

Estero Development Report
 Volume 10, Number 3, Issued October 2010
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)
For More Information about Estero
 ...see www.esterofl.org

**November Opportunities for Citizen Participation
 in Protecting Estero's Quality of Life**

Date	Time	Event	Location
Thursday, November 4 th	9:30 a.m.	MPO Technical Advisory Committee review of Financially Feasible Projects	Cape Coral City Hall
Tuesday, November 9 th	6:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Meeting	Estero Fire Rescue Headquarters
Wednesday, November 10 th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)	Estero Community Park
Saturday, November 13 th	9 a.m.	Estero Community Plan Workshop for Estero Community Input	Hyatt Coconut Point Resort and Spa
Wednesday, November 17 th	9 a.m.	Troyer Brothers Mine Hearing Begins	2 nd Floor Hearing Room, 1500 Monroe Street in downtown Ft Myers
Friday, November 19 th	9:30 a.m.	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to Discuss 2035 Financially Feasible Plan	Cape Coral City Hall
Friday, November 19 th	1 p.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)	Estero Community Park
Monday, November 22 nd	10 a.m.	Wal-Mart Presentation of its New Plan for their Estero Parkway store	Estero Country Club at The Vines
Monday, November 22 nd	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP)	Estero Community Park

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Estero Community Website
The community groups sponsoring the site are:
 Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP)
 Estero Civic Association (ECA)
 Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)
 Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

**Estero Residents Invited to the November 13th
Community Plan Renewal Workshop**

The Future of Estero Is In Your Hands

A Community Planning Workshop

Saturday, November 13th

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Hyatt Coconut Point Resort

To register for the Workshop click on the following link:

<http://tinyurl.com/2010ecpp>

***You don't have to register but it would help us
to plan for your participation***

It has been ten years since the Estero Community launched its community planning effort, eight years since it was adopted by the County Board and five years since we last updated the Estero-specific Land Development Code.

Since then the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) has been intensively involved with the zoning of a large number of developments that include most of the land along the US 41 and Corkscrew Road commercial corridors. In addition the Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) has influenced the architectural, site plan, landscape and appearance of scores of projects located in these developments.

Meanwhile Estero has tripled in population and commercial space has increased fourfold from less than 1,000,000 square feet to 4,500,000 square feet in spite of the sluggish market that has persisted for the last four years.

This economic slowdown presents the ECP and the community with an outstanding opportunity to reevaluate and update our Community Plan and the Land Development Code provisions specific to Estero.

Some of the issues that have been suggested for discussion are:

- Should we improve the existing "Big Box" store provisions?

- How and when should we redevelop the old commercial properties that were built before the plan was adopted?
- Should we expand the existing Affordable Housing provisions?
- What to do about older residential housing areas, including mobile home parks?
- How should the high quality zoning of pending developments be adjusted as a result of the economy?
- Should we designate one or more “Old Florida” areas in the downtown area?
- How should we amend the existing signage provisions?
- What should we do about the appearance of sites that were long ago cleared for commercial development along our commercial corridors?
- Are there some incentives that we could create in order to retain the existing high quality commercial zoning?
- What can we do to incentivize the development of our planned mixed use developments?
- How can we encourage the development of arts facilities in Estero?
- What should we do to encourage energy conservation in our future development?
- How can we obtain the high speed communication infrastructure needed to attract new developments and tenants?
- Should Estero approve some free-standing bars in its larger commercial developments?
- How can we reduce the number of large billboards in the community?
- What can we do about the unsightly utility polls and wires?
- Do we need a town center and, if so, where should it be?
- When will the dangerous traffic situation on the west side of US 41 at Williams Road be fixed?
- Why can't we have continuous sidewalks along all our major roads?
- Why don't we have any Estero community entrance signs along our major roadways?

Please come and bring your ideas and concerns!!!

Another Mining Battle Ahead

On November 17th a Lee County Hearing Examiner will begin consideration of another Corkscrew Road mine application; the third application to proceed through the County's rezoning process in the last 3 years. This project is called “Troyer Brothers Excavation” and would rezone 1,803 acres from Agriculture District (AG-2) to Mine Excavation Planned Development (MEPD) to allow mining activities including administrative offices and rock crushing operations. A 110 foot maximum mine depth is proposed with a mine duration is 35 years. In addition blasting and dewatering are proposed. At over 1800 acres, this is the largest mine yet proposed for the DR/GR area.

