

Estero Development Report

Volume 9, Number 10, Issued May 2010

Edited by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

**For More Information about Estero
...see www.esterofl.org**

This Report is available on the Estero Community website at: <http://esterofl.org/eccl/EDR/>

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Tuesday, May 11 th	5:00 p.m.	First Estero Fire Rescue District Meeting For further information see http://esterofire.org/	Estero Fire Rescue Headquarters... Three Oaks Parkway south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, May 12 th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee meeting. See the full agenda at http://esterofl.org/edrc/agenda.asp .	Estero Community Park
Friday, May 14 th	9 a.m.	Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting...For the agenda see http://www.mpo- swfl.org/agendas.shtml	Regional Planning Commission Building, 1926 Victoria Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Monday, May 17 th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel. For the agenda see... http://esterofl.org/ecpp/ecpp_meetings.htm	Estero Community Park
Friday, May 23 rd	1 p.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) Meeting...for the agenda see... http://esterofl.org/eccl/agenda.asp	Estero Community Park
Wednesday, May 26 th	9 a.m.	First day of the BOCC Hearing on the RCH mine case	2 nd floor Board Chambers 2110 Main Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Thursday, May 27 th	9 a.m.	Second day of the BOCC Hearing on the RCH mine case	2 nd floor Board Chambers 2110 Main Street in downtown Ft. Myers

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Estero Community Website
The community groups sponsoring the site are:

Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP)
Estero Civic Association (ECA)
Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)
Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

Airplane Noise Committee Reports to the ECCL

On April 16th the South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee presented their interim report to the Estero Council of Community Leaders. The full report follows:

LETTER TO THE ESTERO COMMUNITIES
ON STATUS OF TALKS WITH THE FAA CONCERNING FLIGHTS OVER ESTERO

In October of 2008 the FAA instituted The Florida West Coast Airspace Redesign (FLOWCAR) which impacted the arrival routes into Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). This change was made by the FAA in order to accommodate the increasing number of flights into our airport now and in the future.

As a result of this change aircraft began flying over the Estero area causing many residents to be upset by the noise they create as they descend into RSW. As a result of citizen complaints to Estero community leaders, The South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee was formed. The committee, composed of former commercial airline pilots and aviation professionals met with local airport officials and eventually with FAA officials responsible for RSW airspace based at FAA regional headquarters in Atlanta.

The Committee met with the FAA numerous times over the last year to discuss how the noise created by the approaching planes could be eliminated or very substantially reduced. The FAA assigned flight planning professionals to the project and conducted meetings with air traffic controllers to explore possible solutions.

The Committee proposed alternatives that it believes would solve our problem without imposing additional burdens on other communities. Unfortunately, the FAA has said that these proposals have merit but would not work all the time and thus could not be implemented on a full time basis.

Our discussions have not persuaded the FAA to reroute all flights now coming over the Estero area. However, the FAA has made some changes that have improved our situation. In addition, the FAA has assured us that they will continue to work with us to find additional changes that will help improve our situation but do not cause safety or noise problems for other communities. Some of the steps that the FAA has taken that are providing some relief for the residents of Estero and north Bonita Springs include:

- 1) Increasing the altitude of aircraft on the westbound arrival route from 3,000 feet to 4,000 feet over all Estero communities.

- 2) As the aircraft travel west over Estero they will continue further over the Gulf so that they turn north over water west of Ft. Myers Beach rather than flying over Estero Bay or other populated areas.
- 3) Arriving aircraft must fly the published arrival route and may not turn "early" over populated areas to the airport unless traffic and/or weather conditions are present that require deviation from the published procedure. Early turns must be approved by tower supervisors and must be documented in the tower's log.
- 4) Rerouting some traffic arriving from the northeast so that the aircraft can land to the southwest when the wind is not strong enough out of the east to require the planes to fly over Estero and land to the northeast. These flights will not overfly the Estero area.
- 5) Rerouting some traffic arriving from the northeast north of the airport where it continues down the coast and lands to the northeast as flights from the Midwest continue to land, thus avoiding the Estero area. This is and will be done when traffic permits.
- 6) The FAA has agreed to provide traffic analysis information on all arriving aircraft on a regular basis so that we can evaluate how the changes are working.
- 7) The Committee has been encouraged by the FAA to recommend some Estero representatives to participate in the Noise Compatibility Study (Part 150 study) required prior to the construction of the planned second runway at Southwest Florida Regional Airport, We have been assured by the Airport that our committee members will be fully involved.
- 8) The FAA has communicated to the Airport Authority the Committee's request that they install an aircraft flight tracker program that citizens throughout the region can use to identify incoming aircraft that cause noise or other problems.
- 9) The FAA has agreed to continue its dialogue with the Committee in order to explore other changes that will further reduce the impact of these approaching aircraft on our community.

