



## **Estero Development Report**

Volume 12, Number 4, Issued February 2013

Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

**For More Information about Estero**

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

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

Fri., Feb. 8, 10 a.m.	<b>ECCL Monthly Members' Meeting, Dist. 2 Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass Guest Speaker</b>	Estero Community Park
Mon., Feb.11, 5 p.m.	<b>Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting</b>	District Headquarters, Three Oaks Parkway
Tues., Feb. 12, 9:30 a.m.	<b>Bd. of County Commissioners Impact Fee Moratorium Hearing</b>	Old Lee County Court House, 2120 Main St. Ft. Myers
Wed., Feb. 13, 5 p.m.	<b>Estero Design Review Committee Meeting</b>	Estero Community Park
Fri., Feb.15, 9 a.m.	<b>Lee County MPO Meeting</b>	Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd. Cape Coral
Mon., Feb. 18, 5 p.m.	<b>Estero Community Planning Committee Planning Panel</b>	Estero Community Park
Sun., Feb. 24, 4 p.m.	<b>"Music of Beethoven &amp; Mozart" Estero Concert Series</b>	Koreshan State Historic Site

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## ENVIRONMENT

### **FFD Mine Application Heard by Lee County Hearing Examiner.**

The public hearing for the Florida Farms Development (FFD) mine began on Wednesday, January 16, and the proceeding was unlike any other mine hearing of recent memory. Normally, the applicant spends the first 3-4 days presenting their case and calling on their hired experts to explain how they made changes to their master plan to minimize impacts to neighbors and meet requirements of county code. This case proceeded in a much different manner.

The attorney for FFD began his presentation by arguing that the Lee County Hearing Examiner may not consider this case because the request is inconsistent with the Lee Comp Plan. Specifically, the applicant acknowledged that FFD’s property is located outside the “Future Limerock Mining Area” designated by Map 14 of the Comp Plan and therefore can’t be considered for mining. It’s quite clear that FFD was actually seeking a denial of their request so that they can file suit in court under a “Bert Harris” or inverse condemnation claim. The Hearing Examiner denied their request for summary judgment because there are many goals, policies, & objectives which must be evaluated besides Map 14. The case was directed to move forward as planned. The applicant was directed to begin their testimony and to call whatever experts they needed to present their case.

The applicant’s attorney gave a brief chronology of their application process with the county and then introduced Dan Delisi - FFD’s lead planner. Delisi presented a very brief description of the property and the amount of acreage to be assigned to mining pits, conservation easements,

etc. He then concluded by once again pointing out that the FFD property is located outside of the Map 14 "Future Limerock Mining Overlay". Following his presentation, the applicant's attorney rested their case.

The Hearing Examiner then called on County Staff to make their presentations to support their recommendation of denial. The Department of Environmental Services spoke about adverse impacts to wildlife, habitat, open space requirements, setbacks, and reclamation. Then the Department of Development Services spoke to the degradation of traffic service levels and other adverse traffic impacts that would be expected with this mining operation.

There was excellent public testimony from many Estero residents who are opposed to the mine. There were at least 25-30 Corkscrew Road, Estero residents and ECCL members who testified during the course of the day. Additionally there was excellent testimony from representatives of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Audubon of Collier County, the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, and CREW. When public testimony concluded, the Hearing Examiner indicated that she will not be taking any further testimony from the public. Additionally she gave some strong indications in her comments throughout the day that her recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners this case will be for denial

## **COMMUNITY PLANNING**

### **Lee County Commissioners Considering Impact Fee Moratorium**

On February 12, the Board of Lee County Commissioners will hold a public hearing and vote on whether or not choose a two-year moratorium on impact fees.

Impact fees are a way for local governments to require new developments to pay a proportionate share of the infrastructure costs they impose on the community for roads, schools, public safety facilities and parks. The fees are a one-time, up-front charge, with payment made at the time of building permit issuance.

A two-year suspension of impact fees would cost the County \$10.4 million, according to projections presented by county administrators.

Construction has begun again in Lee County. Housing starts last year were higher than they have been in five years, and commercial investment last year was the highest since 2008. In addition, the unemployment rate has come down substantially. All the indications for 2013 show that these improvements in our economy will continue, and most projections show they will improve at even faster rates.

Money from impact fees will be needed to pay for the growth that will be required to accommodate the new residential units and businesses that are on the way. If the commissioners should impose this moratorium, either the County will not be able to afford the necessary infrastructure or the current residents will have to pay the cost through increased taxes of one type or another.

Nick Batos, the ECCL Chairman, and Ben Nelson, Mayor of the City of Bonita Springs, sent a joint letter in opposition to suspension of the impact fees.

