

Estero Development Report
 Volume 11, Number 9, Issued May 2012
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)
For More Information about Estero
 ...see www.esterofl.org

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Tuesday, June 12th	5:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, June 13th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, June 15th	10 a.m.	ECCL Regular Monthly Meeting...County Property Appraiser Ken Wilkerson will be our speaker	Estero Community Park
Monday, June 18th	9 a.m.	BOCC Hearing on the Corkscrew Woods Comp Plan Proposal	Commission Chambers, 2 nd Floor 2120 Main Street in downtown Ft Myers
Monday, June 18th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, June 22 nd	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO (Transportation Planning) meeting	Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd, Cape Coral
Monday, June 25 th	12 noon	Meeting with FDOT regarding safety improvements at US41 and Sweetwater Ranch Road	Estero Fire Rescue HQ On Three Oaks Parkway just south of Corkscrew Road

Index

Page	Subject
1	Calendar
2	Estero Community Website
2	Corkscrew Woods Comp Plan Proposal to County Board on June 18th
3	BOCC Continues to Debate Future of Conservation 20/20 Program
3	May Transportation Project Progress
4	BikeWalkLee and Bike and Pedestrian Plans for Estero
4	Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) Gets a \$10,000 Grant To Help Fund Updating the Estero Community Plan
5	Estero Cultural Center Proposed for Koreshan Historic Site
6	Lee County Commissioners Refer Bonita Springs Ambulance Proposal to a Special Magistrate and Forensic Auditor
6	Lost Grove Mine Update
6	Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) Plan Becomes Law
7	Troyer Brothers Mine Status
7	Estero's April Housing Permits Show Steady Pick-Up
8	Estero's April Commercial Permits Include Another Large Investment
9	May Estero Single Family Home Sales Improve; Year to Date Sales Off 4%

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)

Corkscrew Woods Comp Plan Proposal to County Board on June 18th

On April 23, the Lee County Local Planning Agency (LPA) voted to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approve a Comprehensive Plan amendment for the Cameratta Properties, Inc.'s proposed [Corkscrew Woods](#) development.

Corkscrew Woods is located in the [DR/GR](#), just east of the [Bella Terra](#) community on the south side of East Corkscrew Road. As a former mining site, this property for many years has had a vested right to develop 254 residential units. Cameratta Properties wants to increase the number of units up to 800 single family homes, an increase of about 550 units.

After the Estero Community and The Conservancy of Southwest Florida raised concerns about removing the property from the DR/GR, representatives of Cameratta Properties worked with Lee County staff to draft a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment to establish an "improved residential communities' overlay" within the DR/GR that would apply to Corkscrew Woods and would create a system for Cameratta to pay for the additional density. This would employ a proposed new TDR (transfer of development rights) program that would apply to the property while ensuring that the rezoning of the property includes several important environmental improvements the developer has agreed to implement.

Under the staff proposal approved by the LPA Cameratta Properties would agree to pay \$8,500 per unit for some of the additional units approved for the site. If this TDR option applies to 150 units the developer would pay the County approximately \$1.2 million. According to the approved proposal these funds could be used as seed money for starting the DR/GR TDR program or building a panther underpass on Corkscrew Road.

Corkscrew Woods would be the first proposed Comp Plan amendment since the new DR/GR Comp Plan become law, after an extensive state review of the challenges made to it by several Corkscrew Road landowners who would like to mine their property.

The basic idea behind this program is that a development within the DR/GR that seeks to increase its density must do so by purchasing development rights from other DR/GR lands that are needed for the restoration of the flowways. For example, a farmer in the DR/GR who is farming 4,000 acres could sell the residential development rights on that land (presently authorized at 1 unit per 10 acres except for wetlands that are authorized at 1 unit per 20 acres), or about 400 units and continue to farm that land.

Since the LPA hearing, County staff, the applicant and interested stakeholders have continued to work on further refining the language for the Comprehensive Plan amendment. This proposed language will further define how and when density credits can be obtained and provide additional clarification requested by ECCL and the Conservancy.

This proposed Comp Plan amendment will go before the Board of County Commissioners on June 18, 2012.

