

**Estero Development Report**  
 Volume 11, Number 7, Issued March 2012  
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
**For More Information about Estero**  
 ...see [www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org)

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
Tuesday, April 10th	9 a.m.	Board of County Commissioners Meeting...Fire Rescue Impact Fees	Commission Chambers, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, Old County Courthouse, 2120 Main Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Tuesday, April 10th	2 p.m.	ECCL Transportation Meeting	Estero Community Park
Tuesday, April 10th	5 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, April 11th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, April 13th	10 a.m.	ECCL Regular Monthly Meeting...	Estero Community Park
Monday, April 16th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, April 20th	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO (Transportation Planning) meeting	Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd in Cape Coral

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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)

### **Collier Planning Commission Recommends Denial of Lost Grove Mine**

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the Collier County Planning Commission (CCPC) concluded its hearing of the Lost Grove Mine. This was the 4<sup>th</sup> day of testimony on the project, setting a new record for the CCPC. Alico Land Development Corporation argued that the 59 operational conditions which they agreed to were sufficient in addressing adverse issues raised by nearby residents, environmental advocacy groups, and Lee County planning staff. In a 5-4 vote, the CCPC ruled that the conditions failed to adequately address compatibility with surrounding land uses and issued a recommendation to DENY the Lost Grove Mine.

The CCPC recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for final hearing and vote sometime later this spring. We'll announce the date of that hearing as soon as details are available. We'll need another strong showing of support at this final hearing.

**A petition in opposition to the Lost Grove Mine is being circulated among communities which would be affected by this mine. The petitions will be presented at the final Collier BOCC hearing. Please contact your ECCL representative if you would like to sign the petition.**

#### **Background**

**Lost Grove** is a proposed 1,350 acre limerock mine on Corkscrew Road just across the Lee-Collier boundary line. The project is being reviewed under Collier County procedures which are considerably different from those used by Lee County. The proposed mine is immediately adjacent to a historic rural village in Collier, as well as two residential communities in Lee County. The mine also borders the Lee County Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) and the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) property public hiking trails,

#### **Timeline**

**May 6, 2011** Lee County BOCC Chairman Frank Mann sends a letter to the Collier County BOCC outlining concerns about the impacts of the Lost Grove Mine on Lee County residents and natural resources. The letter offers assistance from Lee staff and indicates that Lee County will participate in any public hearings.

**June 20, 2011** Alico Land Development Corp. hosts a "Neighborhood Information Meeting" for Lee County residents who would be impacted by the Lost Grove mine. Alico and its professional consultants presented their plans for the mine and then listened to public comments. About 30 persons attended the session. The ECCL testified that it supported the concerns expressed by Commissioner Mann in his May 6<sup>th</sup> letter to the Collier County Commission.

- Sept 7, 2011** The Collier County Environmental Advisory Committee held a public hearing on the Lost Grove and voted unanimously to recommend approval subject to conditions.
- Oct 18, 2011** The Lee County BOCC held a special hearing to determine more specifically what position Lee County should take with regard to the Lost Grove Mine. They voted unanimously to formally oppose the mine and participate materially in the remaining hearings in Collier County. Lee Staff was directed to prepare fact based testimony to present to the Collier County Planning Commission and the Collier BOCC.
- Nov 3, 2011** 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 centered on the principle that Collier County cannot adequately condition this operation. They presented evidence that many of the impacts of the mine would adversely affect residents and resources in Lee County. The hearing was continued to a later date.
- Nov 17, 2011** The CCPC hearing resumes. The applicant presented further testimony related to conditions and Lee County concluded 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.
- Jan 5, 2012** Alico presented rebuttal testimony related to blasting and sound impacts of the mine. Another continuance was scheduled.
- Mar 15, 2012** A total of 59 operational conditions were proposed and or agreed to by Alico Land Development Corp. The CCPC voted to recommend DENIAL of the Lost Grove Mine.