Currently, three out of five commissioners are looking to approve this moratorium. The ECCL has prepared a letter for Estero residents to send to the Commissioners opposing this moratorium. All that is required is to go to the Brooks Concerned Citizens web site at <http://www.brooksconcernedcitizens.com/> enter your name and password and then click on the letter. To date, over 400 letters have been sent by Estero residents.

### **Monte Cristo Reinstates Development Plan**

A representative of Monte Cristo went before the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) on January 28 to reinstate a development plan for their community, which is located about three miles east of Interstate 75 on Corkscrew Road. Originally zoned for 724 units in 2007, construction was never pursued due to the sluggish economy. Now that the economy is turning around, the developers are proposing 500 units on their site, which is located adjacent to Wildcat Run. They will be returning to the ECP with an administrative amendment in the near future.

### **Bella Terra Commercial Property Rezoning**

The Lee County Zoning Division has granted a 120-day extension for the Bella Terra Commercial Property rezoning request. The extension expires on May 30.

Habitat Lakes LLC, the developer of [Bella Terra](#), is proposing to change the zoning and amend the DRI (Development Regional Impact) for the development with respect to the 12.35 acres of land on the west front of the Bella Terra community facing Corkscrew Road. The Bella Terra community is a very large residential community behind this small parcel of commercially zoned land.

The developer has applied to rezone this smaller parcel to include 196 multi-family housing units, 49,000 square feet of retail space and 180 parking spaces. The proposed multi-family units would be four buildings of rental apartments, accessed from the community entrance road by a side road located just outside the Bella Terra gate. The current zoning includes 120,000 square feet of retail space and only 30 dwelling units, with 540 parking spaces.

At the January 28 Estero Community Planning Panel meeting, Bella Terra residents expressed disappointment with the developer's plan. They stated they wanted to see a grocery store in that area, as they had been told during the community's sale process.

### **A New Residential Development Underway on Three Oaks Parkway**

Site preparation is underway at Villa Palmeras, a new gated community on Three Oaks Pkwy. The community, formerly known as Mid-Towne Estero Village, is located just south of Corkscrew Road opposite the Estero Fire Rescue Station.

The builder, Neal Communities, is planning 110 paired villas with a community pool and spa. The homes will be single story with two floor plans available with from 1,434 to 1,524 square feet.

The first models should be available by late April or May. Sales will begin on site in February.

Based in Bradenton, Neal Communities is an experienced home builder with a number of established communities throughout southwest Florida. For more information, see <http://www.nealcommunities.com/villas-palmeras.html>

## **HOSPITAL COMMITTEE**

The Hospital Committee met with Lee Memorial Health Systems (LMHS) Executive Staff and a Board member on January 7 to review the current status of LMHS' healthcare plans for South Lee County.

An update on Lee County's progress toward selecting a permanent vendor to provide helicopter service in Lee County was provided. ECCL members provided information on potential improvements for EMS to have additional GPS coordinates to help better serve South Lee County. Examples were given where not all existing locations for EMS Helicopters to land were available in the GPS systems for the county. Discussion also occurred about some previous work done to incorporate specific GPS information in the EMS systems about Golf Course coordinates. They will follow up with EMS and get back with the committee.

LMHS provided an update on the Employer Clinic Model that has been up and running at the Bonita Community Health Center with lower volumes than expected and some issues where patients were using it for primary care versus employer clinic needs. Plans are to continue to recruit new employers to participate in this clinic.

ECCL members expressed that they have not seen as much activity from LMHS as they would like to see in the South Lee communities. ECCL members expressed that both Physicians Regional Healthcare System and NCH Healthcare System are growing presence and branding at a faster pace than LMHS. ECCL recommends that LMHS step up efforts to provide services and create awareness before the opportunity ceases to exist. ECCL expressed the need for enhanced emergency services in the South Lee communities in the form of a freestanding emergency department. The ECCL would like to see more Adult oriented healthcare services provided to meet the needs of the population in South Lee. ECCL members provided examples of the growth in communities in the South Lee market over the past couple of years. ECCL requested that as LMHS performs analysis of services to be provided that LMHS seriously reconsiders their position on not building a freestanding ED in South Lee County. ECCL expressed their support for any initiatives that LMHS would like to pursue and to assist in promoting these initiatives.

LMHS provided an update on current and future plans in South Lee County. Currently, LMHS provides the following services within Bonita Community Health Center: Family Practice, Internal Medicine, OB/GYN, Cardiology, Employer Clinic, and Lab Services. LMHS plans to grow Lee Physician Group by 20 physicians over the next five years in South Lee County. LMHS has FY 2013 funding in the amount of \$1.4M to support expansion and recruitment of

new physicians in this market. This will include leasing additional space in Bonita to house this expansion. This funding will also be utilized to develop a detailed site analysis and plan for the 32 acres that LMHS owns adjacent to BCHC. LMHS plans to implement a more permanent "Bricks and Mortar" strategy based on physician growth and will be seeking additional capital dollars to invest in the South Lee market for FY 2014. A key to LMHS's strategy to support the South Lee communities is to develop better primary care access to both serve patients and provide a referral base that will bring more specialists to the area.

