

Estero Development Report
 Volume 11, Number 4, Issued December 2011
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)
For More Information about Estero
 ...see www.esterofl.org

**January Opportunities for Citizen Participation
 That will Protect Estero's Quality of Life**

Date	Time	Event	Location
Thursday, January 5 th	9 a.m.	Lost Grove Mine Hearing before the Collier County Plan Commission	Collier County Administration Building, Airport Pulling and US 41
Tuesday, January 10 th	5:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, January 11 th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, January 13 th	10 a.m.	ECCL Regular Monthly Meeting...County Manager Karen Hawes is our speaker	Estero Community Park
Friday, January 13 th	12 noon	Reception Celebrating ECL's 100 th Meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, January 20 th	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO (Transportation Planning) meeting	Bonita Springs City Hall on Bonita Beach Road just east of US 41
Monday, January 23 rd	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting	Estero Community Park

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Estero Community Website (www.esterofl.org)

The community groups sponsoring the site are:

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

Estero Completes a Successful 2011

Introduction

Estero is an unincorporated community in Lee County thus it does not have a municipal government and the taxes that go with it. During the last 10 years Estero has grown from a total population of 15,000 in 2000 to 40,000 today. The ECCL was established by a group of community volunteers to help the community cope with the changes that this growth demanded.

Between 2000 and 2007 the challenge for Estero and its volunteer civic organizations, the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL), the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) and the Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC), was to manage the explosive growth of the community and make sure that our infrastructure kept pace. During this eight year period nearly 13,000 housing units and \$700 million in commercial buildings were constructed in Estero.

During the last four years (2008-2011) the emphasis has shifted to satisfying other community needs and responding to threats to the resident's quality of life.

2011 Progress on Community Needs

Accessible Health Care—for six years the South Lee County Hospital Committee has been working with Lee Memorial and NCH to provide better access to emergency and other specialty health care needs not now available in the community. During 2011 the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC), jointly owned by the two hospital systems, extended the hours of that facility by three hours per day during the week (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.) and four hours per day on weekends (from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

Economic Development—Although Estero added 4 million square feet of commercial development between 2000 and 2007 it still has commercial lands zoned for another 7 million square feet of development. In addition the community is zoned for another 7,000 housing units. In order to insure that this property gets developed on a timely basis consistent with Estero's high standards, the ECCL formed an Economic Development Committee in early 2011 and later joined with Bonita Springs to form the Bonita Springs/Estero Economic Development Council. These entities are now working with Lee County Economic Development to recruit about 200 members for the Catalyst Club, a group of local retired and active businessmen who are committed to helping the County grow and diversify our economy.

Transportation Improvements---The roadway network in Estero was greatly expanded since 2000 in order to support the community's rapid growth. Early in 2011 the Florida Department of Transportation started widening US 41 from Corkscrew Road to San Carlos Park, the last segment of US 41 that has not been six laned. Also this year Lee County DOT completed a major safety improvement at the intersection of Corkscrew Road and Three Oaks Parkway and started landscaping the medians on Three Oaks from Corkscrew Road to Alico Road and Estero Parkway from Three Oaks to Ben Hill Griffin. US 41 will also be landscaped upon completion of the widening project in 2013.

Updating the Estero Community Plan---The Estero Community Plan was approved by the Lee County Board in early 2002, nearly 10 years ago. Now that Estero has tripled in size that plan needs to be updated so that the community can learn from all the changes and the new residents can participate in the planning process. During 2011 the Lee County Board approved a matching grant of \$50,000 to help pay for the professional help that we need to update the Plan. The Estero Council of Community Leaders has obtained over \$45,000 in donations this year to provide the Community Plan match and to fund the cost of efforts to protect the quality of life of the community.