**The final Lost Grove hearing before the Collier County Board of Commissioners is expected to be scheduled for late May or early June at the Collier County Government Center.**

### **ECCL Votes to Support Estero Fire Rescue Request to Oppose Suspension of Fire District Impact Fees**

At the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ECCL Chief Scott Vanderbrook asked the ECCL to oppose a recommendation to the Lee Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) that would suspend Fire District Impact Fees for a period of two years, among other changes.

He indicated that these fees have been dedicated to the financing of the four fire stations and administrative center that have been constructed during the last decade in order to serve the explosive growth of the community. In addition they have been pledged as security for the

District's outstanding loans. The suspension would force the District to pay the debt service on these loans from property taxes.

Finally he reminded the ECCL members that the District has experienced a decline in property tax revenue of over 25% during the last three years. Nonetheless, the District has been able to maintain its high level of service by cutting non-essential costs and using reserves with only one small (7.5%) tax rate increase in the last three years.

After considerable discussion the ECCL members voted unanimously to approve the following resolution to be presented to the BOCC when they take up the issue in early April:

**“ESTERO COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY LEADERS’  
RESOLUTION OPPOSING SUSPENSION OF IMPACT FEES PAYABLE TO  
ESTERO FIRE RESCUE**

**Whereas**, Lee County has collected impact fees from developers since 1989 to offset the higher cost of the fire and rescue services needed by the new residents whose purchases produced those increased impact fee revenues;

**Whereas**, the population of the Estero community has more than doubled over the last decade, increasing from about 15,000 to nearly 35,000 total residents,

**Whereas**, during this period Estero Fire Rescue (EFR) has used its share of impact fees to finance four new fire stations and an administrative center in order to provide quality fire and rescue services to this rapidly growing community;

**Whereas**, EFR has pledged all future impact fees for the repayment of the bank loan used to finance these much needed facilities;

**Whereas**, current EFR impact fee revenues are a small fraction of the amount that EFR had been receiving prior to the start of the current housing depression;

**Whereas**, several major new housing developments are just getting underway that, in the absence of a suspension, will provide considerable impact fee revenues to EFR for the payment of debt service on the outstanding loan;

**Whereas**, the Lee County Planning Agency voted 4-3 to suspend schools, parks, fire/ems impact fees for two years;

**Whereas**, the suspension of impact fees, if adopted, will result in current Estero residents having to pay the debt service on the outstanding loan from an increase in property taxes, instead of from impact fees;

**Therefore be it resolved** that the Estero Council of Community Leaders opposes the suspension of impact fees otherwise payable to Estero Fire Rescue.

This resolution is officially adopted on the \_\_9<sup>th</sup> \_\_day of \_\_March\_\_,2012.

Don Eslick

Chairman, Estero Council of Community Leaders”

## **Estero Fire Rescue Works with Other Fire Districts To Increase Effectiveness and Reduce Cost**

Estero Fire Rescue (EFR) for some time has worked closely with neighboring fire districts to speed up response to emergencies by participating in the “closest unit response” program and by participating in other cooperative efforts to provide better service in Estero and the region. Now, EFR and five other nearby districts are collaborating to reduce cost through various forms of “functional consolidation.”

### **Closest Unit Response**

When an emergency occurs, the closest available fire/rescue team is dispatched to the location of the emergency, regardless of the team’s home fire district. This is most effective when the emergency occurs near district boundaries. For example, an emergency team based in the northern part of Estero would respond to an emergency near the southern end of San Carlos Park’s district. Also, when large numbers of equipment and staff are needed for a structure fire or large brush fire, teams from nearby districts will respond to assist the district where the fire is located. Ultimately, closest unit response could save a life and avoids unnecessary expense.

### **Other Cooperative Efforts**

EFR is also an important part of county-wide responses to large emergencies. By participation in the Lee County Incident Management Team, EFR members regularly rotate on a schedule to respond with equipment to mitigate a large scale emergency or to provide assistance in the Lee County Operations Center. In addition, EFR responds to emergencies throughout the State of Florida. Through its membership in the Florida Task Force 6 Urban Search and Rescue team, a group of highly trained members from several Lee County districts provide expertise in high angle, swift water, trench and heavy search and rescue calls.

