

# Estero Development Report

Volume 8, Number 11, Issued April, 2009

Edited by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

## For More Information about Estero

...see [www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org)

This Report is available on the Estero Community website at:

<http://esterofl.org/eccl/EDR/>

## April Opportunities for Citizen Participation In Protecting Estero's Quality of Life

Date	Time	Event	Location
Monday, April 13 <sup>th</sup>	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel meeting. See the full agenda at <a href="http://esterofl.org/ecpp/ecpp_meetings.htm">http://esterofl.org/ecpp/ecpp_meetings.htm</a>	Estero Community Park
Tuesday, April 14 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Monthly Meeting of the Estero Fire Rescue District. For further information see <a href="http://esterofire.org/">http://esterofire.org/</a>	Estero Fire Rescue Headquarters... Three Oaks Parkway south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, April 15 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee review of the following projects: See the full agenda at <a href="http://esterofl.org/edrc/agenda.asp">http://esterofl.org/edrc/agenda.asp</a> .	Estero Community Park
Thursday, April 16 <sup>th</sup>	2 p.m.	Southwest Florida Watershed Council Meeting. For more information see <a href="http://www.swfwc.org/">http://www.swfwc.org/</a>	Lee County Visitors Bureau 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor Conference Room, 12800 University Drive in Ft Myers
Friday, April 17 <sup>th</sup>	9 a.m.	Joint Lee – Collier County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting...For the agenda see <a href="http://www.mpo-swfl.org/agendas.shtml">http://www.mpo-swfl.org/agendas.shtml</a>	Bonita Springs City Hall
Monday, April 20 <sup>th</sup>	6 p.m.	Commissioner Judah's Town Hall Meeting on the Red Sox Spring Training Site Selection Effort	Estero High School Auditorium
Friday, April 17 <sup>th</sup>	1 p.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) meeting. See the full agenda at: <a href="http://esterofl.org/eccl/minutes/index.htm">http://esterofl.org/eccl/minutes/index.htm</a>	Estero Community Park
Wednesday, April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	9 a.m.	South Florida Water Management District/ Lee County Report Review Meeting on the South Lee County Watershed Plan Update	Estero Community Park

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## **Estero Community Website**

*During January and February about 14,500 persons visited this site to learn about Estero.*

The community groups sponsoring the site are:

Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP)  
Estero Civic Association (ECA)  
Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)  
Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
Greater Estero Cultural Arts Council (Arts Estero)

[www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org)

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## **A Big Crowd Is Needed!**

**Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.**  
**Auditorium (seats 900), Estero High School**  
**Northwest corner of River Ranch and Williams Roads**

**Commissioner Judah's Town Hall Meeting on**

## **The Red Sox Site**

**Read the following article and come and express your support for the Coalition's opposition to the Edison Farms site**

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### **Red Sox Spring Training Site**

On March 17<sup>th</sup> the County's Screening Committee made their presentation to the BOCC and sought their approval to begin negotiation with the four remaining applicants: University Highlands, Edison Farms, Watermen and the Galvano proposal. A coalition of Estero civic groups and environmental and growth management groups testified in opposition to this recommendation as part of an effort to have the Edison Farms site removed from further consideration.

After considerable discussion the Board voted 3 to 2 to approve the staff's suggestion to negotiate with all four applicants including Edison Farms. The three Commissioners voting to keep Edison Farms on the list indicated that they supported this proposal in the

expectation that it would improve the County's negotiating position, and did not indicate that they supported the Edison Farms site.

The following is the Joint Statement of the groups seeking to remove Edison Farms from the competition now:

"Position Statement Regarding Proposed Red Sox Sites  
March 9, 2009

A coalition representing the Environmental Community, the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL), The Brooks Concerned Citizens and East Corkscrew residents and others, which has successfully worked together on issues related to the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area, has formulated the following positions relative to the four remaining Boston Red Sox Stadium sites.

It is the view of all the undersigned organizations that we strongly oppose a Red Sox Stadium Complex and/or a multi-venue Sports Complex as proposed by Edison Farms on their 4,000 acres within the DR/GR.