**Over 50 Estero residents testified against each of the last two Corkscrew Road mines
...we look forward to your support once again.**

This will be the first mine application to be heard using the revised Lee County Mining Code adopted by the BOCC on September 9, 2008.

In June 2010 the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) voted unanimously to deny zoning for the 1,365 acre RCH mine on east Corkscrew Road after 22 days of Hearing by a County Hearing Examiner who recommended approval of the mine. This mine would have produced an average of 3,000 round-trip truck trips per day for the next 30 years. As a result of a court order this mine was heard under the old, far less stringent County mining regulations.

On June 16, 2008 the BOCC voted unanimously to deny zoning for the 318 acre Estero Group mine located about 7 miles east of I-75 on Corkscrew Road after a then record 17 days of Hearings before a Lee County Hearing Examiner.

As in the RCH Mine case the lawyers for Troyer Brothers have asked to have someone other than Lee County's Chief Hearing Examiner Diana Parker hear the case. In the RCH Case Judge Parker agreed to step aside and the case was assigned to an Assistant Hearing Examiner with no experience in such matters.

This time Lee County raised objections to this motion and a hearing was scheduled for November 2nd. Hearing Examiner Diana Parker denied the applicant's motion that she recuse (remove) herself, however she left the door open by saying that the applicant could restate their motion at the time of the hearing "should she be the Examiner assigned to the case". As of now, she has not made that assignment.

Unlike the recent RCH mine hearing which proceeded by Court order, the Troyer Brothers application has met the County's sufficiency requirements under the new Chapter 12 Mining standards of the Land Development Code. These guidelines are quite stringent in terms of water modeling and monitoring.

The proposed Troyer Mine is located outside of the "Preferred Mining Area" overlay map which is part of the pending DR/GR Comprehensive Plan Amendment. But because of its pending status, it will not be considered by the HEX in this case.

The Troyer Mine property has an existing unpaved access road entrance on East Corkscrew Road, however the applicant is not proposing use of this entrance for dump trucks "at this time".

In preparation for the upcoming hearing, Lee County Staff has issued a recommendation of DENIAL of the Troyer Brothers Mine application, finding it inconsistent with the Lee Plan, incompatible with surrounding uses, fails to protect natural and environmental resources, and fails to meet traffic standards.

If we are to continue our success in preventing a massive expansion of limerock mining throughout South Lee County's DR/GR, it's essential that Estero residents speak in person at the public hearing.

The hearing will be held beginning at 9:00 AM on 11/17/2010 at the Hearing Examiner's Meeting Room – 2nd Floor, 1500 Monroe Street in downtown Ft. Myers. At this time, three days have been scheduled if needed: Nov. 17, 18, and 19.

As has been done in prior cases, it's expected that the last hour or so of each hearing day will be set aside for public comment. If you do not appear before the Hearing Examiner, by law you will not be permitted to appear before the Board of County Commissioners at the final hearing in this case.

The Long Range Transportation Needs Plan Adopted (The 2035 Plan)

If a road project is not in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) it cannot be built. When Federal legislation was approved to allocate \$10 million to the Coconut Road/I-75 Interchange is could not be built until the project was added to the LRTP. We defeated that road by successfully fighting for years to keep it out of the LRTP.

Every five years the Lee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is required to update the LRTP and extend it for at least the next 20 years. In Lee County transportation planning is performed by the MPO, a panel of 17 members consisting of public officials from Lee County (all 5 Commissioners) and the five Lee County municipalities.

The planning process consists of two steps:

- Step one, the "Needs Plan", involves projecting the demographic and development changes that will occur during the planning period and the transportation needs that they require.
- The second step, the "Fiscally Feasible Plan", requires estimation of transportation revenues from all sources, local, state and Federal and how they should be allocated to the needed facilities.