In summary, while the Committee is not fully satisfied with the improvements it has been able to achieve to date, it is encouraged by the FAA actions taken to reduce the impact of the October 2008 route changes upon the residents of Estero.

We will continue to work with the FAA in an effort to further alleviate the negative impact of the new air traffic over Estero.

**Respectfully Submitted,
South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee**

Landscaping of Estero High School Perimeter Complete

In late April O'Donnell Landscaping completed planting about 140 more plants and trees around Estero High School up and down both River Ranch Road and Williams Road. Over the course of the last three years the Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) raised about \$40,000 to finance this community service project.

The ECIF wants to thank Dan Dronkers, a member of the ECIF Board and the one person who saw the project through from beginning to end. In addition we would like to thank Estero High Principle George Clover, Assistant Principle Howard Wendland and the hundreds of Estero residents and businesses that supported the project by their participation in the ECIF's annual luncheon and fashion show. Finally we would like to thank Al O'Donnell of O'Donnell Landscaping for their outstanding design and installation work and their charitable contributions to the project.

If you haven't yet seen the improvements, please take the time to drive by. We think you will be impressed by the improvement.

Proposed Changes in the Estero Parkway Wal-Mart Zoning

On April 20th representatives of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) and the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECC) met with representatives of Wal-Mart to learn about their plans for the Wal-Mart store zoned for the northeast corner of US 41 and Estero Parkway in 2003. Wal-Mart has not constructed this store because their zoning prevents them from starting construction until six-laning of the segment of US 41 adjacent to the store has begun. The US 41 widening project is expected to start later this year, in November or December.

The stores representatives indicated at this meeting that Wal-Mart's corporate leadership has approved a new, smaller store format for development throughout the country. All their new stores will be much smaller than in the past. They are seeking to rezone this site for a 150,000 square foot store instead of the currently zoned 208,000 square foot store. In addition they would like to add three out-lots to the site plan, using some, but not all, of the surplus space included in the present zoning. The present plan includes one out-lot on the corner of Estero Parkway and US 41. The standard design of their new stores varies greatly from the Mediterranean design approved by the County for this site, however they agreed that the corporate design would have to be substantially modified in order to comply with Estero's appearance standards imbedded in Chapter 33 of the Lee County Land Development Code.

There appeared to be agreement between the parties on the following process for developing the rezoning proposal:

- One or more workshops between Wal-Mart's architects, engineers etc, and the members of the ECP and the Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) to develop a working draft proposal;
- Several meetings with the residents of communities adjacent to the site. This would include the two communities most involved in the existing zoning, The Vines and Breckenridge. In addition Wal-Mart would meet with the new communities along Estero Parkway: Osprey Cove, Belle Lago, the Cascades and the Reserve of Estero.

- Public presentations to the ECPP and EDRC.

Once this process is complete the proposal will then be submitted to Lee County where the following steps are necessary for approval of the rezoning:

- The proposal is reviewed by the County's Community Development staff and a staff report is prepared and sent to a Hearing Examiner with copies available to the public,
- The Hearing Examiner conducts a public hearing on the application and prepares a report based on the hearings that includes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC),
- Finally, the BOCC conducts a hearing on the matter and votes to approve, deny or approve with conditions the application. Only persons who testify before the Hearing Examiner may testify before the BOCC.

2009 Discussion with Wal-Mart

On September 11, 2009 the ECCL sponsored a workshop on the existing zoning for the Estero Parkway/US 41 Wal-Mart store in order to inform the thousands of Estero residents who now live along Estero Parkway, but were not in the community during 2003-04, when the site was zoned. About 60 Estero residents from these communities, the Vines, Breckenridge and other Estero communities attended.

In addition to the ECCL, Skip Block, the County Community Development staffer assigned to the case, Neal Noethlich, Chair of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) at that time of the zoning and Chris Smith who represented the Vines when the property was zoned were available to discuss the plans and answer residents' questions. Subsequent to the meeting the Boards of The Vines and Breckenridge, the two communities closest to the store site and most involved in 2003 and 2004, voted to resist changes in the existing zoning.