We object to what will be a prolonged test case by Edison Farms to achieve approvals by the County and permitting agencies for a DRI and Plan amendment to accommodate intense development within the DR/GR.

As has been recommended by Dover Kohl, your DR/GR consultants, and also by your DR/GR ad-hoc Advisory Committee, we urge County officials to continue to protect wetlands, companion uplands and habitat within the DR/GR, including those which lie in and around the Edison Farms property.

The other three sites have issues of their own, but they are not as overwhelming in our collective opinion as the many challenges associated with Edison Farms.

Together, the undersigned organizations urge the Board of County Commissioners to remove Edison Farms from the list of four sites still under consideration and provide The Site Selection Committee with the authority to negotiate only with the other three property owners.

We respectfully ask that our positions receive your attention on March 17, 2009, and that you give them favorable consideration.

Jointly submitted by,

Estero Council of Community Leaders  
East Corkscrew Rural Community  
Brooks Concerned Citizens  
Audubon of Florida/Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary  
Audubon of Southwest Florida

Collier County Audubon Society  
Conservancy of Southwest Florida  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Responsible Growth Management Coalition  
Calusa Group of the Sierra Club

### Background

On February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> the County's Red Sox Screening Committee interviewed the nine remaining applicants and concluded the review by selecting four sites for further review and negotiation. All four members of the screening committee, three county staffers and one Red Sox executive, voted to continue consideration of the following sites: University Highlands site located just north of Germain Arena, the Edison Farms site, just east of I-75 adjacent to The Brooks, appeared to be favored by 2 or 3 of the committee members while the Waterman site, on Daniels Parkway about 1.5 miles east of I-75, and the Galvano site, on Alico Road over one mile east of I-75, each received two votes.

Prior to this meeting The Conservancy, the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, the Florida Wildlife Federation and the Brooks Concerned Citizens announced their opposition to the Edison Farms site. Some of these groups have further indicated that they are prepared to oppose permitting this project should it receive approval by the BOCC, potentially jeopardizing the stadium being available by the December 1, 2012 deadline in the County's contract with the Red Sox.

On March 17<sup>th</sup> the screening committee will seek BOCC approval to begin negotiation with these four applicants.

The two remaining Estero sites are:

University Highlands Ltd. Partnership...this 210 acre site, owned by Nassif Development of Naples, is located immediately north of Germaine Arena between I-75 and Ben Hill Griffin Parkway. It will soon be bordered on the north by the Estero Parkway Flyover. The Grandezza community is located immediately across Ben Hill Griffin from this site. The site offers an opportunity for the Red Sox stadium to share parking with neighboring Germain Arena. This could be significant because the contract requires the development to provide 4,000 parking spaces. The county transportation staff has indicated that the Red Sox facility could be entered from either Ben Hill Griffin and from Estero Parkway. Edison Farms...the owner of this site has been trying hard for many years to gain development approval for his 4,000, mostly wetland, acres east of I-75 adjacent to The Brooks. Their initiatives include the Coconut I-75 Interchange earmark; Water District approval of a four mile ditch along the western and southern boundaries of the property and Water District pressure on FDOT to install five large culverts under I-75 without proof that they were needed.

Edison Farms is offering free land to the County for the Red Sox site and has promoted the idea of an FGCU football field and a National Swimming Center Corporation Swim USA facility for training of Olympic and other swimmers could also be on the site. This landowner is offering the County 80 acres free of charge with another 1,200 acres being conserved. The site is only accessible if the County builds a road from Corkscrew Road

south to the property, a distance of about 2 miles and would cost about \$30 million. The County owns some, but not all, of the right-of-way for this road inasmuch as it is the planned route for the controversial and expensive CR 951, a road that has not been found fiscally feasible and has been included in the County's long-range 2030 plan with tolling as the likely funding source.

#### Earlier

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> the Lee County Red Sox Advisory Committee met to narrow the list of proposed Red Sox spring training sites. The Committee reduced the number of sites from 13 to 9.