The 2035 Needs Plan

On October 22nd the MPO adopted a 2035 Needs Plan that is consistent with Estero's needs. It contains the following Estero projects:

- Corkscrew Road six laning from Three Oaks Parkway to Ben Hill Griffin
- The Corkscrew Road/I-75 Interchange widening and reconstruction
- Three Oaks Parkway six laning from Coconut Road to Estero Parkway
- Sandy Lane from Corkscrew Road to Estero Parkway, a new two lane road
- Via Coconut Point from the south end of Coconut Point to Old 41 in Bonita Springs, a new four lane segment.

In addition the Needs Plan removes two projects that Estero has long opposed:

- The Coconut Road/I-75 Interchange and its associated approaches, and

- County Road 951 (CR951), a four lane roadway that would run parallel to I-75 through the environmentally sensitive Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area on the east side of I-75.

Removing CR951 from the Needs Plan was one of three controversial decisions that the MPO decided in approving the Needs Plan. In the end the MPO voted 12 to 2 in favor of removing CR951 after a concerted effort by the City of Bonita Springs to keep it in the Needs Plan.

Eliminating CR951 accomplishes several community goals:

- lowers the cost of the 4,000 acre Edison Farms acquisition and restoration;
- preserves wetlands that store and clean rains that flow from the middle of the state through the DR/GR and into our rivers and streams and ultimately into Estero Bay
- reduces the threat of flooding for Estero,
- increases the region's water supply, and
- preserves Estero Bay as a tourist attraction.

The 2035 Financially Feasible Plan

On October 26th the MPO presented the draft 2035 Fiscally Feasible Plan at a Public Hearing in the Three Oaks Banquet Center in Estero. In recent years the primary sources of transportation funding have declined significantly. Federal and State fuel taxes started to shrink even before the economy became soft due to the impact of high fuel prices and expanded use of more fuel efficient vehicles. In Florida most County and municipal transportation funds come from road impact fees. In Lee County these funds are down about 90% in recent years due to problems with the real estate market.

As a result none of the new Estero road projects listed above are funded in the draft staff report. The MPO will review the draft plan on November 19th and approve the final Financially Feasible Plan on December 10th. The 2035 Plan will then be forwarded to FDOT and the Federal Highway Administration for their approval.

November the Month for Estero Parkway Wal-Mart Zoning Presentations

Wal-Mart is now prepared to present their plans for a 150,000 square foot store on the northeast corner of Estero Parkway and US 41. They have been working with the leadership of The Vines community, the ECPP and the ECCL to schedule a presentation to all the local communities surrounding the site and along Estero Parkway on the morning of Monday, November 22nd. Later that day, at 6 p.m., they will make a similar presentation at the ECPP meeting at the Estero Community Park. The public is invited to attend and provide input at the ECPP meeting.

These meetings follow three informal meetings between Wal-Mart's consultants and their contractual architect to discuss how the existing zoning might be modified for the

smaller store that is now Wal-Mart's national standard model and still satisfy Estero's unique appearance standards.

Earlier Activities/Background

On June 17th many members of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) and the Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) met with [Wal-Mart](#)'s project architect and engineer to react to their effort to redesign Wal-Mart's corporate design for its new 150,000 square foot store in order to satisfy Estero's unique appearance and big-box standards. The Estero participants appreciated that Wal-Mart's proposal was a great improvement over the standard store but made numerous suggestions for further improvement.

At the conclusion of the meeting Wal-Mart representatives indicated that they would now have to go back to the drawing boards and consult with the Wal-Mart's corporate architects to gain their approval before returning in a couple of months

On May 24th several members of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) and the Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) met with [Wal-Mart](#)'s project architect and engineer to discuss how Lee County and Estero Comprehensive Plans and Land Development Code provisions should be used to modify Wal-Mart's new, smaller store plans. The meeting produced a lively discussion and many good ideas that Wal-Mart's architect will incorporate into two draft proposals that will be discussed at a second meeting between these parties, probably sometime in late June. The next steps in the process will be as outlined below.

On April 20th representatives of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) and the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) met with representatives of Wal-Mart to learn about their plans for the Wal-Mart store zoned for the northeast corner of US 41 and Estero Parkway in 2003. Wal-Mart has not constructed this store because their zoning prevents them from starting construction until six-laning of the segment of US 41 adjacent to the store has begun. The US 41 widening project is expected to start later this year, in November or December.