ECCL members expressed a desire to have more consistent updates and communication from LMHS representatives in regard to LMHS initiatives. Based on the conversation from both parties the following Action Items were set forth:

- LMHS will follow up with EMS on a couple of items and report back to the ECCL members.
- LMHS will generate a monthly email update to provide updates to the ECCL on their progress with current FY 2013 strategies for growth and future planning.
- In-person meetings will be set up between ECCL and LMHS as requested or if major news, such as added services or assistance/collaboration, is being requested by either party.
- By June 2013, LMHS will have completed site analysis of 32 acres to incorporate findings into FY 2014 and beyond planning. Suzanne Bradach will spearhead completing this analysis and Don Eslick will connect Suzanne with the firm that the ECCL has been using for planning in the event any synergies exist as LMHS goes through this process.

The committee plans to meet with Physicians Regional Healthcare System to explore their plans for South Lee County.

## **Bonita Springs/Estero Economic Development Council Reports Progress**

On January 16, 2013, the Bonita Springs City Council received an update on the activities of the Bonita Springs/Estero Economic Development Council (Council). Chairman Rich Mancini reported that the Council continues to meet with out-of-state candidates for relocation to the Bonita/Estero area. Also, the Council works with existing businesses to help with expansion and growth opportunities. In an effort to retain local businesses that are considering expansion outside the area, the Council is encouraging them to consider first vacant office space and undeveloped land in our area.

The Council is supporting the Bonita Springs' eleven specific initiatives to attract and retain businesses. The City has targeted seven industries for growth opportunities, including internet technology, clean manufacturing and eco-tourism. In addition, Council Chairman Mancini recently reported that the Council is analyzing existing vacancies in the Estero market to see what can be done to improve the office vacancy rate and exploring ideas for Estero-specific incentives for business development.

The Council has joined the Bonita Springs City Council and the Bonita Chamber of Commerce in supporting the County referendum to allow slot machines at the Naples Fort Myers Greyhound track in Bonita. About 65% of Lee County voters supported the referendum. Now,

the Council is encouraging the legislature to enact legislation that recognizes the will of the voters.

The Council believes that maintaining a first class web site is important to attract and educate professional site selectors who are key to relocation decisions. The Council's web site: [www.bonitaedc.com/](http://www.bonitaedc.com/) features both Bonita and Estero and attracted over 100 new visitors a month in the fourth quarter of last year.

The City of Bonita Springs is the major investor in the Council, which also receives investments from a number of Bonita and Estero businesses, as well as the ECCL.

## **ESTERO CONCERT SERIES**

The music of Beethoven and Mozart will be presented at the third Estero Chamber Music Concert Series at the Koreshan State Historic Site's Art Hall at 4 p.m. on Sunday, February 24.

Beethoven's Serenade for String Trio in D Major and Mozart's Piano Quartet in G Minor will be featured by artists Bella Gutshtein on the piano, Boris Sandler on the violin, Monica Biacchi on the viola and Susan Bergeron on cello.

The Art Hall at the Koreshan State Park is located at 3800 Corkscrew Road. Seating is limited to 80 attendees. Tickets are \$30 per person and are available by calling 239-596-8404 or emailing [rcc@rccnaples.org](mailto:rcc@rccnaples.org).

Performers for this concert series are all accomplished classical musicians, several of whom are currently with the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra and other important musical groups around the country.

The venue honors the Koreshan Unity Settlement which considered art and music an integral part of their lives. The Art Hall was built circa 1905 and includes a restored 1885 Steinway grand piano.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Estero Council of Community Leaders, Koreshan State Historic Site, the Friends of Koreshan and Bella Gutschtein collaborated to present this Estero Concert Series.

Estero's Community Plan includes a goal to integrate the Koreshan State Historic Site and our historic heritage into the fabric of the community. This concert series will provide the cultural environment envisioned by the Koreshans for the enjoyment of the residents and visitors of today.

## **Pick-up in Estero's New Housing Starts Continues in December**

### **2012 Represents Best Year Since 2007**

During December, thirty (30) single family home building permits and a seven-unit condominium building permit, with a combined building value of \$6.0 million, were issued in the Estero planning community. The total of thirty-seven (37) units is the third best monthly figure this year. Total year-to-date permits shown below continue to a solid increase in new home construction.