Also during January the ECCL Committee on the Red Sox site met with representatives of the Edison Farms and the University Highlands sites to learn more about those proposals.

On December 9, 2008 Lee County signed a 30 year lease with the Boston Red Sox for a Spring Training facility in south Lee County.

On November 1, 2008 Lee County and the Boston Red Sox signed a 29 page agreement committing the County to provide the Red Sox a new spring training ballpark and training facility (Project Site) in south Lee County by a "target date" of December 1, 2011 "but in no event later than December 1, 2012 (Outside Date)." The agreement specifies a 30 year lease commitment, an 80 acre site for the Red Sox and contains a detailed description of the 9,999 seat facility plus capacity for another 2,000 fans.

### **South Lee County Hospital Committee Update**

On March 4<sup>th</sup> Bonita Springs Mayor Ben Nelson, ECCL Chair Don Eslick and the members of the Committee's Needs Assessment Sub-committee met with the leadership of Naples Community Hospital (NCH) System to discuss their plans for a Free-standing Emergency Department and eventually a hospital in south Lee County. Dr. Alan Weiss and his staff focused their attention upon how to make the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) profitable for both owners, NCH and Lee Memorial. They had no specific recommendations regarding a 24/7 Free-standing Emergency Department. As a result the Committee members asked NCH to develop a written proposal addressing this need.

On March 11<sup>th</sup> the members of the South Lee County Hospital Committee's Public Relations sub-committee met with Chad Gillis, the editor of the Bonita Banner to discuss the development of a Health Care section within the Banner. Mr. Gillis liked the idea and is planning on adding a section to the Banner's website (<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/banner/>) and to add a Healthcare section in each Saturday edition.

He will work with the committee to obtain content for each week's edition. Each of the hospital systems serving the area will be requested to submit content to the Banner website on a weekly basis. All other local healthcare providers will be asked to post material on the website as well. The Committee hopes that this section will become "the place" that all south Lee County residents, both old and new, can find reliable and useful information on all locally available healthcare services.

At present the Banner plans to introduce the section in its Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> edition with the first full section to follow the next Saturday.

On March 19<sup>th</sup> the Lee Memorial Health System (LMHS) Board of Directors approved two motions in order to implement their commitment to provide Free-standing Emergency Services to south Lee County. They are:

1. "Administration is directed to extend an offer to the Naples Community Health System to purchase the NCHS share in the Bonita Community Health Center Joint Venture for the sum of one dollar. If the offer is accepted, LMHS will assume 100% of the bond obligations on this facility". This transaction would add \$28.5 million of bond debt obligation to their balance sheet.
2. "Administration is directed to include up to \$4 million in capital in the FY'10 capital budget for the purpose of developing a Free-standing Emergency Room in the Bonita/Estero market and is authorized to spend not more than \$500,000 in FY2009 to allow legal, planning, design, and architecture work to proceed immediately." The analysis provided to the Board by Lee Memorial staff shows that the system would experience an estimated "net incremental gain" of about \$2 million in the first year and \$2.6 million in the fifth year.

LMHS's project summary for this facility further states:

- "Absent any unknown regulatory delay, it would be reasonable to target opening of this facility by January 2011".
- "Although Bonita Community Health Center would be the preferred location for the free-standing emergency room, LMHS has identified two other possible sites that are centrally located in the Bonita/Estero area. All of these locations are compatible with the target opening date", and
- "Negotiations are currently underway with NCHS toward this goal and LMHS leaders are optimistic that a satisfactory resolution will be achieved. Regardless of the outcome of this negotiation, however, the free-standing emergency room would not be delayed."

On March 30<sup>th</sup> NCH provided the South Lee County Hospital Committee with a position statement which states in part the following:

"In the event that LMHS continues to disagree with NCH's position to seek a way to continue the BCHC joint venture and proceeds to dissolve the partnership, NCH intends to continue its role as the healthcare provider of choice for the Bonita/Estero residents.

