

Estero Development Report
 Volume 11, Number 5, Issued January 2012
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)
For More Information about Estero
 ...see www.esterofl.org

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wednesday, February 8th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, February 10th	10 a.m.	ECCL Regular Monthly Meeting...County Commissioner Ray Judah is our speaker	Estero Community Park
Tuesday, February 14th	5:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Friday, February 17th	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO (Transportation Planning) meeting	Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd in Cape Coral
Monday, February 20th	9:30 a.m.	BOCC Hearing on the Florida Rock #2 Mine	Commissioners Chambers, 2 nd Floor, 2120 Main Street in downtown Ft Myers
Monday, February 20th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting including an update on the Community Plan revision process	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 Design Review Committee (EDRC)
- Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)
- Estero Community Association (ECA)

January Progress on the Williams Road/US41 Western Approach

On January 30, 2012 under the auspices of the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL), the Transportation Committee of the ECCL met with David Loveland, Director of Transportation for Lee County and two members of his staff, Sarah Clarke and Stephen Jansen to discuss what improvements are needed to improve the safety of traffic on Williams Road just west of the Williams/US 41 Intersection.

Attending for the ECCL were Bill Williams and Jim Boesch, co chairs of the ECCL Transportation Committee, Dick Schweers representing Fountain Lakes and also, in his capacity as Fire Commissioner of the Estero Fire Rescue, Alan Brennan representing Pelican Sound, John Kermond and Wayne Smith, Route 41 project chairs for the Williams Road widening project for the ECCL (both residents of West Bay) and Roger Sirlin, representing the West Bay Property Owners Association.

Kermond and Smith conducted a thoughtful and well planned presentation of the problem area with photographic exhibits. They set forth the following priorities in their presentation:

- Right turn lane on US41 facing east,
- Correction of problems at the left turn into Walgreens, and
- Drainage issues on Williams Road on the south side of the road.

After discussion of the presentation David Loveland (DOT) suggested that the Committee proceed with priority number one first.

The continuing discussion focused on the following issues raised by the project:

- Available funding...it is estimated that this project will cost about \$500,000 to complete. Lee County has \$1,500,000 in its 2012 budget for **all** of Lee County Intersection upgrades. The decision as to which projects will be funded and when, is decided after the design and permitting procedures are completed.
- Timing... the design and permitting on a fast track takes 4 – 6 months – usually it takes one year under normal circumstances. The funding decision and construction would then take another year – assuming funding is provided.
- The need for design and permitting... the 2004 plans for this improvement must be reviewed to determine if property surveys are available. They will be used to determine if there is a need to relocate the traffic signal poles on the southwest corner of the intersection. If they must be relocated the cost would increase by about \$250,000. Drainage measurements must be taken. The County will begin this research soon.
- Follow up requirements...Sirlin advised David Loveland of the existence of the agreements by the developer West Bay, the owner of the property on the south side of the western approach to the corner, to dedicate a 15 foot easement adjacent to the roadway necessary for the right turn lane. Loveland suggested that the West Bay representatives move forward expeditiously on the dedication of the easement to the County.

Right Turn Lane at Estero Parkway and Three Oaks Parkway

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 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.

Earlier Actions

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.

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.

Roadway Landscaping

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.

Florida House and Senate Responds to Estero Residents Seeking Legislative Districts That Keep It Whole

Every 10 years after the census is completed, all federal and state legislative districts are reviewed and changed so that each district is nearly equal in population so that every citizen has an equal opportunity to impact his or her representation. Throughout the last 10 years Estero has been included in a State Senate district that stretches all the way to the east coast. Because of the district’s configuration Estero has been represented throughout the decade by an east coast Senator who is torn between two very different areas.

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.

The process started during the spring of 2011 and will be completed later this summer in time for the Primary Election in August and November’s General Election.

January Progress Report

The House Map

On January 13th a House Redistricting sub-committee voted to send three maps to the full committee, all with the same boundaries for the south Lee County area district, District 76. Unfortunately none of them contained all of Estero’s communities.