The stores representatives indicated at this meeting that Wal-Mart's corporate leadership has approved a new, smaller store format for development throughout the country. All their new stores will be much smaller than in the past. They are seeking to rezone this site for a 150,000 square foot store instead of the currently zoned 208,000 square foot store. In addition they would like to add three out-lots to the site plan, using some, but not all, of the surplus space included in the present zoning. The present plan includes one out-lot on the corner of Estero Parkway and US 41. The standard design of their new stores varies greatly from the Mediterranean design approved by the County for this site, however they agreed that the corporate design would have to be substantially modified in order to comply with Estero's appearance standards imbedded in Chapter 33 of the Lee County Land Development Code.

Looking Ahead

Once this process is complete the proposal will be submitted to Lee County where the following steps are necessary for approval of the rezoning:

- The proposal is reviewed by the County's Community Development staff and a staff report is prepared and sent to a Hearing Examiner with copies available to the public,
- The Hearing Examiner conducts a public hearing on the application and prepares a report based on the hearings that includes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC),
- Finally, the BOCC conducts a hearing on the matter and votes to approve, deny or approve with conditions, the application. Only persons who testify before the Hearing Examiner may testify before the BOCC.

University Highlands Comprehensive Plan Change

University Highlands is a 209 acre parcel located on the southeast corner of Estero Parkway and Ben Hill Griffin Parkway. The property was zoned many years ago as part of a very large Development of Regional Impact (DRI) that included most of the land around the intersection of Corkscrew Road and Ben Hill Griffin.

During the last year the owners of this large commercial site have made several presentations to the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP) about their future plans for the site. Earlier the property had been one of four finalists considered by Lee County for the Red Sox Spring Training complex.

The present zoning on the property provides for 2,279 dwelling units, 150,000 square feet of general office space of which 50,000 square feet may be medical office space; 210,000 square feet of retail space; 200 hotel rooms and an assisted living facility.

During October the BOCC approved a Comprehensive Plan change for University Highlands that would change its designation from Suburban to Urban Community; add a mixed use overlay and require that any future use of Density Bonus on the property would use of the County's new Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. The overall density of the development was not changed by the Comp Plan change but it will designate the location of buildings that could be as tall at 95 feet. These buildings are situated so that they are not visible from adjacent residential communities.

The owners of this property had sought a zoning change that would have permitted one or more free-standing bars at certain locations but this request was withdrawn after the ECPP's public hearing on this question.

BOCC Makes Progress in Approving the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) Comprehensive Plan

On October 26th the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously voted to approve a Stipulated Settlement Agreement intended to resolve the differences between the County and the State Department of Community Affairs (DCA) over a few provisions of the DR/GR Comprehensive plan adopted by the Board earlier this year.

The next step in this process took place on November 1st when the BOCC unanimously approved remedial plan amendments necessary to resolve the issues raised by the State DCA.

With the Board's adoption of the settlement agreement, DCA will now have 30 days to file a letter of intent. This letter will "realign" the case putting Lee County, DCA, and others in favor of the amendment on one side, versus the intervenors (Cemex, Troyer Brothers, and Corkscrew Plantation) on the other side. The ECCL and several civic and environmental organizations have joined the County and State in all further proceedings. The intervenors will then have to restate their specific objection to the amendment. The burden of proof with regard to harm caused by the amendment will lie with the intervenors.

While the length of this process is disappointing, it's important to understand that this process is not time limited and could drag on for as much as a year. In the meantime, the amendment will not be in effect.

Other 2010 Activities

On May 11th the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) sent the County a "Statement of Intent to Find a Portion of the [Comprehensive Plan Amendments](#) Not in Compliance". The only area where DCA found the County out of compliance is its Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. In general they found this program to lack the kind of specificity that they would like to see in such a program. Meanwhile the County has developed a detailed TDR program to amend its Land Development Code.

DCA's finding of "Non-compliance" triggers negotiations between DCA and the County and an Administrative Hearing conducted by the State Division of Administrative Hearings. Interested parties can file to intervene in this process, a procedure that allows them to participate in what otherwise would be private negotiations. In addition new issues, not those specified by the Non-compliance" notice can be raised and included in the final agreement. As a result the ECCL voted unanimously at its May 21st meeting to file an application to intervene in this process in conjunction with The Conservancy and the Brooks Concerned Citizens.