Meeting Community Challenges

Mining -- Working with our rural neighbors to the east we have gotten the County Board to DENY permits for three major mines on Corkscrew Road. If these mines had been approved our roads would be traveled by thousands of dump trucks each day under normal economic conditions. In addition these mines impair the adjacent wetlands thus reducing their ability to hold rainwater for future water use and for cleaning the groundwater as it flows to the west. This achievement protects us from flooding and further contaminating the water in Estero Bay. During 2011 the Board of County Commissioners unanimously voted to DENY Troyer Brothers the right to mine 1,803 acres for thirty years on east Corkscrew Road. In addition the community has participated in 5 hearings expressing our opposition to the Lost Grove mine, located on Corkscrew Road just east of the Collier County line.

Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area--

Throughout 2011 we have been part of a coalition that joined Lee County in defending the County Board and State approved comprehensive plan for the DR/GR area against legal challenges filed by some of the landowners with property outside the proposed Future Limerock Mining Overlay. If this is successful we won't have to fight more mines along Corkscrew Road until after 2030.

In 2007 we formed a coalition that persuaded the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to develop a new plan for the 82,000 acre Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area to our east in order to preserve our future water supply, prevent flooding of our rivers and streams and reduce pollution in Estero Bay.

Coordination with FGCU-- We are working with FGCU's leadership to coordinate our community planning with theirs so that vacant land near the University is used in ways that satisfy the needs of the University and prevents future problems for our communities.

Transportation Committee Meets with Local Transportation Officials

On December 14th the ECCL Transportation Committee met with Dave Loveland, Director of the Lee County Transportation department (LeeDOT), Johnny Limbaugh, Manager of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Fort Myers office and Don Scott, Executive Director of the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to discuss Estero's transportation projects and priorities.

At present Estero has three significant intersection/safety projects that need to be completed as soon as possible. They are:

- The western approach to the US 41/Williams Road Intersection,
- Installing a right turn lane for vehicles approaching the Estero Parkway/Three Oaks Parkway intersection from the west, and
- Reconfiguring Three Oaks Parkway in order to provide better access to the Estero Post Office.

The Committee has recruited leaders from West Bay Club, Fountain Lakes and Pelican Sound to lead the effort to improve the US 41/Williams intersection. A follow-up meeting for this project committee has been scheduled with Lee DOT in January.

Committee members living near the Estero Parkway/Three Oaks intersection are working with the County to determine the status of available right-of-way. If sufficient right-of-way is available this project group will seek County sponsorship for the project and seek available funding from the MPO.

Improving access to the Post Office will be a long run project. Nonetheless the Committee would like to develop a project group to begin the process of exploring what options are available with the County and the USPS.

Filling Bike and Sidewalk Gaps

The MPO has provided the Committee with information on the gaps in Estero's bike paths and sidewalks. A project group of bikers will be formed to work with the Transportation Agencies and Bike/Walk/Lee to establish priority bike/ped projects and get them in the cue for funding.

Via Coconut Point is the only major thoroughfare in Estero that where the median is not scheduled to be landscaped. The Committee is looking for one or more volunteers to move this project forward working with Lee DOT roadway landscaping specialists and the landowners along this quite visible roadway.

Gateway Signage

The citizens of Estero at all our planning workshops have long advocated "Estero Gateway Signage" on all the major roads entering Estero. FDOT indicated that state law does not permit such signage on state roads that are not within the boundaries of a municipality. Thus if Estero is to have such signage as people enter Estero on US 41 or exiting I-75, the Gateway Signs will have to be on privately owned land adjacent to the road.

On the other hand Lee County would permit the "Gateway Signage" to be located in the median of the county arterial roadways. In order to authorize the "Gateway Signs" the Board of County Commissioners must adopt an ordinance approving the sign locations and their design and providing for the continuing maintenance of the signs. Thus the 'Gateway Sign project group may want to begin investigating the best locations on Three Oaks Parkway and Ben Hill Griffin for "Gateway Signs" and begin to work with Lee DOT to gain approval for this signage.