To that end, our plans could include establishing an outpatient facility in the community that will provide office space for NCH staff physicians, as well as ancillary services including imaging, wound care, rehab, pain management, a same day surgery center and an urgent care facility. In the context of contingency planning, we have commenced a formal feasibility study to evaluate short and long-range potential health services".

The Board of the Bonita Community Health Center, consisting of representatives of the two systems, is scheduled to take up this issue when they meet on May 1, 2009.

## Background

On February 25<sup>th</sup> Bonita Springs Mayor Ben Nelson, Don Eslick and the members of the Needs Assessment Committee met with the leadership of Lee Memorial Healthcare Systems to discuss their plans for a Free-standing Emergency Department and eventually a hospital in south Lee County. The group thought the meeting was very productive and looks forward to a meeting with the leaders on the Naples Community Health (NCH) system, now scheduled for March 4<sup>th</sup>.

On January 15<sup>th</sup> the Committee met to discuss and approve the Report of the Needs Assessment sub-committee, chaired by Dave Shellenbarger. A copy of this report may be viewed at <http://esterofl.org/EsteroLife/healthcare/FinalReport1-22-09.pdf> . The report has been transmitted to Southwest Florida's three medical systems.... Lee Memorial, NCH and Physicians Regional ...for them to review before meeting with the Mayor Nelson, Don Eslick and the members of the Needs Assessment committee. In addition the Committee's Public Relations sub-committee is developing and implementing a community awareness program. More information on the Hospital Committee and local emergency care facilities and services may be obtained at <http://esterofl.org/EsteroLife/healthcare/index.htm> .

On January 7<sup>th</sup> the ECCL and the Bonita Springs City Council met for their semiannual meeting. The agenda included the first discussion by the City Council of the South Lee County Hospital Committee co-chaired by Mayor Ben Nelson and Don Eslick, Chairman of the ECCL. The representatives of both communities agreed with Mayor Nelson when he said that this issue alone warranted the two communities working together on issues of regional significance.

## **Airplane Noise Committee Progress Report**

On March 25 the members of the Joint ECCL/Brooks Concerned Citizens Airplane Noise Committee met with Doug Murphy, the Regional Director of the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA), and Bob Ball, the Director of the Lee County Port Authority, to discuss the impact that the recent changes are having on airplane noise levels in the Estero, Bonita Springs and Fort Myers Beach communities along the new route.

The Committee consists of a City Councilperson from Bonita Springs and Ft. Myers Beach; representatives of the major Estero communities along the new flight route, three retired commercial airline pilots, an IFR rated private pilot and a retired airport administrator. Prior to the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> members of the Committee met on several occasions to analyze what had happened and to develop an alternative flight route that would provide us with relief while not shifting the noise and pollution to other nearby communities.

Mr. Murphy explained why the route changes were made last October and apologized for not holding any public hearings although technically the FAA was not legally required to do so under. He listed to the Committee's recommendation and committed to having his staff review it thoroughly; to have them meet with a small group representing the Committee, finalize their review of the proposal in about 2 to 3 months and committed to a large public meeting in the fall after many of our "snowbirds" have returned.

Everyone in attendance left the meeting believing that it had been very cordial and quite productive. The following day Mr. Murphy met with a group of Fort Myers Beach residents and public officials.

### Background

On October 1, 2008 the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) implemented a permanent change to the arrival and departure paths for commercial aircraft arriving and departing from the Southwest Florida International Airport (SWFIA) from cities in the northeast. As a result over 100 flights per day instead of reaching southwest Florida from over the Gulf of Mexico and approaching the Southwest Florida International Airport's runway from the west, they are now being directed down the middle of the state past the airport and over densely populated sections of Estero, Bonita Springs and Fort Myers Beach before completing the same final approach path.

