

**Estero Development Report**  
 Volume 11, Number 6, Issued February 2012  
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
**For More Information about Estero**  
 ...see [www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org)

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
Sunday, March 4 <sup>th</sup>	2 p.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders 7 <sup>th</sup> Annual "All Play No Work" Party	Angelina's Restaurant
Friday, March 9 <sup>th</sup>	10 a.m.	ECCL Regular Monthly Meeting...	Estero Community Park
Tuesday, March 13 <sup>th</sup>	5:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, March 14 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) meeting	Estero Community Park
Thursday, March 15 <sup>th</sup>	9 a.m.	Lost Grove Mine Hearing of the Collier County Planning Commission	Collier County Complex, 3299 Tamiami Trail East (northeast corner of Airport Pulling)
Friday, March 16 <sup>th</sup>	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO (Transportation Planning) meeting	Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd in Cape Coral
Monday, March 19 <sup>th</sup>	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting	Estero Community Park

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**Estero Community Website ([www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org))**

**The community groups sponsoring the site are:**

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

## **Future Use of the Coconut/I-75 Land Between the Lighthouse Bay and Copperleaf Communities**

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> Ned Dewhirst, representing Oakbrook Properties and Funnel Land Investment, LLC, presented to the ECPP a proposed Development of Regional Impact (DRI) Notice of Proposed Change and Zoning Amendment for the Brooks DRI/MPD. The proposal is for a parcel of land located at the eastern terminus of Coconut Road next to I-75, consisting of approx. 38 acres.

In addition Oakbrook has met with representatives of the adjacent Copperleaf and Lighthouse Bay communities, the Brooks Community Development Districts, and Estero Fire & Rescue. As a result of these meetings Oakbrook Properties through Ned Dewhirst has committed to hold a community meeting with all residents of both Copperleaf and Lighthouse Bay in addition to a holding general meeting for all Brooks residents when the development plans become more definite.

The developer's request proposes to eliminate the current zoning reservation for 150' of ROW and additional acreage for the extension of Coconut Road east and an overpass of I-75 due to their removal from the MPO 2035 Traffic Plan.

Other requests include revisions to the Brooks Master Concept Plan (MCP), elimination of the mid-rise multifamily use, and the addition of up to 200 multifamily residential units. When asked when these units might be constructed, Dewhirst responded that at present there is not a development schedule for these 38 acres. The majority of the Panel and one Brooks' resident in the audience supported the change. Panel member Maas expressed his view that the ROW should remain in place for future consideration of an interchange.

On February 3<sup>rd</sup> several members of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), an advisory committee to the Lee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), sought to pass a resolution asking the MPO to amend the MO's 2035 plan so as to prevent the vacation of the roadway easement on this property.

On February 17<sup>th</sup> the CAC report, presented by the CAC's Vice-chair argued strongly for this position. Three members of the ECCL spoke in opposition to such a change supporting the land owners right to seek County approval for the use of his property since the County's Long Range Transportation Plan no longer found that the land was needed for its transportation needs through 2035. No action was taken by the MPO on the CAC report and request.

Oakbrook Properties plans on filing the necessary paperwork to begin the vacation process with Lee County within the next month or so. In the meantime the Board's of Lighthouse Bay, Copperleaf and the other Brooks communities will be considering resolutions in support of the developer's request. The Spring Run community Board has already approved such a resolution. The ECCL will take up the issue at its March meeting.

### **Estero Community Plan Update Progress Report**

On February 20<sup>th</sup> the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) sponsored a workshop that complemented their November 2010 workshop. The ECPP now has the necessary funding

commitments to update both the Estero Comprehensive Plan (Goal 19 of the Lee Plan) and our section of the County Land Development Code (Chapter 33).

Dan DeLisi of DeLisi Fitzgerald facilitated the meeting along with his co-contractors: Bill Prysi, a landscape architect and Joe McHarris, a professional planner and architectural designer, both long time members of the Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) and Jeff Rapham, a planner under contract from Orlando.