District 76 in the map adopted by the sub-committee included all of Bonita Springs and most of Estero, all except the following ten important north Estero communities:

1. Rookery Point
2. The Cascades
3. Cypress Bend
4. The Vines
5. Osprey Cove
6. Belle Lago
7. The Reserve of Estero
8. Coastal Village
9. The Groves
10. A small part of Country Creek

These Estero communities were included in District 79, a district that would have been dominated by Lehigh Acres. This was unnecessary inasmuch as Lehigh Acres is nearly large

enough to send a state representative to Tallahassee. That district should not needlessly disenfranchise over 5,000 Estero residents.

The following week more than 500 Estero residents sent emails to each of the members of the full House Redistricting Committee and to the House Leadership urging them to amend the map to keep all of Estero in District 76. In addition the City of Bonita Springs instructed their Tallahassee lobbyist to ask the committee members to make this amendment. Finally the ECCL contacted our two local Representatives, Trudi Williams and Matt Caldwell, asking for their help.

In response to all of these efforts the full House Redistricting Committee added these communities to District 76 and the full House adopted the Committee proposed map on January 27th. The Senate has agreed to ratify this map so it is likely to continue through the approval process and probable court challenges. This change should increase the likelihood that the map will be approved by the courts since it increases the map's respect for community boundaries, one of the new criteria included in a Constitutional amendment approved by the voters of Florida in 2010.

The Senate Map

The Senate Redistricting Committee has recommended a single Senate map for consideration by the Senate during the Spring Legislative session. The recommended Senate Map creates a new District 23 that keeps Bonita Springs and Estero whole in a Lee County district. Hundreds of Estero residents sent emails urging the Senators to support the proposed District 23 in any map they finally approve.

On January 10th the Senate Redistricting Committee approved the recommended map and on January 17th the full Senate voted to adopt this map which will keep Estero and Bonita Springs whole in a Lee county district.

Next Steps

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

Earlier

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 Estero/Bonita Springs Catalyst Club Program Moves Ahead

The current recession has clearly demonstrated the need for southwest Florida to diversify its economy. Lee County's Economic Development Office is committed to a long-term, forward-thinking mission that will expand and diversify our local economy.

To accomplish this mission Lee County Economic Development is establishing a **Catalyst Club**. The members of the Catalyst Club will be business executives and professionals who have retirement homes in the area, are frequent vacationers or have other kinds of connections to Lee County.

Bonita Springs and Estero are blessed to have many retired execs with extensive knowledge of their industry and profession, many years of insightful experience and many valuable relationships with key decision-makers who can greatly assist the Lee County Economic Development staff to attract new businesses and grow existing businesses in southwest Florida.

January Progress Report

During January the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) Economic Development Committee and Lee County Economic Development hosted three "Catalyst Club Receptions" attended by over 60 Estero and Bonita Springs residents.

On January 9th about 15 residents of The Colony in Pelican Landing participated in a Reception at the Colony Golf and Country Club. This was the first such meeting where the Gulf Coast Venture Forum made a presentation about how members can participate in "start up" investment opportunities in Florida and especially southwest Florida.

On January 23rd about 35 Bonita Bay residents participated in a Catalyst Club Reception at the Bonita Bay Club. At this reception Jim Moore, the Director of Lee County's Economic Development department and Jeff Kottkamp, formerly Florida's Lieutenant Governor and now Chairman of VR Labs spoke to the group about Lee County economic development needs and opportunities.

Finally on January 30th about 15 Pelican Landing residents participated in a Catalyst Club Reception at the Pelican Nest Golf Club. Each of these meetings and receptions generate lots of good ideas and opportunities for the County.

At present three more receptions have been scheduled for February. Anyone interested in participating in a Catalyst Club reception should call Don Eslick at 207-8152.

Earlier Efforts

The Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) Economic Development Committee and Lee County Economic Development hosted two "Catalyst Club Reception" training sessions on November 7th and 14th. Each Reception was attended by 5 Catalyst Club members from each of three of our target communities plus some staff members from Lee County's Economic Development Office.

