



ESTERO COUNCIL OF
COMMUNITY LEADERS

The ECCL Report: June 2017

Executive Summary: *161st meeting of the Estero Council of Community Leaders*

Estero residents are urged to stay involved as the Village finalizes its original Comprehensive Plan during the coming months. The first draft is expected to be presented by the consultant, LaRue Planning & Management, in July. This document will serve as the “vision” for land use in Estero for years to come.

Currently, Village Council is considering a bonus density program which would allow three developments to build higher density residential projects in exchange for financial contributions toward land acquisition for parks, open space and river access.

The Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) is host two public workshops in July where comments will be heard on the consultant’s first draft of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Planning process must be completed by the end of the year.

“You need to be engaged in this Comprehensive Plan throughout the rest of the year,” advised ECCL Interim Chairman Don Eslick.

Estero has just 14 sizable parcels of vacant land left within its commercial corridors of US 41 and Corkscrew Road. As these projects are reviewed by the Village, Estero residents need to communicate with the Village how they would like to see them develop.

For the full ECCL Report, including development updates, transportation and environmental issues and other committee reports, keep reading.

The next ECCL meeting will be Friday, July 14, at 10 a.m. at Estero Community Park.

Bonus Density

When the Village of Estero incorporated, it inherited Lee County's Comprehensive Plan. Three developments — Estero Grande, Estero on the River and Downtown Estero — are entitled to bonus density units as a result of their zoning by the County. Under Lee County's plan, developers could build higher density in exchange for monetary contributions toward low income housing. In order to benefit from these additional units, the Village has decided that its bonus density program will involve contributions for land acquisitions for parks, open space and river access.

Estero on the River is an 85-acre property on the northeast corner of Corkscrew Road and US 41 and became entitled to bonus density when it was zoned by the County. The developer is not presently seeking Village approval for development.

Estero Grande is a 30-acre property west of U.S. 41 at Estero Parkway. It has been zoned by the County for 285 apartment units and up to 100,000 square feet of commercial space.

Downtown Estero (also known as Southland Village) is a 34-acre property on the east side of U.S. 41 north of Broadway. It is not currently in the Village zoning process but was previously zoned by Lee County as a mixed use, walkable community with about 300 apartment units, a hotel and 200,000 square feet of commercial space, including some bonus density units.

Village Council is considering whether to expand the bonus density program to other properties seeking higher density, particularly Estero Crossing, which is currently in the Village's zoning process. Estero Crossing is a 43-acre property on the south side of Corkscrew Road west of Interstate 75 and east of Lowe's proposing a 350-unit apartment complex and four commercial out-lots. [Click here to see a map of the Estero Crossing and Estero Grande locations.](#)

A few ECCL members expressed concern about implementing a bonus density program. ECCL Chairman Don Eslick encouraged them to stay involved in the Comprehensive Plan process.

Village Capital Improvement Plan

Village Council recently discussed priority projects for capital improvement totaling about \$6.4 million. Citizens are encouraged to provide input on which projects should be completed first. More projects may be added. The identified capital projects included:

- Ben Hill Griffin Parkway - \$2.5 million (traffic signal, median openings, "Estero" signage)
- Williams Road - \$2 million (widening, mill & overlay, drainage, intersection improvements)
- Three Oaks Parkway - \$750,500 (landscaping)



- South Tamiami Trail - \$599,000 (intersection improvements: Estero Parkway, Broadway, Williams Road, Coconut Road)
- Sandy Land landscaping - \$36,000

To view the ECCL Transportation Committee Report, [click here](#).

Growth Trends for Estero

Residential Trends



The ECCL has been tracking housing permits for the last 15 years. Until 2015, Estero’s residential growth was roughly a 50/50 split between single family homes and condominiums. Pre-2015, there was just one apartment complex (The Tides that soon was converted to condos), one student housing complex (Coastal Village) and one senior living facility (Estero Life Care Center).

In 2015, 614 rental apartment units and 244 senior housing units were permitted, representing 82 percent of all housing permits that year. Estero Crossing and Estero Grande could add an additional 630 apartment units in the near future. Volunteers of America, on Corkscrew Road near Sandy Lane, is zoned to build an additional 300 senior housing units.

“We’re undergoing a big shift,” Don Eslick noted. “In the last three years, we’ve seen a major change in the trend of housing toward rental housing and senior housing.”

Click here to read the ECCL’s recent article [“The History of Housing in Estero: 2000-2016”](#) which Mr. Eslick cited.

Retail Trends

The ECCL has also been studying retail trends in Estero. Coconut Point Mall and Miromar Outlets collectively contain about 2.5 million square feet of retail space. Estero’s big box stores — Walmart and Lowe’s — add another half-million square feet, plus there are several strip malls and auto dealers in Estero, making the Village the “retail capital of Southwest Florida.”

However, trends are changing within the retail industry. As more people shop online, major retail stores are closing, along with many malls. The successful malls are positioning themselves as destinations, offering more than just shopping: entertainment, green space, dining and other amusements. Estero’s vacant land in commercial corridors will need to change zoning and our retail centers will need to adjust as the retail market evolves. Click here to read the ECCL’s most recent feature article: [“Estero’s Future as the Retail Center of Southwest Florida.”](#)

Additionally, the first office building in recent years is being proposed in Plaza Del Sol at the northeast corner of Corkscrew Road and Three Oaks Parkway. Arcos Executive Center presented its plan for a three-story, 70,000-square-foot office/retail building to the PZB on June 1