On April 21st the ECCL, The Conservancy and several Estero communities sent a detailed letter to the state Department of Community Affairs urging them to approve most of the provisions in the County's plan. The only exceptions were suggestions to:1) remove the "Rural Communities", including Edison Farms, from the plan, and 2) remove the additional Florida Rock properties that were added by the Board at the last minute from the Future Limerock Mining Overlay.

On Wednesday, March 3rd the BOCC voted to send three DR/GR Comprehensive Plan ordinances to the State Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for their determination of compliance or noncompliance. The Board made two significant changes in the plan as presented by Lee County staff prior to this vote.

First they voted to delete the “rural communities” located along Corkscrew Road and on the Edison Farms property from the plan. This action will reduce the amount of residential sprawl in the DR/GR, reduce the amount of infrastructure that the County would have to add over the years as these communities were completed and increase the effectiveness of these large properties as sending areas in the planned Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. Under the TDR program the residential development rights on these properties will be exported to receiving areas in the DR/GR along SR 82 or to areas in need of higher densities outside the DR/GR.

Secondly, the Board approved adding another section of Florida Rock land to the Future Limerock Mining area. This land lies immediately east of the Future Limerock Mining area recommended by the County’s consultant and staff. It has been the subject of extensive litigation for nearly two decades but has been characterized in all the planning documents as a Priority One Conservation Area.

On January 15th the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) completed their review of the DR/GR Comprehensive Plan amendments and transmitted them to Lee County.

In general DCA’s comments and recommendations were quite limited given the scope of the County’s Plan changes. They had only seven objections, most of which would strengthen, rather than weaken, the environmental protections included in the plan. In addition they recommend that the Edison Farms property not be the site of a rural residential community...”Use the TDR program to transfer development from properties along Corkscrew Road and the Edison Farms tract to more appropriate locations in the Mixed-Use Communities along State Road 82.”

Not only does DCA agree with plans to keep all limerock mining in the Alico Road corridor they suggested that the process for expanding the Future Limerock Mine area be made more open to public input.

Final Report of the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee

On September 16th the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee created by NCH and Lee Memorial Health Systems met for its final meeting. The meeting commenced with a discussion of the financial projections for the 24/7 Freestanding EDR for the next five years.

During the many months that the Steering Committee met the focus of the financial analysis changed from modifying the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) to construction of a new

facility on adjacent property owned by the Lee Memorial Health System. The estimated cost of this new facility is \$11.2 million. As a result the estimated annual cost of operating the ER includes about \$550,000 in interest cost (at 5%) and \$700,000 in non-cash depreciation cost. The combination of these two costs represents \$6.2 million out of a total estimated five year loss of \$8.6 million. The estimated cash flow of the project during the five years is a net outflow of \$5 million, over half of which is the cost of financing the facility.

At present Lee Memorial and NCH Health Systems provide virtually all the Emergency health care used by the Bonita /Estero community. As a result in the short run all Emergency Health Care service provided by the proposed 24/7 ER causes other Lee Memorial/ NCH Emergency facilities to lose business and revenue. Thus the financial analysis provided to the Steering Committee estimated this lost business at about \$15.5 million during the first five years that the facility would be in operation. This creates a great short term disincentive for the two systems to pursue a new Free-standing ER in the Bonita/Estero community.

The analysis did not look at the long term needs for additional Emergency Health Care capacity over the next decade and beyond, especially in areas like Bonita/Estero that are remotely located from existing ER facilities.

In conclusion the two health care systems agreed to take the financial analysis to their leadership to see what might be done to address the emergency health care needs of the south Lee County communities. They spoke about extending the hours of the BCHC but did not commit to a specific plan for a Free-standing ER nor a hospital for the area, although the representatives of the community indicated that specific plans would be necessary for the community to help finance the construction of a 24/7 Free-standing ER.

The community members involved in the Steering Committee effort are disappointed that, due to various circumstances, the creation of a hospital in our immediate area has been delayed for a while. We are assessing our options but may find ourselves in a position of redefining our goal from being concerned about when the hospital happens... to being sure that plans are in place to make sure that it will definitely happen as soon as possible.