DeLisi focused about 80 community participants on five areas:

- 1) Water Access
- 2) Historic Overlays
- 3) Roadway Connectivity
- 4) Parks and Recreational Connectivity
- 5) Architectural Design Guidelines

Much of the discussion followed that of the earlier workshop. Areas that were unique and different from what has already been documented are highlighted below:

**WATER ACCESS** –Everyone wanted greater focus on access to the Estero River and the State and County parks and other properties with access to Estero Bay. Much discussion as to how this might be accomplished.

**HISTORIC DISTRICT IN OLD ESTERO** --One resident suggested special lighting along 41 or signage in the historic area to distinguish it from the rest of Estero. DeLisi indicated that the next workshop would be focused on residents of the Highlands Avenue/Broadway neighborhoods to get more public input from homeowners in the contemplated historic district.

**PARK ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY** -- Neighborhood parks were discussed and the pros and cons were outlined for everyone. Questions were raised as to how connected are our schools to the existing parks? Are there simple connections between schools and parks that could be done at little cost? We should ensure our community plan is consistent with the MPO Bike/PED master plan for the entire county. The concept of linear park connectivity segued into how to solve the problem of crossing US 41 and Corkscrew Roads. McHarris noted that one approach would be to redo the Estero River bridge to go UNDER 41 instead? That would solve both bike and pedestrian access issues at a reasonable cost (instead of building a pedestrian bridge no one would use).

**ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES** – The group had a long discussion concerning Mediterranean vs. Old Florida architecture and how it has been implemented so far in Estero. A new concept was proposed: developing a “Koreshan Style” for parts of Estero that are in the historic region. It would be unique to this area. Ensuring compatibility of the appearance of new buildings with those around it was also suggested.

**SIGNAGE** – Specific discussions ensued regarding the use of electronic signs and future technologies that might make them more acceptable in Estero.

The ECPP meets monthly at the Estero Community Park at 6 p.m. on the third Monday of each month.

## **South Lee County Hospital Committee Progress Report**

The **South Lee County Hospital Committee** has been working with Lee Memorial and NCH healthcare systems for over five years in an effort to improve the availability of quality health care in Bonita Springs and Estero. Due to the fact that the nearest Hospital is about 10 miles from the center of our communities our short term goal has been to obtain a 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department.

To date the Committee's greatest accomplishment has been extension of the hours of operation of the Bonita Community Health Center's (BCHC) Walk-in Clinic/Urgent Care center to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. each weekday, an increase of 3 hours per day, and expanded weekend hour from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., an increase of 9 hours per weekend. BCHC has recently announced that these new hours will be maintained throughout the year.

As a show of good faith the Hospital Committee has worked with the BCHC to market the facility and its services throughout Bonita Springs and Estero. As a result of this joint effort the finances of the BCHC partnership have greatly improved, thus putting both systems in a better position to further improve south Lee County's access to quality health care.

### **Lee Memorial's Latest South Lee Service Expansion Plans**

On February 29<sup>th</sup> the leadership group of the South Lee County Hospital Committee met with representatives of Lee Memorial Health System to discuss the following:

- Their analysis of the south Lee County healthcare market,
- Lee Memorial's ongoing efforts to satisfy the unmet healthcare needs of the community, and
- Their ongoing development of this market.

### **The South Lee County Healthcare Market**

Lee Memorial has used the 2010 Census information to help us understand the demographics of the south Lee County healthcare market. The permanent population of South Lee County is much older than the rest of Lee County and our elderly population is growing much faster than elsewhere in the county.

In 2010 thirty seven (37) percent of south Lee County's full time residents were over 65, while the percent over 65 throughout Lee County was only 23%. Estero's over 65 population was even higher at 42% compared to 34% for Bonita Springs.

Bonita and Estero had nearly 31% of the County's growth in over 65 residents between 2000 and 2010. This is important because this age group consumes a disproportionate share of health care services. It should be noted that south Lee County has a very high percentage of "snowbird" residents who are not included in these figures and may be somewhat different from a demographic perspective.