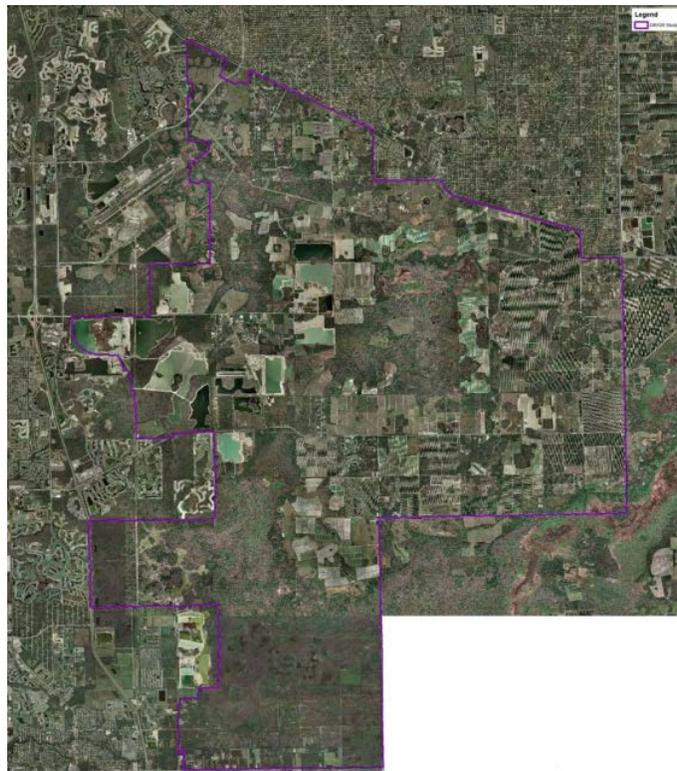
Also on the Village’s radar, the School District of Lee County plans to build a middle school and a second elementary school in Estero in the future. Sites have not been determined. Fire Chief Scott Vanderbrook noted that traffic on Williams Road may be heavy this school year because Estero High School has brought in portable units to accommodate 350 additional freshman students for use until the opening of the new Bonita Springs High School in fall 2018.

DR/GR Developments

Lee County’s Local Planning Agency (LPA) has a hearing for a comprehensive plan amendment for the Verdana development tentatively scheduled on June 26 at 8:30 a.m. Verdana is a 1,460-acre development south of Corkscrew Road immediately north of the CREW conservation lands. In its original application to Lee County, the developer proposed to build 1,425 homes within the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource area (DR/GR). After the public hearing, the LPA will forward its recommendation to the Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on whether the BOCC should transmit the proposal to Tallahassee for review and approval.

The ECCL Transportation and Environmental Committees have urged the BOCC to hold approval on any new development within the DR/GR until after the county’s Corkscrew Road Study has been completed. That study is looking at important issues raised by intense development along that corridor such as traffic congestion, hydrology, proportioning costs for addressing growth impacts, and effects on wildlife habitat. Estero’s separate Traffic Study of Corkscrew Road is expected to be completed in July and should provide further insight.

Another proposed residential development in the DR/GR, Pepperland Ranch, is also going through Lee County’s zoning process with plans to build 700 homes. The Lee County Hearing Examiner conducted a review of the Pepperland Ranch application on May 4-5 but has not released any recommendations yet. Two other developments have already been approved within the DR/GR: WildBlue (1,100 homes) and The Place at Corkscrew (1,325 homes).



Also in the DR/GR, Troyer Brothers is proposing to mine 900 of its 1,800 acres. The mine spans a large area of the DR/GR between Corkscrew Road and SR 82 and lies outside of Lee County's currently designated Future Limerock Mining Overlay area authorized for mining. Mining is proposed to take place over 30 years, with operations starting at the south end of the property (north of Corkscrew Road) and moving north toward SR 82. Truck traffic will exit the site onto SR 82 and will be directed to use Daniels Parkway to access the interstate; however, truck drivers are independent contractors and may use Corkscrew Road for southbound loads.

"This could be a very significant impact," said ECCL Environmental Director Pete Cangialosi. The next Environmental Committee meeting is June 14 at 1 p.m. at Fine Mark Bank.

To view a map of residential developments and mining operations proposed within the DR/GR, [click here](#).

Fire District Report - Chief Scott Vanderbrook

The Estero Fire Rescue (EFR) District is looking to purchase additional property within the Village. The District was donated property by Cameratta Properties several years ago along east Corkscrew Road adjacent to The Place at Corkscrew. However, Chief Vanderbrook said the District also needs more property closer to US 41 in the Coconut Point area.

"In 10-15 years as the Village grows, the fire department is going to have to expand," Chief Vanderbrook said. "We are looking for small pockets so we can put a rescue station in as we grow and so our ISO rating is maintained."

EFR currently is in the process of finalizing its 2017-18 budget. The District recently completed its FEMA 5-year update for emergency management strategy.

Financial Report

Income for May was \$1,475, thanks to four more communities which paid their dues. Expenses totaled \$1,200, mostly for our communication costs. For the month, we had a surplus of \$276, and the year-to-date surplus is \$5,351. Cash at the end of the month was \$20,630. As for dues, the two remaining unpaid communities have requested copies of their invoices.

ECCL Communications

The ECCL has launched its new website at www.esterotoday.com! Recent website use is up by nearly 5 percent. In addition, Facebook responses are up 100%. To view the presentation by ECCL Communications Director Tom MacDonald, [click here](#).

Also view a new promotional video produced for the ECCL by Evolution Brands (Tom MacDonald), at [this link!](#) It will be used to help inform others, including prospective new members, of ECCL's role and function in the community.



[Click to View Video](#)

ECCL Membership Program

Membership continues to add approximately two communities per month. The Membership Committee consists of four members and encourages more participation from other members. We are on task to complete our goal of 95% membership by year end. The next Membership Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 12, at 10 a.m. at South County Regional Library.