Fortunately the Brooks Concerned Citizens (BCC) became aware of the problem early and started to work on it even before it happened. During that period they have:

- Put together a small committee of dedicated professionals from the airline industry (retired commercial pilots, airport administrators and others) that have put together some alternatives that would be much better for the community than what is now in place.
- Met with airport officials, contacted our Lee County Commissioners and our Federal congressional delegation, as well as local FAA staff. The local airport authority does not have authority over the routes, and cannot make the needed changes.
- Became convinced that our strategy needs to be to get the FAA to change or modify this policy by putting pressure on our elected Federal delegation and the FAA officials. The County Commissioners, who also cannot make the changes, are committed to supporting our efforts and will soon be taking up a resolution to that effect.
- Have coordinated with some of the leaders in Ft. Myers Beach, who are also affected by this change, in order to broaden the coalition in support of a change in these routes.

On January 7<sup>th</sup> the leaders of Estero's community organizations met with the City Council of Bonita Springs and discussed this issue with them. They responded enthusiastically and agreed to take up the issue at their next City Council meeting. The Bonita Springs City Council has now gone on record as seeking a change in these routes as well.

On January 14<sup>th</sup> the BCC and the ECCL met with Bob Ball, the administrator of the Southwest Florida International Airport, his staff and Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah to discuss the issue and to obtain their recommendations for remedying the situation. The Airport Authority states that they were not informed about the changes until shortly before they were implemented and indicated that they told the FAA that it

should not be done without some public hearings that would provide them with valuable community input.

In anticipation of the meeting the Airport Authority and Commissioner Judah had contacted U. S. Representative Connie Mack's office, our member of the U. S. House and a member of the Aviation Subcommittee of the House Transportation Committee. Mack's office had not been aware of the impact of the change upon the residents of south Lee County until that call.

Since October 1<sup>st</sup> the BCC and the ECCL has been contacted by hundreds of Estero residents expressing concerns about the impact of the planes upon their ability to live here in peace and quiet, with air pollution concerns and concerns about the impact these flights will have on the value of their property.

### **Fire District Merger Study Update**

On March 18<sup>th</sup> Harold Cohen and Jack O'Neal of Tridata Division of the Systems Planning Corporation met with the ten person committee of community leaders selected by the Fire District Board for continuing input. Mr. Cohen briefed the committee on the consultant's goals for the study and the progress they have made to date.

Even if no merger or consolidation is recommended or implemented the consultant's will be providing each district with a five year plan for their district.

They reported that all three districts have more talent than most districts that they have studied. In addition the performance of the Estero Fire District is well above average with better and improving response times. They have concluded that the three districts could feasibly operate an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system for the area while the independent districts could not do so.

They indicated that there are opportunities for improved service and/or cost savings in the following areas:

- Fire Prevention
- Public Education
- Training
- Use of Information Technology

The improvements or cost savings are the result of:

- Increased expertise and specialization
- Greater independence from State and Federal authority
- Increased service per man hour
- Increased capacity due to increase in the scale of operations

The consultant's are considering two forms of consolidation. They are:

- Administrative consolidation with independent district operations
- Full merger of the three districts in one organization

The consultants will study the facilities, 12 total stations; each district's debt; several labor contracts with two different unions and each district's pension systems in making their final recommendations.

### Background

During February the districts' consultants continued their study of the three systems and will be reporting their progress to the three districts and each of their advisory committees in the middle of March. In this way the community can have some input on the conduct of the study.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> three representatives of Tridata Division of the Systems Planning Corporation met with the ten person committee of community leaders selected by the Fire District Board for continuing input. The Fire District has posted the names of the committee members on the District's website... <http://esterofire.org/>. Among the groups represented on the committee are: the ECPP, the ECCL, the Brooks Concerned Citizens and the Estero Chamber of Commerce.

On January 13<sup>th</sup> the Estero Fire District held a Town Hall Meeting to discuss the Fire District Consolidation Study of the merger prospects of the Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park Fire Districts. The meeting opened with a presentation by Fire Chief Scott Vanderbrook outlining the procedures that the Districts' consultant will follow and the opportunities for public input throughout the course of the study. This presentation was followed by a question and answer period for the 20 or so Estero community residents in attendance. The Estero Fire District was the only district involved in the Consolidation Study to sponsor this kind of community briefing.