In December, over half of the 30 single family permits were for The Preserve at Corkscrew, which is being built by Centex/Pulte Homes and Lennar. The permit for 7 units in the condominium was issued for Mirasol (DR Horton). On a year-to-date basis, about 70% of the single family permits have been issued to Bella Terra and Toll Bros' two developments: The Reserve of Estero and Belle Lago. But, as permits for these three developments appear to be slowing, The Preserve at Corkscrew has been ramping up as sixty-five (65) permits have been issued this year, of which fifty-one (51) were issued in the last four months.

The following table compares 2012 figures with those of the prior twelve years. For the year, building values were up over 50% percent from the last two years and the \$59.6 million shown below for 2012 represents the best year since 2007.

Year	Year to Date Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	2,088	\$291,811,402	\$139,756	41%
2001	2,104	325,403,253	154,659	47
2002	1,500	278,888,919	185,926	51
2003	1,425	231,712,400	162,605	47
2004	1,646	365,109,794	221,816	60
2005	2,833	627,683,225	221,561	46
2006	1,310	343,633,334	262,316	39
2007	432	123,191,025	285,164	38
2008	167	56,356,637	337,465	81
2009	164	53,242,861	324,652	76
2010	194	39,205,544	202,090	79
2011	181	37,949,095	209,664	83
2012	341	59,611,615	174,814	75

Source: Lee County Permit Reports for the Estero Planning Community;  
<http://www.lee.gov.com/gov/dept/dcd/Reports/Pages/reports.aspx>

## Estero's December Commercial Permits Remain Weak

During December, commercial permits, excluding condominiums, totaling \$300,000 were issued for Estero. This represents the second-worst month of 2012.



As shown in the following table, commercial investment fell precipitously from 2006 through 2010, and then began to improve in 2011. Since commercial permit values can be quite large, the month-to-month changes can be quite large as well. In 2012, the last few months' permit levels have been exceptionally low. For the year, 2012 exceeded 2011 by about 1%.

A current analysis prepared for the main ECCL zip code shows that Estero's retail vacancy rates for recent months have been about 3%, which is exceptionally good. However, Estero's office vacancy rate has been above 30% for the last eighteen months. This suggests that significant investment in Estero office space in the near future is unlikely.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Totals</b>
2000	\$77,250,835
2001	44,116,526
2002	23,135,139
2003	23,234,725
2004	60,859,820
2005	111,037,977
2006	184,709,240
2007	157,614,045
2008	39,261,677
2009	9,752,556
2010	9,322,546
2011	11,717,593
2012	11,879,291

The major commercial projects permitted in 2012 were:

- \$2,000,000 for remodeling the Hyatt Regency;
- \$1,500,000 for expanding and remodeling Spring Run Country Club;
- \$1,445,000 for various Coconut Point Mall and Residences remodeling projects,
- \$1,442,000 for remodeling Shadow Wood Country Club;
- \$1,253,000 for various Miromar Mall remodeling projects, and
- \$1,000,000 for a new Goodwill Industries facility.

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

For County permit information, see "Planning Communities" and then "Estero" at: <http://www.leegov.com/gov/dept/dcd/Reports/Pages/reports.aspx>.

Thanks to Andrew DeSalvo at Premier Commercial, Inc. in Estero for providing vacancy statistics for the Estero zip code.

## Estero's Single Family Home Sales Cool In January; Activity Picking Up

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures show that 20 single family homes in Estero were sold in January. As shown below, this is down from 28 in December, 2012, and the unusually high 58 sold last January.

Period	Sold in 2011	Sold in 2012	Sold in 2013	Inc (Dec)	Inc (Dec) %
Jan	23	58	20	(38)	(65) %
Feb	45	21			
Mar	39	32			
Qtr 1	107	111			
Apr	50	29			
May	27	37			
June	28	32			
Qtr 2	105	98			
July	26	35			
Aug	31	20			
Sept	24	31			
Qtr 3	81	86			
Oct	16	28			
Nov	21	21			
Dec	24	28			
Qtr 4	61	77			
Year	354	372			

As of January 31, 2013, there were 407 listings of currently active unsold homes in Estero. This compares with 419 listings a year ago and 382 listings at the end of December, 2012. The January increase from 382 to 407 mirrored a big increase last January also, as many home owners list their homes at the beginning of season. The 407 figure includes 100 pending sales, compared with an average of 80 throughout the fourth quarter of 2012. This reflects increased activity and a potential increase in completed sales in February.

The 407 listings represents about a 15 months' supply of unsold homes, compared with a 12 months' supply in December. Both figures are well above 6 months' supply which typically indicates a good market.

Of the 407 active listings, 13% 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. This month's 13% continues the month-by-month trend down from the 20% level of June last year.

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.