extreme measures with significant detrimental effects on the economic vitality of the metro Atlanta region.

Designed by state lawmakers to enable local governments to act where it is believed that growth would harm infrastructure in areas of health, safety and welfare, particularly regarding water and sewer capacity, moratoria have instead become a punitive political measure by local officials under pressure from “no-growth” groups. Nevertheless, the consequences are significant, and such action should be limited to the most extraordinary circumstances.

The Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association believes that moratoria have a multitude of negative impacts on jurisdictions. Metro Atlanta area moratoria have been utilized primarily as growth management measures, rather than as a means to temporarily address deficiencies in infrastructure. Moratoria affect not only potential home buyers but also long-term residents of an area. On the macro level, moratoria cost jobs, hurt primary and secondary economic activity and cause tax revenue shortfalls. As a result, quality-of-life indicators, as well as the cost borne by current residents, will rise and fall according to the availability and attractiveness of new housing.

Due to the fact that most local governments do not have the resources available to adequately measure and plan for growth and rarely have the staff resources available to handle rezoning, variance and building permit applications, **the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association recommends that local governments contractually hire outside resources available for these activities.** Such hiring may be funded by special assessments on the development applications that will be reviewed. Additionally, the Georgia General Assembly and state and regional planning authorities, should clarify and restrict the practice of moratoria as a course of action for local governments, as well as encourage local authorities pursue long-range planning.