During the later months of 2008 Tridata gathered much information about the three districts. During their January visit they met with each district to meet the key officials, discuss information gaps and to view firsthand the districts and the properties contained therein. During the next couple of months Tridata will be developing agency evaluations on each of the three districts. They will return to the area then for meetings with the districts and the citizens committee to determine the critical issues and to assess the consensus process. For more information on this important issue please visit the fire district web site (see address above).

During August, 2008 each of the three Fire District Board's approved the contract with System Planning Corporation, Tridata Division. The study is expected to be completed in about six months, or about mid-2009.

On June 17, 2008 the three Fire District Boards, Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park, voted to approve a contract with System Planning Corporation, Tridata Division to evaluate the merger of the three districts. During July each of the three Fire District Boards voted to approve funding their share of the cost of this consulting contract. Each district will pay \$40,162.

### **BOCC Unanimously Rejects Midtowne Estero Rezoning Recommendation**

On March 24<sup>th</sup> representatives of the Estero Community including both the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) and the Estero Council of Community Leaders

(ECCL) asked the Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to reject the Special Master's recommendation and reduce the amount of commercial space that he had recommended from about 200,000 to something closer to the 90,000 square feet that the present zoning allows.

The primary concern of all the Estero residents who testified on the development is the traffic safety problems that the configuration of the site would have on the already dangerous intersection of Three Oaks Parkway and Corkscrew Road. The site is easy to enter but if you are traveling west or north exiting the site can be quite dangerous. The following graphic, presented to the BOCC, clearly demonstrates the difficulties that this development proposal would have caused...

<http://esterofl.org/Issues/MidTowne%20Traffic%20Out%20Only%20Final%203-18-09.pdf> .

The Joint ECPP/ECCL position statement on the development can be viewed at <http://esterofl.org/Issues/POSITION%20PAPER%20%203-18-09.pdf> .

The BOCC was persuaded by these arguments and unanimously rejected the Special Master's recommendations. If the developer wishes to challenge the BOCC's earlier decision to reject a "big box" on this site he may now file a lawsuit in Circuit Court.

#### Background

On September 15, 2008 the BOCC voted unanimously to deny, without prejudice, Ascot Development's application to rezone the Midtowne Estero development, located on the southwest corner of Three Oaks and Corkscrew. The "without prejudice" language permits the developer to immediately initiate an effort to have a Special Magistrate resolve the dispute between the County and the Developer.

This rezoning application would have dramatically changed the zoning on the property by:

- Increasing the amount of commercial on the property from 90,000 square feet to about 300,000 square feet including a 140,000 "Big Box" store, and
- Reducing the number of housing units from 234 to 92 units.

In the fall of 2008 the Developer filed the necessary appeal in a timely manner so that it could trigger the Special Master Dispute Resolution Process contesting the BOCC's rejection of their rezoning effort. Inasmuch as the Developer and the community had not reached an agreement when the Dispute Resolution process reached a decision point the Developer introduced a proposal that exceeded the 90 square feet of commercial development that had been the basis of all the discussions with the community. The community had an opportunity to provide input but was not a party to the dispute. As a result all negotiations were between County staff and the Developer.

#### The Consent Recommendation

On February, 20<sup>th</sup> Special Magistrate Simon Harrison issued his Consent Recommendation. That recommendation would permit the Developer to construct 179,999 square feet of retail commercial and 20,000 square feet for office use along with

92 residential units. Thus the community's and the BOCC's objection to an increase from 90,000 square feet of commercial to 300,000 square feet including a big box, would be adjusted to 200,000 square feet of commercial or about 2/3rds of what the Developer was originally seeking and more than double the existing zoning if the Special Magistrate's recommendation is accepted by the BOCC on March 24th.

The Special Magistrate's recommendations would require the Developer to provide some improvements to the River Ranch entrance to the property but does not address the concerns of the community about traffic circulation around the intersection of Corkscrew Road and Three Oaks Parkway, in spite of the added 110,000 square feet of commercial and the exclusively right-out exits on both of these roads. In addition it does not require the Developer to pay for any additional traffic signals on Three Oaks Parkway.