### **Functional Consolidation**

This term is used to describe actions where multiple fire districts work together to effectively consolidate certain functions without formally consolidating the district.

*Joint Purchasing*...Recently, EFR, Bonita Springs, Iona McGregor, Ft Myers Beach, South Trail and San Carlos Park fire districts have joined together to find cost reductions, like joint purchasing arrangements. They are reducing costs by combining their purchasing power through bulk purchasing of supplies such as drugs and medical supplies. Items are purchased in large quantities and stored in a central location for ease of access and assurance that supplies are available when needed.

*Equipment Purchases*...the replacement of a large piece of equipment provides another cost reduction opportunity. Such purchases are usually extremely expensive, but partnering with another district on purchases of large equipment together often allows both districts to achieve better pricing. Recently EFR needed to replace an ageing ladder truck, EFR worked with another agency that also needed to replace the same type of apparatus and was able to negotiate with the vendor a \$18,000 savings to each district for purchasing the apparatus at the same time. EFR continues to look at ways of saving its tax money whenever possible.

*Training...* While employee training is vital in fire departments, it is expensive. By partnering with neighboring districts to provide group training and share the costs, all of the departments enhance training at a reduced expense.

*Fire Prevention...* An important part of fire prevention is examining plans for new construction. After an EFR plans examiner retired, rather than hiring a replacement, EFR outsourced their plans examination function to the Bonita Springs Fire District. This saves EFR approximately \$100,000 annually. Now, other districts are joining in to have Bonita perform this function for them as well.

*Fire Inspection...* Fire inspectors are now being utilized across district lines to help out where they are needed. To help make it happen, districts adopted a common fee schedule and a standard set of operating guidelines for building inspections.

*Information Systems...* In Finance and Information Technology, one IT expert serves multiple fire districts. Also, the six fire districts are also adopting the same computer software used for building plans and inspections and are considering centralized billing. Currently EFR does their own billing for plans and inspections. Other districts have asked EFR to handle their billing as well, which could reduce costs for all the districts.

In addition, several of the fire districts are faced with the need to update their financial systems. So, they are jointly researching the alternatives to see if they can purchase the same software to reduce installation issues and reduce cost.

More functional consolidation opportunities are expected in the future. We will update you from time to time on EFR's efforts and results.

### **Corkscrew Woods Development Proposal in the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) Area**

A former mining site is being proposed for residential development as "Corkscrew Woods" in the DR/GR area of Southeast Lee County, which extends northeast and southeast of the Corkscrew Road/I-75 intersection. The DR/GR was designated as such by Lee County in 1990 to protect area groundwater resources by maintaining low density development.

A new DR/GR comprehensive plan, on which work was initiated in 2007, aims to ensure that any relatively high-density development at one site in the DR/GR would be allowed only insofar as the developer acquired sufficient transferable development rights ("TDRs") from owners of other properties in the DR/GR sufficient to preserve the intended average low density. To date, the TDR program for the DR/GR is outlined in the DR/GR Comprehensive Plan but does not have implementing language in the Lee County Land Development Code.

Corkscrew Woods developers initially requested that they be removed from the DR/GR land use category, allowing them to increase their density by about 600 units without any offset elsewhere in the DR/GR through TDRs. This would follow the pattern for some 14,000 acres (nearly 15%) that have already been removed from the original 96,000 acres in the DR/GR to date.

Based on the March 19th meeting of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECCP), where the Panel members and a coalition of local citizen groups expressed strong resistance to the removal option, the developers, ECCP and other interested parties agreed to approach Lee County officials together to pursue swift development and implementation of a DR/GR TDR program for Corkscrew Woods, even if only in interim form.

There is general agreement that, apart from the TDR aspect, the developer's plan includes features that should optimize the use of this former mining site from an environmental standpoint.