To learn about the history of this major Estero zoning negotiation see [http://www.esterofl.org/eccl/EDR/estero_development_report_October_2004.htm#Estero Parkway Wal-Mart Progress Report](http://www.esterofl.org/eccl/EDR/estero_development_report_October_2004.htm#Estero_Parkway_Wal-Mart_Progress_Report) and http://www.esterofl.org/Issues/wal-mart_estero_pkwy.htm

During August 2009

On August 26, 2009 several representatives of Wal-Mart met with members of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP), the Estero Council of Community Leaders and residents of The Vines and Breckenridge to discuss proposed plans for rezoning their property on the northeast corner of US 41 and Estero Parkway. The major elements in their proposal would:

- Reduce the size of the Wal-Mart store by about 40,000 square feet
- Add three out-lots along US 41 for stores that would offset the reduced size of the Wal-Mart store,

- Substitute a new standard Wal-Mart design for their store for the existing “Estero” unique design that was negotiated by the community over a period of two years in 2003 and 2004, and
- Amend the “super-concurrency” provision in the existing zoning that requires construction of the store to begin only after the widening of US 41 in this area has been finally approved and funded.

South Lee County Hospital Committee Update

On April 9th several members of the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee traveled to Largo to visit another 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department. Once again the managers of that facility provided the Committee with an abundance of information on their operations to date, both service wise and financial. This facility, although only two years old, is already profitable and experiencing business well beyond projections.

On April 15th the Steering Committee met again to discuss the market service area for a 24/7 Freestanding ER located on the site of the Bonita Community Health Center; the services to be provided by the facility; service to the facility by Lee County EMS (ambulance and helicopter service); procedures for estimating the future demand for service from the facility by transported and walk-in clients.

Earlier in 2010

On March 18th the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee met for the second time to discuss the antitrust, licensure and other legal aspects of establishing a 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department (FED); the services that should be provided by this facility and those that should continue to be provided by the participating hospitals and what needs to be researched in order to estimate the present and future market for these services in its expected service area.

The meeting identified many of the challenges that must be overcome before a FED can be constructed in our community and the steps that we need to take to be successful in this effort.

On March 26th most of the Steering Committee traveled to North Port to tour Sarasota Memorial’s North Port Medical Plaza 24/7 Freestanding ER that opened for business last October. The facility is a combination Freestanding ER and a Walk-in Clinic with comprehensive laboratory and diagnostic/testing facilities. It is located in a bedroom community with a population of 50,000 at the far south end of Sarasota County. The area was considered an “underserved” community.

The leadership and staff at North Port were very generous with their information and time. Being such a new facility they shared with the Committee many of the obstacles they had to overcome in order to gain all the necessary approvals and prepare for an uncertain community response. They stressed the importance of community support throughout the approval and implementation phases. In the 6 months since the FED facility opened client use of the facility has far exceeded expectations.

On February 18th the fourteen member Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee met for the first time. The Steering Committee approved the following mission statement:

“Develop a plan and recommendations for a freestanding emergency department in the Bonita/Estero community”.

In pursuit of this outcome the Steering Committee will

- Identify gaps in emergency services provided to the community,
- Complete a five year projection of patient visits, revenues and expenses,
- Complete a capital budget and identify funding requirements, and
- Develop recommendations for next steps towards the development of a Freestanding ED.

On January 29th representatives of the Committee met with the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) Board to discuss how the owners of this facility would begin to implement a Freestanding ER on the BCHC property. About a week prior to the meeting Suzanne Bradach, Acting Executive Director of the Center, provided the Committee with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two hospital systems, NCH and Lee Memorial, that contains their “plan that provides the framework for the development of a freestanding ER” to serve the area.

The plan provides our Committee with three members on a broad based Committee, called the “Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee”, that would, over a period of about 6 months, do the research needed to address all the questions that must be answered prior to obtaining the approval of the project by the Boards of the two hospital systems.

On January 15 the Committee met with Kim Dickerson, the executive that manages the Lee County EMS system, to learn about their operations and how they interact with the Hospital systems while serving south Lee County. Mrs. Dickenson provided the Committee with detailed information about all the patients that have been transported by EMS to all area hospitals over the last two years.