BOCC Continues to Debate the Future of the Conservation 20/20 Program

On May 1, the Estero Council of Community Leaders, Brooks Concerned Citizens, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, as well as a number of others, went before the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) again in support of Conservation 20/20, the County's land conservation program, as well as to make recommendations on how to possibly evolve and enhance the program.

These recommendations include forming a "visionary committee" to review and evaluate the program and its selection and financing procedures. Another important proposal is to develop a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program task force. The TDR program would enable the County to bank any development rights associated with future acquisitions and then sell them to prospective development applicants located in designated high density receiving areas.

Karen Maguire, Director of the Division of County Lands, reminded the commissioners that there are currently 25-30 properties on an eligible "C" list that have been reviewed and that funds are available to pursue some of these purchases. The BOCC determined to hold those properties in abeyance until after a June 4th Management & Planning meeting. At that meeting, they hope to reach a consensus on the potential makeup of the proposed review committee and if and when a referendum on continuation of the program should be presented to the voters of Lee County.

At their April 24 meeting, the BOCC approved the purchase of a "B" list property of 309 acres abutting other Conservation 20/20 properties in Alva. There are three other "B" list properties which have gone through the review process that may be considered by the BOCC in the near future should agreements for purchase be reached between County Staff and the land owning sellers.

The ECCL and many Estero community organizations long have been supporters of Conservation 20/20 because it has been used to conserve many properties along Corkscrew Road, thus protecting Estero and Bonita Springs from flooding and protecting Estero Bay from further contamination. In addition the 4,000 acre Edison Farms property just east of I-75 from The Brooks is on the short list for acquisition using Conservation 20/20 funds.

May Transportation Project Progress

Williams Road/US41 Intersection

At the May 11th ECCL meeting Sarah Clarke, project manager for the Lee County Department of Transportation, reported that Lee DOT was currently conducting a title search in order to obtain the right of way needed to widen the western approach of the intersection of Williams Road/US41 to accommodate dual left turn lanes onto US41.

The design for a right turn from eastbound Williams Road onto US41 will be completed soon. The West Bay Club has granted the County with the necessary easement for this right turn lane.

Construction will be scheduled once the plans are complete and the permits have been received.

Right Turn Lane at Estero Parkway and Three Oaks Parkway

Clarke also reported that the required surveys have been completed for a eastbound right turn lane on Estero Parkway onto southbound Three Oaks Parkway. There is no funding for this project in the current year's budget so construction will not start until sometime after October 1.

BikeWalkLee and Bike and Pedestrian Plans for Estero

Darla Letourneau gave an overview of the BikeWalkLee organization at the May 11th ECCL meeting. Formed in 2009, the group currently has a coalition of 42 organizations consisting of health providers, planners, and community organizations, as well as bicyclists. The ECCL was one of the first community organizations to support this group.

BikeWalkLee focuses on all modes of transportation and are advocates of complete streets policies. Complete streets is a new way of planning and building communities by offering safe, attractive and convenient access for all transportation users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

The group is involved with transportation and land use and overall planning through attendance and participation at meetings of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Lee County Commission. They recommend looking at entire corridors, not just a portion of a street, when making transportation improvements. They also believe that complete streets and a balanced multi-modal transportation system should be imbedded in the Lee County Comprehensive Plan.

As a result of their advocacy:

- LDOT and the MPO addressed five road projects and determined they didn't need to four-lane these roads. These roadways will use a complete streets approach resulting in a two-lane divided roadway with a median, turn lanes and bike/ped facilities. This design will save the County \$56 million.
- A new Bike/Ped travel route from downtown Ft. Myers to the Collier County line is included in the MPO's Complete Streets Initiative federal grant application for a USDOT TIGER grant. USDOT should announce the grant awards by the first week of June.
- The MPO has initiated a feasibility study development of a multi-use path along the CSX railway corridor through Estero starting at Alico Road and continuing south to the County line.
- A bike lane has been approved for Three Oaks Parkway and is in LDOT's budget for next year.

Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) Gets a \$10,000 Grant To Help Fund Updating the Estero Community Plan

This month, the Estero Community Improvement Foundation has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$10,000 from the Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation which will be used to help fund the ongoing update of the Estero Community Plan. The Foundation is interested in Florida's

environmental issues, particularly those that address comprehensive planning and growth management. The ECPP has contracted with DeLisi Fitzgerald, Inc. to accomplish the plan update with the help of several specialized sub-contractors.