### **South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee Update**

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> representatives of Lee County Port Authority and ESA Airports, their noise study consultants, conducted their third Public Information Workshop at the Estero Community Park.

ESA plans to recommend **six proposals** to RSW in July that they believe will mitigate the noise issues currently experienced by neighborhoods impacted by arrivals and departures to Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Their proposals are intended to be compatible with the NextGen satellite based air traffic control system including Optimum Descent Profile (OPD) approaches. After studying the Airplane Noise Committee's proposal, ESA decided **not** to recommend our Transition alternative that would keep all incoming flights north of the airport.

The following are the six recommendations that ESA plans to submit to the Port Authority Board in July:

- (1) Route traffic from Runway 24 departures initial climb over mostly commercial and industrial areas of south Fort Myers.
- (2) Mandate crossing all Beaches at a minimum of 3000 feet.
- (3) Promote a Visual Optimized Profile Descent (OPD) Approach to Runway 06. This route crosses Estero from northeast to southwest to a waypoint over the Shadow Wood neighborhood of The Brooks before initiating a turn to the north over Estero Bay.
- (4) Starting OPD approaches to Runway 06 crossing north of Labelle at 10,000 feet with idle throttles until shortly before landing.
- (5) Make Runway 24 the preferred runway after 10 P.M. if compatible with wind direction and speed. This would eliminate most flights from overflying Estero at night.
- (6) Implement officially charted Visual Procedures as incorporated in recommendations (3) and (4).

An unofficial seventh recommendation is to turn the charted Visual OPD approach to Runway 6 into a charted Instrument approach.

### **Approach Changes Now Underway**

The first phases of the implementation of the OPD approach system are now underway. Southwest, Delta, US Air, and American have now all been approved to fly this new approach. Southwest is lobbying hard to have the OPD approach start north of Labelle in western Hendry County where the aircraft are at 10,000 feet. From that point they would start their descent with throttles at idle.

Such an approach would produce altitudes above 4,000 feet from there to at least the waypoint over the western part of The Brooks community.

The Estero neighborhoods northeast of The Brooks will benefit significantly from the higher altitudes and minimum power settings. From The Brooks area to Estero Bay the benefit will be limited to the reduced engine noise.

### **Earlier Committee Activities**

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.bocaairport.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](mailto: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.

### **ECIF Seeking Financial Support for Comprehensive Planning and Growth Management in Estero**

Estero is a unique, unincorporated community in South Lee County that has led the way for community planning in the county for many years. The first Estero community plan was submitted by the community and approved in 2002.

Our community's current planning effort addresses many issues that were unforeseen when the existing plan was initially approved by the Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). Some of these are:

- Improving bike/pedestrian access on collector streets,
- Improving water access to the Estero River and Estero Bay through public and private lands,
- Introducing the concept of neighborhood parks and ensuring connectivity to their local schools and Estero's county park,
- Providing guidance for the redevelopment of commercial developments in place before the original community plan was adopted,
- Exploring incentives for the development of zoned but vacant commercial sites satisfying Estero's high appearance standards,
- Considering the potential of sharing an existing Seminole railroad right of way for public recreational uses, and
- Addressing issues of architectural style, historic district overlays, signage requirements and other concerns

The Estero Community Plan component of the Lee County Comprehensive Plan (Lee Plan) is scheduled to be amended in 2013 by the Board of County Commissioners. Our goals are to implement these changes in Goal 19 of the Lee Plan which addresses Estero specifically, and to the Estero

section of Lee County's Land Development Code contained in Chapter 33. These planning ideas have been generated through a series of community workshops.

The budget for this project is \$100,000. Recently, a Community Planning Grant of \$50,000 was received from Lee County with the stipulation that these funds must be matched by the Estero Community through donations and in-kind services. Many volunteers as well as residents of Estero's communities have been assisting with the required fundraising efforts.