The format of each Reception was a workshop that provided each participant an opportunity to talk about his or her career, the industry or industries that they know best and how Lee County's economy might benefit from their experience and relationships. This session lasted about 90

minutes and was followed by a one hour cocktail reception with hors d'oeuvre. The members enthusiastically enjoyed the opportunity to participate in these sessions and agreed to help organize more Receptions in their home communities during the coming spring.

The time commitment of most Catalyst Club members will be quite limited. It's not the members' time that is needed; it's their knowledge, experience and relationships that are needed. From time to time they will be invited to advise the County about business attraction strategies appropriate for their industry or profession, how best to work with a prospect in that industry that is considering Lee County as a site for expansion or to see if the member has some business relationships that may be useful in attracting a business to the area. For more information about the Catalyst Club see the presentation that we saw on May 26th at <http://esterofl.org/eccl/committees/economic-development.htm> ,

Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council Hosts Ribbon Cutting Event

On January 10, The Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council (BSEEDC) hosted a ribbon cutting event to officially open its new office at the Bonita Springs Chamber of Commerce, showcase its new web site and provide an update on the BSEEDC's progress and plans.

The web site www.BonitaEDC.com provides useful information on the Bonita Springs and Estero communities, including history, demographic characteristics, and other useful information on its vision, plans and objectives. The BSEEDC tag line is: "Quality Business, Quality Life."

At the meeting, Board Chairman Rich Mancini outlined BSEEDC's objectives, including: "Partnering with FGCU to survey existing businesses, asking questions such as: What do we do right? What do we do wrong? What can we do better? How do we make this a better place?"

"We're just about done with a questionnaire. We're going to talk to as many businesses in Bonita Springs and Estero as we possibly can," Mancini said. "If we make it a better place for existing businesses, they're going to grow."

"Eighty percent of all new jobs created in the community come from existing businesses. We want jobs."

"We need the existing business community in Bonita Springs and Estero to know that we're here," Mancini said. "We want folks outside of Southwest Florida to hear this story. This is just a really good place to live and work. We want that story to spread."

The BSEEDC is incorporated as an independent nonprofit 501(c)(6). The ECCL is one of the investors from the Bonita Springs and Estero communities.

The BSEEDC is in the middle of a campaign to increase its investor base of local area individuals and businesses with a passion for contributing to the region's economic development. Those interested in more information about membership, should contact Christine Ross, Executive Director of the BSEEDC, at 333-2332 or Director@BonitaEDC.com.

Another Lost Grove Mine Hearing by the Collier County Plan Commission

If approved *the Lost Grove Mine* would be a Corkscrew Road mine located just over the Collier County boundary line so it 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 Road mining 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 **January 5th**, the Collier County Planning Commission (CCPC) continued its hearing on the Lost Grove Mine with rebuttal testimony from the developer, Alico Corporation, and its experts. The Public was allowed to testify only in response to the new evidence put into the record by Alico. In the end the Hearing was continued until March 15, 2012. Once the Planning Commission has adopted its recommendations the matter will be considered by the Collier County Board.

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.

Estero's Annual Housing Permits Hit Record Low

During December, two [single family homes](#) with a combined building value of \$1.6 million were permitted in Estero. The two homes permitted is the lowest monthly figure in four years. During the month, no permits were issued to Estero's two volume builders, Lennar and Toll Brothers. For the year 2011, the \$37.9 million shown below is 3% less than the 2010 total and the lowest annual total in the last eleven years, and well below the 2000-2007 periods.

Of the single family homes permitted this year, 89 % were issued for Lennar's Bella Terra on Corkscrew, and Toll Brothers' two developments, Belle Lago and The Reserve of Estero, on Estero Parkway.

The following table compares annual figures for the past eleven years.

Year	Annual Total 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

Estero's December Commercial Permits Tail Off

During December, permits totaling \$ 47 thousand were issued for Estero's [commercial buildings](#). This represents one of the 3 worst months in the last eleven years. But, for the year 2011, the \$11.7 million shown below is 26 % ahead of last year, as a result of 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 especially low for the last three years.

Year	Annual Total
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

The major projects permitted this year were:

\$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](#) 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>