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

Our community's current planning effort addresses many issues that were unforeseen when the existing plan was initially approved by the 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. The 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 approved by 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.

Estero Cultural Center Proposed for Koreshan Historic Site

Bella Gutshtein, co-founder of the Russian Cultural Center of Naples, presented her vision of a future cultural center in Estero at the May 11th ECCL meeting. Gutshtein and her husband Boris Sandler are the artistic directors of the first classical concert series held at the Art Hall in the Koreshan State Historic Site this past season. The chamber music concerts were performed by a string quartet and piano.

Gutshtein became interested in developing a cultural center at the Art Hall about 7 years ago. Following recent reconstruction of the facility, she brought in a New York architect to assure that the Hall would provide the proper acoustics for chamber music. The Hall contains a 1885

Steinway grand piano, which has also recently been restored and was used in this year's concert series.

In addition to the current musicians performing in these concerts, some of whom play for the Naples Philharmonic, Gutshtein would like to involve other forms of art as well.

Since Gutshtein's presentation the ECIF has agreed to sponsor a "Sunday Concerts at the Koreshan Park" series for 2013 and to seek grants to help fund the concerts.

Lee County Commissioners Refer Bonita Springs Ambulance Proposal to a Special Magistrate and Forensic Auditor

On May 22, the Lee Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) voted 3 to 2 to refer the Bonita Springs Fire and Rescue Service's (BSFR) proposal to assume responsibility for Bonita Springs' ambulance transportation to a Special Magistrate and a Forensic Auditor. The cost of this review is not to exceed \$75,000 and will be shared equally by Lee County and BSFR.

The BOCC will approve or deny the proposal after receiving the third party reports at an unannounced future date.

This is the third time the BSFR's proposal to take over the responsibility for emergency transportation from the Lee County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has been brought before the BOCC. The EMS is opposed to this proposal.

The ECCL has not taken a position on this matter because we believe that the proposal, if implemented, would not significantly affect Estero residents and we believe that both positions have merit.

Lost Grove Mine Update

On March 15, 2012, the application for the Lost Grove Mine, proposed by Alico Land Development, Inc. to be located on 1,382 acres in eastern Collier County adjacent to Lee County's DR/GR, was recommended for denial by the Collier County Planning Commission.

While the Conditional Use permit application was expected to go before the Collier County Board of County Commissioner on June 12th, the applicant has requested that the mine not be heard on that date. According to Collier County staff, the petition has been continued indefinitely.

While an application can be deemed withdrawn if no activity occurs within six months, this is not mandatory. Thus, while the Lost Grove Mine has dropped from the radar screen for now, it probably will resurface and this could happen at any time. We must be ready to come out in strong opposition when this petition is finally scheduled for a Commission hearing.

Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) Plan Becomes Law

On March 30th the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity agreed with an Administrative Law Judge's decision that Lee County's Comprehensive Plan meets the state's standards of protecting our water resources in the [DR/GR](#) by confining all mining to the Alico Road corridor.

One month later the deadline for appeals of this decision by the parties contesting the DR/GR plan expired without them filing an appeal. Thus all of the provisions of the DR/GR Plan are now law.

ECCL and many community and environmental groups participated in support of Lee County's new plan amendments restricting mining to the Alico Road corridor over the 5 year planning and appeal process.

There are two areas designated DR/GR in the Lee County Comprehensive Plan. These areas were established primarily to reduce the County's future residential density and to protect its groundwater resources to accommodate our future growth.

The DR/GR Plan applies to the southeastern section of the County and consists of approximately 83,000 acres. The land within the DR/GR has a high water table. It is an environmentally diverse area which contains wetlands and other habitat used by the endangered Florida panther and wood stork, and the threatened black bear, Big Cypress fox squirrel, and bald eagle.

The DR/GR includes potable water well fields which currently provide about 40 percent of water delivered by the County's potable water utility. In addition to mining the other permissible land uses within the DR/GR are agriculture (row crops, pasture and citrus) and low-density residential (one dwelling unit per 10 acres).