In March, the Estero Community Improvement Foundation, Inc., partnering with the Estero Council of Community Leaders, submitted a grant proposal in the amount of \$25,000 to the Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation to assist us as well. This Foundation is interested in Florida's environmental issues, especially comprehensive planning and growth management. We expect to hear in June regarding the results of this application.

The ECPP has contracted with DeLisi Fitzgerald, Inc. to accomplish the many tasks required with the help of several specialized sub-contractors. This project is a unique opportunity for our community to come together and address how we want to grow in the future while celebrating our history as an old Florida community.

### **Vacating the Roadway Reservation from the Property Between Lighthouse Bay and Copperleaf**

On March 9<sup>th</sup> Ned Dewhirst, representing Oakbrook Properties and Funnel Land Investment, LLC, presented their plans for this parcel of land between Lighthouse Bay and Copperleaf to the ECCL. After considerable discussion the membership of the ECCL adopted the following resolution in support of the project:

*"Whereas*, the most current transportation data available indicates there is no definitive long term need for either a Coconut Road Extension Flyover or an interchange at the intersection of the Coconut Road Extension and Interstate 75, and

*Whereas*, the MPO 2035 Transportation Needs Plan as approved by the Lee County MPO has eliminated both the Coconut Road Extension Flyover and the Coconut Road/I-75 interchange, and

*Whereas*, Oakbrook Properties, the owner of the 38 acre parcel known as the "Martini Glass" and the Coconut Road Extension, desires to develop this parcel of land, and

*Whereas*, Oakbrook Properties needs to vacate the reservation of the 150' Right of Way bisecting this parcel of land for the extension of Coconut Road to the I-75 Right of Way and expanded Right of Way allowing for a Coconut Road flyover in order to proceed with rezoning of the parcel for development, *therefore*:

*Be it Resolved* that the Estero Council of Community Leaders proclaims its support for Oakbrook Properties request to vacate the reservation of the 150' Right of Way and other Right of Ways described in the previous paragraph currently dedicated to the Coconut Road Extension and flyover and;

*Be it Further Resolved* that the Estero Council of Community Leaders also proclaims its support of the developer's request for rezoning of this parcel of land."

The developer plans to file the application with the County in mid-April. That will be followed by consideration by the Regional Planning Commission in July or August; a Hearing before a Lee County Hearing Examiner in about October or November and finally the Hearing before the Board of County Commissioners in December or January 2013.

### **Background**

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> Ned Dewhirst 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.

The Board's of Lighthouse Bay, Copperleaf and the other Brooks communities will soon be considering resolutions in support of the developer's request. The Spring Run community Board has already approved such a resolution.

### **March Transportation Committee Progress**

### **Williams Road/US41 Intersection**

The Lee County Department of Transportation (DOT) reported that a project is now in the works to widen Williams Road on the west entrance to the US41 intersection, adding a designated right turn lane. This came about once RADCO, the owners of West Bay Club, granted Lee County DOT the necessary easement at this intersection.

The project is currently in the design and permitting stage. The construction schedule is not yet firm, but construction will start once the plans are complete and the permits have been received. It is anticipated that construction could start as early as later this year or in early 2013.

### **US41/Sweetwater Ranch Full Signalization and Speed Limit Reduction**

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has agreed to conduct a traffic study at US41 and Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard, at the entrance of Rapallo, to determine if a fully operational traffic light can be activated at this location.

We were told that this study will be conducted during the final phase of this year's peak season but there are no indications that it will soon be underway. FDOT originally planned to conduct this study in 2013.

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

Lee County DOT reported they will be able to fund the design phase for a right turn lane at Estero Parkway eastbound onto Three Oaks Parkway. They have already determined there will be no need for additional right-of-way to construct a right turn lane.

The design services are estimated at \$59,000; however, there is no funding available in the present fiscal year for construction of the project. Lee County DOT also noted there is no documented safety problem associated with this project so those projects with safety issues will be of a higher priority.