Using data on admissions and emergency room treatments from all local hospital systems Lee Memorial was able to analyze how much residents living in south Lee County use these hospital services.

During 2011 over 7,200 south Lee County residents received inpatient hospital services in southwest Florida hospitals. Fifty eight (58%) percent of south Lee County residents receiving inpatient hospital services were over 65 years of age. The number of south Lee County persons receiving inpatient services continues to grow at over 3% per year. The over 65 age group produces almost all of this growth (87%) is provided by the over 65 population of the area. As the south Lee County population ages this demographic will continue to need more and more inpatient hospital services.

During 2011 almost 9,800 south Lee County residents were treated and released from area hospital emergency rooms. This was about 1,000 less persons than two years earlier. During that period the Bonita Community Health Center's Walk in Clinic/Urgent Care facility greatly increased the number of patients that it served and the area's other two Urgent Care facilities may have contributed to this reduction. Since there are no Emergency Rooms closer than 10 miles from the area many residents are probably choosing these more convenient facilities.

Finally Lee Memorial analyzed the 2011 hospital admissions of south Lee County patients to determine the needs of these patients and found that over 950 of the 7,200 admissions were for orthopedic services and another 950 were for cardiovascular medical services. These are undoubtedly a couple of the medical fields where additional medical resources are needed in south Lee County.

All of this data may understate the use of these services by persons living in Bonita Springs inasmuch as many of our "Snowbird" residents may be using their northern addresses when accessing these locally provided hospital services. More research is needed to determine the extent of this shortfall.

### **What Lee Memorial Has Been Doing to Better Serve This Market**

Lee Memorial has recently added the following physician services to their Lee Physicians Group in the BCHC to serve the south Lee County market:

- Added two pediatric physicians here
- Added two physicians to provide obstetrics and gynecological service
- In the Primary Care area they have added one nurse practitioner and planning on adding one more
- Their Heart Group is expanding the coverage of their services in the south Lee County market
- A weekly vascular clinic has been added at the BCHC
- An Employees Health Clinic has recently been opened at the BCHC. On March 12<sup>th</sup> a residency trained, Board Certified Occupational Medicine physician will begin practice at BCHC,
- A comprehensive balance and fall prevention program has been added, and
- A comprehensive Joint/Spine and Pain Program has also been added.

### **Looking Ahead**

Suzanne Bradach, the outgoing CEO of BCHC, and Dr. Scott Nygaard, the head of Lee Physicians Group, will bring the Estero community up to date at the ECCL meeting on April

13th. Sara McCallum will replace Suzanne Bradach as CEO of the BCHC on March 17<sup>th</sup>. Lee Memorial and the South Lee County Hospital Committee will meet again in late April to continue this dialog on expanding south Lee County 's healthcare services

## **February Transportation Project Progress**

### **Better Access To and From the Post Office**

The third traffic safety priority of the ECCL Transportation Committee has been improved access to and from the Three Oaks Parkway Post Office. Since midway landscaping is underway on Three Oaks Lee DOT and the County does not want to waste its limited resources by having to remove recently planted material, the County responded quickly to the Committee's request with a proposal to the Committee.

The County proposal, which included graphics accurately depicting it, would install a new left turn lane just north of Copper Oaks for vehicles leaving the Post Office or Copper Oaks that wish to travel south. This would substantially shorten the distance vehicles would have to travel before being able to make a u-turn after leaving the Post Office or Copper Oaks.

In order to provide the U-turn at this location the County would relocate the existing Southbound directional left just south of the Seventh Day Lutheran Church entrance to the north to align with the driveway and provide separation from the directional left into Copper Oaks.

The proposal was discussed by the Transportation Committee at its meeting on February 20<sup>th</sup> and the members voted unanimously to approve the proposal. Co-chairman Bill Williams immediately informed the County of the Committee's decision.