Estero Is Seeking Legislative Districts That Keep It Whole

During the second week of January the Florida Legislature will begin consideration of Maps that will create new Florida House and Senate Districts for the next 10 years. The ECCL has been working with the City of Bonita Springs to convince the legislature to create House and Senate Districts that contain all of our communities and are likely to be represented by a Lee County Senator and Representative.

On August 31st the Florida Redistricting Committee conducted a Public Hearing in the Lee County community of Lehigh Acres. Because we want representation that knows and cares about our area and its needs, the ECCL joined with the City of Bonita Springs to submit legislative district maps to the Florida House and Senate that include everyone in both communities and are exclusively in Lee County.

The Senate Map

The Senate Redistricting Committee has recommended a single Senate map for consideration by the Senate during the Spring Legislative session that starts on January 10, 2012. This map was made public in early December along with a call for public input. There will likely be some changes made in this map when it is reviewed by the Senate in mid-January

The recommended Senate Map creates a new District 23 that keeps Bonita Springs and Estero whole in a Lee County district. We urge you to tell the Senators you support of District 23 in the proposed map.

To do that go to the **Brooks Concerned Citizens website** by clicking on the following link: <http://www.brooksconcernedcitizens.com/default.aspx?p=MembersDefault>, sign in using the instructions provided and send an email to the members of the Senate Redistricting Committee and the Senate leadership urging them to adopt the boundaries of District 23 included in the proposed Senate Map.

The House Map

The House Redistricting Committee has produced four House maps for consideration by the House during the Spring Legislative session that starts on January 10, 2012. **Only one of those maps keeps Bonita Springs and Estero whole in a Lee County district.**

This district is District 76 in Map H000H9021.

For Estero to be well represented in the Florida House over the next 10 years we need you to go to the **Brooks Concerned Citizens website** by clicking on the following link: <http://www.brooksconcernedcitizens.com/default.aspx?p=MembersDefault>, sign in using the instructions provided and send an email to the members of the House Redistricting Committee and the House leadership urging them to adopt Map 9021 and the boundaries of District 76 included in that Map.

Once the legislative approval is achieved, the proposed state maps will go to the state Attorney General's office and the state Supreme Court for review and finally to the U.S. Department of Justice for review.

South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee Update

The members of the South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee met on Thursday, December 15 with the staff of Lee County Port Authority (LCPA) and Mike Reynolds, Operations Manager for ESA, the consulting company hired by the LCPA to study and make suggestions regarding how the Port Authority can best comply with FAA Federal Regulations, Part 150, Airport Noise issues. ESA will be making initial recommendations to the FAA in this spring of 2012 with final decisions and enactment by early 2013.

Suggested Route Change

The purpose of the meeting was to review results of TSA's analysis of a Committee recommendation for a routing change for arriving aircraft at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). The Committee's suggested routing change had been submitted to the FAA by the ESA staff last summer. In addition, we hoped to get an update on the Part 150 Noise Study and a progress report on the installation of a flight tracking system that the Committee has been seeking for a long time to help area residents determine the height of aircraft flying over their homes.

The Committee's route change request was denied, after the FAA's various technical groups reviewed the possibilities for implementing it.

The Part 150 Noise study is still in its first phase, gathering up-to-date data. Portable noise monitors were operated from several Estero golf courses located under the approach route for a few days this summer as part of the study.

Flight Tracking System

The Committee is constantly urging the FAA and the Port Authority staff to have the flight *tracking* system in operation before the end of the 2011-12 season ends. Flight tracking systems for public use are initially funded by the FAA and subsequently sponsored by the local airport authority (LCPA in our case). Over a year ago the LCPA obtained approval from the Lee County Board of Directors and requested the system from the FAA. This fall the system was included in the FAA's 2012-13 budget plan.

The Webtrack system for Southwest Florida International Airport continues to be reviewed by the FAA. The system is currently going through the National Airspace Change Proposal (NCP) process. Based on the Port Authority's discussions with the FAA, they anticipate receiving the approved Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) from the FAA in early 2012. The approved MOA will then be taken to the Airport Special Management Committee (ASMC) and Board of Port Commissioners for signature. Once the document is fully executed the Authority will begin installing the hardware and software. The flight tracking system will then be tested for accuracy and security. Once all these steps are complete they will make the Webtrack system available to the Estero and other communities.