The Special Magistrate also provides the authority for the Developer to construct three drive-through out-parcels, only one of which can be a fast food enterprise. He further recommends a maximum of two fast food restaurants in the complex. Drive throughs along Corkscrew Road require a deviation from the overlay zoning provisions in Estero LDC because of the community's effort to have all the buildings constructed up close to the Corkscrew Road.

#### Earlier

In late September Ascot met with representatives of the ECCL, many of whom had testified against the big box, to propose an amendment to the existing zoning that would retain the existing 90,000 square feet of commercial and 234 housing units. The suggestion would change the 9 acre commercial parcel from a single parcel into several outlots wrapping around the Three Oaks/Corkscrew corner.

On October 3, 2008 representatives of ECCL and the Brooks Concerned Citizens (BCC) joined Ascot in a meeting with Lee County Zoning staff. The purpose of the meeting was to determine if County staff would consider making this change "administratively". Administrative approval of the change would permit the developer to rezone the property without the change being reviewed by a Hearing Examiner and final approval by the BOCC, thus saving the developer considerable time and money. Ascot agreed to present the proposal to the ECCL on October 17<sup>th</sup> and the ECPP on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The residents of Estero attending these meeting made the same points as were made at the earlier meetings.

In addition representatives of the Estero Fire Rescue Department sought a commitment from Ascot to pay for an emergency traffic signal in front of their Three Oaks station if a full median and signal could not be installed between Midtowne Estero and Lowe's Three Oaks entrance. The developer's agreed to pay half the cost of an emergency signal and to join the community and Fire Department at a meeting with county staff regarding the issue.

### **Estero's Housing Permits Continue Very Slow Growth**

During February only 23 housing units with a building value of \$6.5 million were permitted in Estero. This slowdown in construction of new homes should continue to

help reduce the inventory of unsold new homes constructed in Estero during 2005 when 2,833 units were permitted.

[Housing units permitted](#) during the first two months of 2009 are comparable to 2008 and far lower than all others during the 10 years that the County's system has tracked Estero's permits. This result reflects the declining trend that began in early 2006, three years ago. The County permitting information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

The following table shows how 2009 compares with the prior nine years:

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	329	\$42,541,070	\$129,304	32%
2001	289	48,480,616	167,753	57
2002	191	354,231,265	184,457	56
2003	376	58,389,301	155,291	31
2004	248	46,184,756	186,229	76
2005	491	104,218,898	212,258	43
2006	165	35,590,117	215,698	27
2007	139	34,406,017	247,525	20
2008	37	12,238,274	330,764	89
2009	31	11,988,196	386,716	74

Not only are the 2009 total housing units far below all prior years but 2008, they equal only 16% of the quantity during 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001.

On the other hand the average building value, excluding the land beneath it, continues to increase, up dramatically from all prior years and nearly triple (199% above) the average in 2000. Some of this increase is due to the increase in the single family share of the permitted units.

### **Permitted Commercial Building Values Continue Slow Increase in January**

January and February building permits of all types continued at a very slow pace. The value of [commercial buildings](#) permitted in Estero during these two months totaled only \$3.6 million, well below the last three years.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$6,224,692	\$77,250,835
2001	10,191,033	44,116,526
2002	1,913,907	23,135,139
2003	1,011,631	23,234,725
2004	1,079,434	60,859,820
2005	5,214,576	111,037,977
2006	56,324,955	184,709,240
2007	33,162,359	157,614,045
2008	15,674,464	39,261,677

2009	3,628,999	?
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As the above table indicates Estero commercial development started to expand rapidly in 2004 and peaked in 2006 with a total of \$184.7 million. (All figures are exclusive of the underlying land). Nonetheless, 2007 was still Estero's second highest commercial development year, far ahead of the third place year, 2005, with \$111 million.

During January and February the major projects that contributed to the year to date total are:

- \$2.38 million in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#);
- \$619,000 for Villages of Country Creek Water Storage System
- \$328,300 for [Miromar Outlets](#) expansion
- \$104,800 for Estero Park Commons

REMINDER: The building values understate the cost of each residence or commercial building because it excludes the value of the underlying land.