The Administrative Law Judge found that "Limerock mining adversely affects wildlife by replacing habitat with open pits. Limerock mining adversely affects residential uses because of the noise and vibrations associated with blasting, by the truck traffic, and by the replacement of more natural landscapes with industrial landscapes."

The County's plan amendment for future limerock mining in the DR/GR is now effective and includes the objective of clustering future mining close to areas that are already disturbed in order to protect natural resources, wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge areas, and residential uses.

Troyer Brothers Mine Status

In 2011 Lee County denied an application for a mine at the Troyer Brothers potato farm that extends from Corkscrew Road to SR82 about 10 miles east of I-75. Troyer Bros has appealed the denial to the Circuit Court and ECCL and its civic and environmental allies participated in support of Lee County's defense of the application denial. The case is still pending in the Circuit Court.

Estero's April Housing Permits Show Steady Pick-Up

During April, eighteen [single family homes](#) with a building value of \$2.5 million were permitted in Estero. This number is slightly ahead of April a year ago. On a year- to-date basis, permits are up by more than 50% over 2011 and slightly ahead of 2010.

Most of the April permits were issued to Lennar's Bella Terra on eastern Corkscrew Road. Also included are two permits for models at Estero's newest housing development just west of Bella Terra, The Preserve at Corkscrew. <http://preserveatcorkscrew.com>

The following table compares April year-to-date 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	733	\$95,634,278	\$130,470	36%
2001	743	114,361,268	153,918	43
2002	453	79,305,463	175,067	56
2003	694	100,480,796	144,785	34
2004	506	101,842,275	201,269	73
2005	1,061	207,175,802	195,265	43
2006	648	143,344,385	221,210	19
2007	258	66,051,728	256,014	31
2008	47	16,487,000	350,787	87
2009	51	18,838,887	369,390	80
2010	76	14,872,134	195,686	79
2011	51	9,046,766	177,388	84
2012	80	12,732,527	159,157	89

Estero's April Commercial Permits Include Another Large Investment

During April, permits totaling \$ 1.9 million were issued for Estero's [commercial buildings](#). This includes a \$ 1.4 million remodeling permit for Shadow Wood Country Club. The year-to-date total, shown in the table below, exceeds the first four months of 2011 by 14% and is up six-fold since 2010.

As shown in the following table, Estero's commercial development peaked in 2006 with a total of \$185 million. After 2006, total commercial investment in Estero fell precipitously through 2010. However, the number of permits granted through four months of 2011 and 2012 could suggest that a modest rebound is in process.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$7,780,586	\$77,250,835
2001	15,427,071	44,116,526
2002	3,712,079	23,135,139
2003	4,935,094	23,234,725
2004	7,699,199	60,859,820
2005	12,676,374	111,037,977
2006	70,651,988	184,709,240
2007	51,145,498	157,614,045
2008	20,431,973	39,261,677
2009	5,881,990	9,752,556
2010	982,742	9,322,546

2011	4,480,682	11,717,593
2012	5,907,662	?

There have been three major projects permitted so far in 2012: \$1.1 million for remodeling within Coconut Point, \$1.0 million for a new Goodwill Industries facility on Corkscrew Road and \$1.4 million for remodeling Shadow Wood Country Club.

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>

May Estero Single Family Home Sales Improve; Year to Date Sales Off 4%

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures indicate that thirty-seven single family homes in Estero were sold in May. As shown below, this represents a 37% increase from a year ago, and eight more than recorded in April this year. Year-to-date total single family home sales are down 4 %.

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
Qtr 1	107	111	4	4
Apr	50	29	21	-42
May	27	37	10	37
YTD	184	177	-7	-4
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 May 31, 2012, there were 388 listings of currently active unsold single family homes in Estero. This is 7 % less than at the beginning of the year, and is 49 (11%) less than at May 31, 2011. The decline since the beginning of the year is probably attributable to some snow birds taking their units off the market when they go north.

Of the 388 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. This percent is unchanged from the end of last month.

Based on sales in recent months, 388 active listings represent a thirteen month supply of unsold homes, about the same as a year ago and up from a twelve month supply at December 31, 2011. A six month supply typically indicates a good market.

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.