### **Estero's February Housing Permits Show Modest Increase**

During February, twenty [single family homes](#) and one six-unit apartment with a combined building value of \$2.9 million were permitted in Estero. The twenty-six total units is up significantly from the five permitted in February a year ago and up slightly from the twenty-two units permitted last month.

Most of the February 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 February year- to- date figures with those of the prior twelve years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Annual Total Housing</b>	<b>Building Value of</b>	<b>Average Building Value</b>	<b>Percentage of Single Family</b>
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	Units	Units	Per Unit	Units
2000	329	\$42,541,070	\$129,304	32%
2001	289	48,480,616	167,753	57
2002	191	354,231,265	184,457	56
2003	376	58,389,301	155,291	31
2004	248	46,184,756	186,229	76
2005	491	104,218,898	212,258	43
2006	165	35,590,117	215,698	27
2007	139	34,406,017	247,525	20
2008	37	12,238,274	330,764	89
2009	31	11,988,196	386,716	74
2010	38	7,277,277	191,507	79
2011	21	3,285,432	156,449	81
2012	48	7,660,340	159,590	80

### Estero's February Commercial Permits Show Some Life

During February, permits totaling \$ 1.2 million were issued for Estero's [commercial buildings](#), excluding the six-unit apartment. This compares favorably with an unusually depressed February 2011, and is one of the best monthly figures since last June. The year to date total shown in the table below trails the February, 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.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$6,224,692	\$77,250,835
2001	10,191,033	44,116,526
2002	1,913,907	23,135,139
2003	1,011,631	23,234,725
2004	1,079,434	60,859,820
2005	5,214,576	111,037,977
2006	56,324,955	184,709,240
2007	33,162,359	157,614,045
2008	15,674,464	39,261,677
2009	3,628,999	9,752,556
2010	360,340	9,322,546
2011	3,392,431	11,717,593
2012	2,647,435	?

The only major project permitted so far in 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>

### March Estero Single Family Home Sales Decline; Quarter 1 Sales up 4%

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures indicate that thirty-two single family homes in Estero were sold in March. As shown below, this represents an 18 % decrease from a year ago. But, for the entire first quarter, sales were up 4% due to unusually strong sales in January.

Period	Sold in 2011	Sold in 2012	Inc (Dec)	Inc (Dec) %
Jan	23	58	35	152%
Feb	45	21	(24)	-53
Mar	39	32	(7)	-18
<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
Apr	50			
May	27			
June	28			
<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>105</b>			
<b>YTD</b>	<b>212</b>			
July	26			
Aug	31			
Sept	24			
<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>81</b>			
<b>YTD</b>	<b>293</b>			
Oct	16			
Nov	21			
Dec	24			
<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>61</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>354</b>			

As of March 31, 2012, there were 422 listings of currently active unsold homes in Estero. This is 20 % more than at the beginning of the year, but about the same as at May 30, 2011, when the ECCL first began capturing these numbers.

Of the 422 active listings, about 18% 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 422 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 March.

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.

### **Florida House and Senate Approve a New Senate District For Bonita Springs and Estero**

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.

The adopted House Map creates a south Lee County district that includes all of Bonita Springs and Estero. It has been approved by the Florida Supreme Court and is now being reviewed by the Federal Justice Department for compliance with civil right laws.

#### **The Senate Map**

The Florida Legislature completed a two-week special session on March 27 by passing a map that redraws eight districts found deficient by the Florida Supreme Court, including the district immediately west of Estero, District 30, which included Cape Coral and as far south as Marco Island. The Supreme Court had ruled that the original map passed by the legislature contained eight of the 40 districts that violated new anti-gerrymandering standards in the Florida Constitution as well as the map's numbering scheme. The revised map contains a new District 30 that is more compact and includes all of Bonita Springs and Estero as well as western Collier County. About 60% of the new District's population lives in Collier County with the other 40% living in Lee County.

#### **Next Steps**

The revised proposed state maps was also approved by the state Attorney General's office but *must now go to the state Supreme Court and finally to the U.S. Department of Justice for review.*