### **US 41/Sweetwater Ranch Full Signalization and Speed Limit Reduction**

On February 1<sup>st</sup> Estero High School student Danielle Chapman was struck and killed by a vehicle while attempting to walk across US 41 at Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard. This tragedy called attention to the traffic safety issues caused by the rapid increase in traffic in and around the Coconut Point Town Center with large residential communities on the west side of US 41 and a 55 mile per hour speed limit on this segment of US 41.

This intersection has long been served by a constantly flashing emergency signal controlled by the adjacent Fire House when its equipment is responding to a call.

As a result of this tragedy the ECCL approved the following resolution at its February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting:

**“ESTERO COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY LEADERS  
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FULL  
TRAFFIC SIGNALIZATION AT  
US 41 AT SWEETWATER RANCH BOULEVARD**

**WHEREAS**, a traffic signal was installed by the Florida Department of Transportation at the US 41/Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard intersection but was left to flash yellow and only operate for public safety vehicles, and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Department of Transportation has been unwilling to activate the signal until increased residential building raised traffic levels, and

**WHEREAS**, on February 1, 2012 Estero High School student Danielle Chapman was struck and killed by a vehicle while attempting to walk across US 41 at Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard, and

**WHEREAS**, this intersection is also very hazardous for Fountain Lakes residents and Marsh Landing residents who have unsafe conditions to turn north on US 41, and

**WHEREAS**, the existing 55 MPH speed limit further impacts the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles exiting and entering this non-signalized intersection, and

**WHEREAS**, the 55 MPH speed limit should be lowered to 45 MPH throughout this segment of the road as increased traffic at Coconut Point and its proximity to adjacent non-signalized developments is extremely dangerous, and

**WHEREAS**, these conditions have now resulted in the needless loss of life of a young teenage girl,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Estero Council of Community Leaders by this resolution implore and make formal demand upon the Florida Department of Transportation that the existing traffic light at the US 41 Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard intersection be fully activated as soon as possible; and lower the speed limit on this segment of US 41 to 45 MPH, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor, State Senate, House of Representatives, Lee County Commissioners, and the Lee County Sheriff.

**Adopted Unanimously: Friday, February 10, 2012"**

Since the resolution was adopted Dick Schweers the project manager for this project has contacted Senator Benacquisto to request that she ask FDOT to undertake the necessary study of this intersection so that full signalization can be implemented immediately. The Transportation Committee discuss this issue at their February 20<sup>th</sup> meeting and decided to wait before contacting our other legislators until we hear back from Sen. Benequisto.

In addition the Committee agreed that the project should take on a broader scope than just changes signal on a traffic light and reducing the speed limit. Dick Schweers and Ned Dewhirst of Oakbrook Properties, the developer of Coconut Point will craft a plan that will prioritize phases for this project that will solve more of the problems.

The Fountain Lakes Community Board and the Rapallo community Board have been asked to adopt resolutions in support of the Committee's efforts to make this intersection safer for all concerned.

Once these steps have been completed the Committee will contact FDOT for a meeting to discuss how the safety of the intersection can be improved.

### **Right Turn Lane at Estero Parkway and Three Oaks Parkway**

The ECCL Transportation Committee discussed this project at its February 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. After considerable discussion the Committee decided that the Co-chairs should ask County staff to validate the cost of the design for this project and to meet with some or all of the County Commissioners to obtain their support for addressing the funding of this project as soon as possible.

## Earlier Actions

At its December meeting with County DOT staff the Committee had a brief discussion with project manager Sarah Clarke about adding a right turn lane to the western approach of Estero Parkway to Three Oaks Parkway. She indicated that the major stumbling block to this project is obtaining about \$30,000 to pay for the design of the project. There is currently no money in the County's 2012 Budget for this project so the community will need to lobby the County Commissioners to have the project added to the 2013 budget that will be adopted this September.

## February Roadway Landscaping Progress

As many of you have probably seen, tree planting is in progress on Three Oaks Parkway between Corkscrew Road and Alico Road, as well as continued irrigation installation. Pump stations and electricity to them are ready to go and the south pump is putting out water to the new trees. This will be the trend for Three Oaks in the upcoming weeks and everything is on schedule.