Go to <http://www.bocairport.com/flight-tracking.shtml> and click on Flight Tracking to see how the approved system is working at the Boca Raton airport. In addition you can Google *flight tracking systems* to see systems at other airports nationwide. Generally, it provides web users

with information, including the altitude of the airplane, on an over-flight (after a 20 minute delay for security purposes).

The readout is similar to the information on an air traffic controller's screen and includes the following information: air carrier or aircraft operator, flight number, airspeed, altitude, departure and destination airports, etc. The information is superimposed, along with a track arrow, on a map similar to Google's.

If a resident suspects that an aircraft overhead is flying too low or has another issue with an over-flight, that person can go to the website and get specific flight data before contacting LCPA's noise complaint line (**239-590-4466**) or e-mail at noisecomment@flylcpa.com to register a complaint. Accurate follow-up and corrections for future flights if appropriate are then expedited. In other words, if there was an airspace violation the pilot will be tap dancing in the chief pilot's office in a few days.

Lost Grove Mine – Collier County

Lost Grove is a Corkscrew Road mine located just over the Collier County boundary line so is being reviewed under Collier County procedures that are considerably different from those used by Lee County. This mine is immediately adjacent to two residential communities in Lee County and to the Lee County Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area that is far along in the process of designating the Alico corridor as its Future Limerock Mining area. It is also immediately north of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) property that has been acquired by various public bodies in order to conserve it and its water resources.

On **November 3rd**, the Collier County Planning Commission (CCPC) began its hearing on Lost Grove Mine. The applicant's testimony was extensive as they discussed conditions they were willing to implement. Testimony by Lee County planning staff was also extensive and centered on the principle that Collier County cannot adequately condition this operation to satisfy requirements of the Collier County Comp Plan. They presented compelling evidence that many of the impacts of the mine would adversely affect residents and resources in Lee County. There was insufficient time to allow public comment and the hearing was continued to a later date.

On **November 17th**, the CCPC hearing resumed. The applicant provided further testimony related to possible conditions and Lee County concluded their presentations on impacts to wildlife and conservation lands. Testimony by opponents, including environmental groups and residents from Estero, Corkscrew, & Lehigh Acres took the rest of the day. The CCPC chairman determined that more time was needed to consider the testimony and declared another continuance.

The Lost Grove CCPC hearing will resume at 9 a.m. on January 5th, 2012 at the Collier County Government Center. The final Lost Grove hearing before the Collier County Board of County Commissioners will be announced after the CCPC hearing concludes in January.

Estero's November Housing Permits Remain Lackluster

During November, twenty [single family homes](#) with a combined building value of \$2.4 million were permitted in Estero. In addition, a four-unit apartment building with a value of \$.4 million was permitted. The \$2.8 million total building value approximates the 2011 monthly average.

Year-to-date, the \$36.4 million shown below is just slightly ahead of last year's pace through November. Of course, the year-to-date figure is well below the 2000-2007 periods.

Half of the single family home permits issued in November were granted to Lennar's Bella Terra and Toll Brothers' Belle Lago developments. Of the single family homes permitted this year, over 90% were issued for Bella Terra, Belle Lago and Toll Brothers' other development, The Reserve of Estero.

The following table compares year-to-date figures through November with those of the prior eleven years.

