

ECCL

ESTERO COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

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FEATURE: Economic Development Effort launches in the Village of Estero

Since its inception, the Village of Estero's leadership has embraced the spirit of collaboration with its community and regional partners, together promoting smart growth and fostering an ideal environment in which to live, work and play.

From the standpoint of economic development, the Village has been actively involved in the Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council, and the Chamber of Commerce. Recently, Village leaders explored the need for an independent Estero economic development capability that would be recognized by both the Village and the Chamber, while continuing its relationship with the Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council.

Last June, Nolen Rollins of Kingdom Mobilization and Pastor of Legacy Church, was asked to join the Estero Chamber's Board of Directors and to take the lead on creating an economic development task force.

Mr. Rollins explains that his first step was to connect with area leaders to determine the key players who would serve on a task force. Based on their recommendations, the team members of



the Estero Community and Economic Development task force are a broad representation of the community and include:

- Gary Bonvillian – President Emeritus, Thomas University
- Commander Morgan Bowden – Lee County Sheriff's Office, Public Services
- Don Eslick – Interim Chairman and Director Emeritus, Estero Council of Community Leaders
- Jeff Maas – CFO, Envirostruct
- Brandy Minchew – Florida Master Naturalist
- Sarah Newcomb – Executive Director, Estero Chamber of Commerce
- Joseph Pavich, Sr. – Owner/Broker, Realty World Real Estate
- Nolen Rollins, Team Lead – Estero Chamber of Commerce Board/Director, Kingdom Mobilization/Pastor, Legacy Church
- Steve Sarkozy – Village Manager, Village of Estero

- Suzanne Specht – Assistant Director, Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC)/FGCU
- Christopher Westley – Director, Regional Economic Research Institute/Professor of Economics, FGCU
- Jim Wilson – Village of Estero Councilperson

One of the Task Force’s most important efforts has been to implement a survey among community leadership to help provide a framework for how the team should operate.

The leaders surveyed were:

- Estero Village Council and Manager
- Estero Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
- Estero Community and Economic Development Team



FOLLOWING ARE THE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES:

1. Should the Estero Community and Economic Development Team effort operate under the authority of ...
 - a. The Village of Estero Council and Staff (Public) 30%
 - b. The Estero Chamber of Commerce (Private) **70%**

2. Should the Estero Community and Economic Development Team effort ...
 - a. Operate as a part of the Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council 20%
 - b. Operate separately and exclusively represent the Village of Estero **80%**

3. Should the Estero Community and Economic Development Team effort be funded and directed primarily by ...
 - a. The Public Sector (Village of Estero, Lee County) 5%
 - b. The Private Sector (Businesses, Developers, Donors) 5%
 - c. A Partnership of both Public and Private Sectors **90%**

Based on the survey results and the Task Force’s intention to build and strengthen local partnerships, they listed their basic strategies:

- **Establish a partnership of community and economic development entities.**
 - The Village of Estero Council and Staff
 - The Estero Chamber of Commerce
 - The Estero Council of Community Leaders
 - Florida Gulf Coast University
 - Local Schools
 - Estero Business Owners/Operators
 - Local Board of Realtors
 - Non-Profit/Faith-Based Organizations
 - Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council
 - Horizon Council Lee County Economic Development
- **Establish a Community and Economic Development Team.**
- **Support the Village of Estero’s community and economic development plan/strategy.**
- **Develop a plan/strategy for ...**
 - Public and private partnerships and investment
 - Human resource development, education and training
 - Land use and sustainable housing growth
 - Social, recreational, arts and cultural development

- **Employ a full time Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce** to provide staff leadership to execute the strategy for community development, business retention and growth and developing a stronger Chamber of Commerce.
- **Mobilize funding for the strategy.**
 - Chamber of Commerce Operating Budget
 - Chamber New Membership Drive
 - Estero Businesses
 - Village of Estero



After completing the survey, the Task Force developed the following mission and vision:

MISSION

The purpose of the Village of Estero Community and Economic Development Team is to develop and implement a strategic plan that enhances the overall quality of life within the Village and focuses on:

- Community Development
- Business Retention and Growth
- Strong Chamber of Commerce

Community Development:

Village Physical Place Identity, Village Center/Downtown, Cultural and Arts District, River Walk, Restaurants and Shops, Recreation and Entertainment, Village Hall

Business Retention and Growth:

Supporting current and new businesses with training, education and human resources development, high technology district, new hospitals and medical corridor

Strong Chamber of Commerce:

Strong voice of the Estero Business Community, Executive Director, adequate funding, on-going business surveys, economic growth reports, working teams addressing business needs, Chamber permanent facility/office space

VISION

We envision Estero becoming the most desired city in Florida for overall quality of life, economic development, new businesses, and sustaining growing businesses.

Most recently, the Task Force is analyzing how its plans accord with the goals and strategies set out in the Florida Chamber Foundation's Florida 2030 plan. The Florida Chamber Foundation describes Florida 2030 as follows:

**We envision Estero becoming
the most desired city in Florida
for overall quality of life,
economic development, new
businesses, and sustaining
growing businesses.**

“Florida is now the third most populous state and by 2030, five million more residents will call Florida home and 1.7 million more jobs will be needed. To prepare for this continued growth and ensure Florida remains successful, the Florida Chamber Foundation is leading the charge to write the blueprint for Florida’s future — Florida 2030. This two-year research program will stimulate strategic thinking about Florida’s future and engage business and community leaders in each of Florida’s 67 counties and identify key trends and the factors that can drive their regional economy. Florida 2030 is our opportunity to work together to strengthen your community, business and future. The future belongs to all Floridians and we need your help to plan for the future.”

The Estero team will partner with Florida 2030 to choose the strategies that will best help the Village of Estero and will contribute to the goals of the Florida 2030 plan.

Jim Wilson, economic Task Force team member, Estero Chamber board member, Horizon Council executive board member, and Village Council liaison, says that in only a few short months, a lot of has been accomplished.

“We are excited about the appointment of Sarah Newcomb as executive director of the Estero Chamber,” states Mr. Wilson. “She brings a wealth of experience from Lee County economic development, and she is a strong business leader.”

Mr. Wilson’s efforts revolve around reaching out to people interested in doing business in the Village of Estero. He is working on an opportunity map to identify where corporate entities can be placed and where they can grow. He explains that there may even be potential growth around redeveloping areas of existing commercial space to meet the needs of a changing economy. He anticipates many businesses reaching out to the Village and to the Chamber for opportunities, and to strengthening the Chamber’s resources.

“We are looking forward to working with the new Chamber director during the first quarter of 2019,” Mr. Wilson continues. “I am particularly excited about FGCU economists being part of our effort. Having the university next door is a great benefit. And I

am so pleased that we now have a board that is focused on where we are and where we want to go.”

Another crucial imperative for the economic development effort is to attain funding beyond the allocation from the Estero Chamber.



“We have mobilized to achieve our funding goals and have already made progress,” says Mr. Rollins. “During the last few months, we established various levels of sponsorship and the Village of Estero has stepped up to the top level. We have additional tentative commitments, and our goal is to reach \$50,000 by the end of January 2019.”

Mr. Rollins and the entire task force are energized and optimistic about all that’s on the horizon for 2019.

“Our vision encompasses a City Center, ‘Estero on the River,’ complete with walking trails, parks, theaters and restaurants,” he concludes. “I am confident in a recent relocation consultant’s report that cites Estero as the number one relocation area for the eastern United States. With Estero community and economic development, thriving public/private partnerships, and Village of Estero leadership, we are positioned for success.”

Steve Sarkozy, Village of Estero Manager, concludes:

“The Village is excited in this upcoming year to participate in a new effort—focusing on economic and community development. We relish the opportunity to be partners with other organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce in this effort. It is so important for the future of all our citizens to work together developing strategic plans to establish a stronger community.”

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