Landscaping on the Estero Pkwy Extension over I-75 is moving along as well with irrigation installation. County staff selected the trees for the project during the week of February 20<sup>th</sup> and will begin to plant them during March. This project is on schedule as well.

Via Coconut Point is the only major thoroughfare in Estero that where the median is not scheduled to be landscaped. The ECCL Transportation 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.

## Estero's January Housing Permits Show Modest Increase

During January, eighteen [single family homes](#) and one four-unit apartment with a combined building value of \$2.9 million were permitted in Estero. The twenty-two units permitted are up slightly from January a year ago and up significantly from an unusually depressed December figure.

All of the January single family unit permits were issued to Lennar's Bella Terra on Corkscrew and Toll Brothers' Reserve of Estero on Estero Parkway.

The following table compares January figures with those of the prior twelve years:

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	77	\$11,813,625	\$153,424	61%
2001	146	25,310,064	173,257	51
2002	83	15,451,353	186,161	52
2003	109	20,384,062	187,010	63
2004	153	25,552,428	167,009	80
2005	176	41,429,210	235,393	51

<b>2006</b>	75	16,961,195	223,949	27
<b>2007</b>	59	14,077,487	238,601	24
<b>2008</b>	9	2,688,186	298,687	56
<b>2009</b>	8	3,563,005	445,376	50
<b>2010</b>	19	3,325,793	175,042	79
<b>2011</b>	16	2,283,545	142,722	75
<b>2012</b>	22	3,339,222	151,783	82

### **Estero's January Commercial Permits Show Some Life**

During January, permits totaling \$ 1.4 million were issued for Estero's [commercial buildings](#), excluding the four-unit apartment. This compares favorably with an unusually depressed December, and is the strongest monthly figure since last June. This January's total trails the January, 2011 amount due to one large commercial investment in January a year ago...\$2.1 million for Cayo de Estero.

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 especially low for the last five years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>Annual Total</b>
<b>2000</b>	\$5,015,801	\$77,250,835
<b>2001</b>	2,295,968	44,116,526
<b>2002</b>	818,116	23,135,139
<b>2003</b>	804,159	23,234,725
<b>2004</b>	128,760	60,859,820
<b>2005</b>	2,523,640	111,037,977
<b>2006</b>	13,414,883	184,709,240
<b>2007</b>	18,391,794	157,614,045
<b>2008</b>	3,028,264	39,261,677
<b>2009</b>	1,122,922	9,752,556
<b>2010</b>	331,365	9,322,546
<b>2011</b>	3,179,495	11,717,593
<b>2012</b>	1,434,121	?

The only major project permitted in January, 2012 was for \$1,020,000 for some remodeling within Coconut Point.

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>

### 2012 Year to Date Estero Single Family Home Sales Show Increase

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures indicate that seventy-nine single family homes in Estero were sold in January and February, 2012. As shown below, this represents a 16 % increase from a year ago.

Period	Sold in 2011	Sold in 2012	Inc (Dec)	Inc (Dec) %
Jan	23	58	35	152%
Feb	45	21	24	-53
YTD	68	79	11	16
Mar	39			
Qtr 1	107			
Apr	50			
May	27			
June	28			
Qtr 2	105			
YTD	212			
July	26			
Aug	31			
Sept	24			
Qtr 3	81			
YTD	293			
Oct	16			
Nov	21			
Dec	24			
Qtr 4	61			
Year	354			

As of February 29, 2012, there were 429 listings of currently active unsold homes in Estero. This is 23 % more than at December 31, 2011 but about the same as at May 30, 2011, when the ECCL first began capturing these numbers.

Of the 429 active listings, about 16% 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. The level of distressed sale properties remains volatile.

Based on sales in the recent past, the 429 active listings represent a fourteen month supply of unsold homes, up from about twelve months supply at December 31, 2011. A six month supply typically indicates a good market. Comparable figures are not available as of last February.

Thanks again 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.