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	1,956	\$274,917,477	\$140,551	42%
2001	2,070	318,309,650	153,773	47
2002	1,418	265,574,765	187,288	50
2003	1,365	219,137,397	160,540	46
2004	1,485	328,019,837	220,889	62
2005	2,699	600,971,677	222,665	47
2006	1,268	330,712,219	260,814	39
2007	428	121,212,530	283,207	37
2008	144	49,233,767	341,901	81
2009	150	45,948,311	306,322	77
2010	177	36,167,371	204,335	80
2011	179	36,388,729	203,289	83

Estero's November Commercial Permits Remain Sluggish

During November, permits totaling \$.6 million were issued for Estero [commercial buildings](#), (excluding the apartment). Although this represents another sluggish monthly result, the 2011 year-to-date figure shown below is about 30% ahead of last year, due to three permits issued earlier this year: \$2.1 million for Cayo de Estero on US 41 near Estero Pkwy., \$1.0 million for the Olive Garden restaurant in Coconut Point and \$1.2 million for the Blue Cross Blue Shield service center also in Coconut Point.

As shown in the following table, Estero's commercial development peaked in 2006 with a total of \$185 million. Since then, total commercial investment in Estero has fallen precipitously and has remained low for several years. For the year, 2011 is expected to show an uptick on the strength of the three million-dollar-plus investments permitted earlier this year.

Year	Year-to-Date	Annual Total
2000	\$76,434,302	\$77,250,835
2001	37,087,252	44,116,526
2002	23,095,139	23,135,139

2003	19,057,328	23,234,725
2004	59,806,230	60,859,820
2005	82,721,406	111,037,977
2006	180,995,072	184,709,240
2007	155,487,478	157,614,045
2008	38,765,644	39,261,677
2009	9,545,879	9,752,556
2010	8,836,508	9,322,546
2011	11,670,078	?

The major projects permitted so far this year are:

\$2,052,000 for [Cayo de Estero](#),
 \$1,200,000 for the [Blue Cross Blue Shield](#) service center in Coconut Point,
 \$1,000,000 for the [Olive Garden restaurant in Coconut Point](#), and
 \$ 952,000 for [Meadows of Estero](#).

Note: The building values above understate the cost of each residence or commercial building because they exclude the value of the underlying land.

The County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

December and Year 2011 Estero Single Family Home Sales Flat

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures indicate that twenty-four single family homes in Estero were sold in December, the same number as December, 2010. As shown below, Quarter 4 sales were off 18% from a year ago, continuing the quarterly volatility that we have experienced all year. Despite that volatility, total sales for all of 2011 were virtually the same as 2010 totals.

	HOMES		HOMES	%
2010	SOLD	2011	SOLD	INC. -DEC.
QUARTER 4		QUARTER 4		
OCTOBER	27	OCTOBER	16	-40%
NOVEMBER	23	NOVEMBER	21	-9%
DECEMBER	<u>24</u>	DECEMBER	<u>24</u>	-%
TOTAL QTR 4	74	TOTAL QTR 4	61	-18%
YEAR		YEAR		
QTR 1	93	QTR 1	107	15%
QTR 2	130	QTR 2	105	-19%
QTR 3	58	QTR 3	81	40%
QTR 4	<u>74</u>	QTR 4	<u>61</u>	-18%
TOTAL YEAR	355	TOTAL YEAR	354	-%

As of December 31, 2011, there were 350 listings of currently active unsold single family homes in Estero. This is 5% less than last month and 20% less than the May 30, 2011 inventory level when the ECCL first began capturing these numbers.

Of the 350 active listings, about 8% represent “distressed sales,” i.e., short-sale listings or bank owned properties which, in each case, the bank is expected to receive less than its loan amount. Active listings of distressed sale properties have declined significantly from levels reported several months ago.

Based on sales in the last year, the 350 inventory level represents a twelve month supply of unsold homes, about the same as in each of the last three months. A six month supply typically indicates a good market. While comparable figures are not available for last year, we believe that the current inventory and months of supply figures are significantly better than a year ago. As always, thanks to Joe Pavich, Sr. of Realty World in Estero for compiling these figures for the ECCL.

Note: These amounts include most of Estero, but do not include the Estero portion of Pelican Landing, which is not separately listed in the MLS. Also, none of the above amounts include listings of multi-family homes.