During 2009

The EMS data indicates that the system received nearly 8,300 emergency calls from residents of the Bonita Springs and Estero Fire District area during 2008 and 2009. Over half of those that we transported by ambulance were sent to the NCH’s North Naples Hospital on Immokalee Road. About 80% of these patients were Bonita residents. While nearly 1,000 Estero residents went to NCH’s North Naples Hospital about 600 Estero residents were admitted to each of Lee Memorial Health Park and Lee’s Gulf Coast Hospital.

Early in October the Hospital Committee received a response from the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) inviting the leaders of the Committee to meet with the BCHC Board as had been requested by the Committee (see below). This discussion is now scheduled for the next BCHC Board meeting in late January 2010.

In the meantime the South Lee County Hospital Committee, which consist of about 40 volunteers... many with strong health care backgrounds, has begun to plan and implement a community awareness and support program to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to obtaining a 24/7 Freestanding ER for the area as soon as possible. Thus far 37 community organizations have endorsed the Committee's efforts. The following are some of the prominent community organizations that have endorsed the Committee's efforts: The Bonita Springs and Estero Fire Districts; the City of Bonita Springs; the ECCL; Senior and Retired Physicians Association of Lee County; three civic and community service organizations; eight businesses and 22 residential community boards.

Anyone who would like to participate, recruit other local organizations or make suggestions to the committee may do so by calling or emailing Co-chairman Don Eslick at 273-9493 or doneslick@comcast.net .

Earlier in the year the prospects for a 24/7 Free-standing Emergency Department in the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) looked very bright. We were told that throughout the summer Lee Memorial and NCH, the co-owners of this facility, would discuss how this commitment could be implemented while retaining the existing shared ownership arrangement.

Unfortunately in late August the Hospital Committee learned that Lee Memorial and NCH had decided that their first priority had to be to work on making BCHC profitable and that the Emergency facility had to be placed on the "back burner". Upon learning of this decision the leaders of the Hospital Committee decided to send a letter to the Chairmen of the two systems seeking a meeting with the BCHC Board to learn first hand what the intentions of the Board are regarding the south Lee County community being served by a 24/7 Freestanding ER in the BCHC.

Estero's Housing Permits Continue Slow Pace

During March 16 single family homes and 4 duplex units with a building value of \$3.2 million were permitted in Estero. This continued slowdown in construction of new homes is helping to reduce the inventory of unsold new homes constructed in Estero during 2005 when 2,833 units were permitted.

Housing units permitted thus far during 2010 are higher than 2008 and 2009 but lower than all other years during the 11 years that the County has tracked Estero permits. The number of housing units permitted in Estero is slightly above rock bottom. The County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

The following table shows how 2010 compares with the same year to date period during the last ten years:

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	506	\$68,142,696	\$134,669	41%
2001	584	88,114,145	150,880	42
2002	292	55,956,255	191,631	60
2003	532	77,905,904	146,440	32
2004	371	74,011,015	199,491	73

2005	883	168,168,623	190,451	37
2006	569	119,676,682	210,328	15
2007	218	56,648,641	259,856	33
2008	40	13,791,205	344,780	90
2009	36	14,016,521	389,348	78
2010	58	11,319,926	195,171	79

Although the number of housing units permitted thus far this year is above 2008 and 2009 they equal only 20% of the quantity during 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001.

Permitted Commercial Building Increases Very Slowly

During the first quarter of 2010 Estero building permits of all types continued at a very slow pace. The value of [commercial buildings](#) permitted in Estero during these 3 months totaled only \$411,276, by far the smallest total on record.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$6,493,092	\$77,250,835
2001	12,714,570	44,116,526
2002	2,377,297	23,135,139
2003	3,348,635	23,234,725
2004	2,556,018	60,859,820
2005	7,209,706	111,037,977
2006	68,428,727	184,709,240
2007	49,358,941	157,614,045
2008	18,837,360	39,261,677
2009	4,575,618	9,752,556
2010	411,276	?

As the above table indicates Estero's 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). 2007 was Estero's second highest commercial development year, far ahead of the third place year, 2005, with \$111 million.

Since then commercial development in Estero has declined sharply and this year it has almost come to a stop.

Thus far this year the major projects that contributed to the commercial permitting total are:

\$137,880 in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#);
 \$16,500 in the Estero Ridge development

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