Earlier in 2010

On July 15th the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee met to discuss the five year financial projections from the operation of a 24/7 Free-standing Emergency Department to serve the population of south Lee County. In addition the Steering Committee discussed cost estimates for the construction of such a facility assuming that the existing Bonita Community Health Center would continue to operate as a walk-in clinic in the present building. After some minor changes were identified the Committee decided it was time for this information to be shared with the senior leadership of the two hospital systems before scheduling another meeting of the Committee.

On June 17th the [Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee](#) met once again to analyze the feasibility of a 24/7 Free-standing Emergency Department on or adjacent to the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC), located on the east side of US 41 just south of Coconut Road. The Committee reviewed customer volume projections for the next 5 years based upon historical emergency visit information provided by both hospital systems. After extensive discussion the staff analysts agreed to modify the projections to take into account many of the suggestions made by members of the committee.

Next the Committee discussed possible configurations and locations of the Emergency Department of the facility on the three properties controlled by the various hospital systems. The parcel of property where the BCHC is located is jointly owned by NCH and Lee Memorial. In addition there are three parcels owned by Lee Memorial, totaling nearly 30 acres, immediately adjacent to this property that might be used for a 24/7 Free-standing ED. None of these properties, including the BCHC property, is presently zoned for a Free-standing ED. Since all of this property is located within the Coconut Point Development of Regional Impact (DRI) the rezoning process is more complicated than a non-DRI zoning. It will involve approvals by the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Commission as well as the Lee County Board. Such a rezoning typically takes a year or more to complete.

The Bonita Community Health Center is presently utilizing all of its available land. Thus adding a 24/7 Free-standing ED to this building would necessarily require the use of some land from one of the adjacent parcels inasmuch as the Committee and the two hospital systems plan to continue the operations now located in the existing BCHC.

In May 19th the [Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee](#) met to discuss how the Committee should proceed to forecast demand for services for a 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department (FED) at the Bonita Community Healthcare site over the next 5 years. The Committee extensively discussed all sources of available data and how that data should be adjusted in order to produce the most accurate forecast. The balance of the meeting focused upon analyzing the alternative configurations of the FED and the cost of each of them consistent with the applicable State and Federal regulations. Subcommittees will continue to work on both of these projects during the period prior to the June meeting of the Steering Committee.

On April 9th several members of the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee traveled to Largo to visit another 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department. Once again the managers of that facility provided the Committee with an abundance of information on their operations to date, both service wise and financial. This facility, although only two years old, is already profitable and experiencing business well beyond projections.

On April 15th the Steering Committee met again to discuss the market service area for a 24/7 Freestanding ER located on the site of the Bonita Community Health Center; the services to be provided by the facility; service to the facility by Lee County EMS (ambulance and helicopter

service); procedures for estimating the future demand for service from the facility by transported and walk-in clients.

On March 18th the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee met for the second time to discuss the antitrust, licensure and other legal aspects of establishing a 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department (FED); the services that should be provided by this facility and those that should continue to be provided by the participating hospitals and what needs to be researched in order to estimate the present and future market for these services in its expected service area.

The meeting identified many of the challenges that must be overcome before a FED can be constructed in our community and the steps that we need to take to be successful in this effort.

On March 26th most of the Steering Committee traveled to North Port to tour Sarasota Memorial's North Port Medical Plaza 24/7 Freestanding ER that opened for business last October. The facility is a combination Freestanding ER and a Walk-in Clinic with comprehensive laboratory and diagnostic/testing facilities. It is located in a bedroom community with a population of 50,000 at the far south end of Sarasota County. The area was considered an "underserved" community.

The leadership and staff at North Port were very generous with their information and time. Being such a new facility they shared with the Committee many of the obstacles they had to overcome in order to gain all the necessary approvals and prepare for an uncertain community response. They stressed the importance of community support throughout the approval and implementation phases. In the 6 months since the FED facility opened client use of the facility has far exceeded expectations.

On February 18th the fourteen member Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee met for the first time. The Steering Committee approved the following mission statement:

"Develop a plan and recommendations for a freestanding emergency department in the Bonita/Estero community".

In pursuit of this outcome the Steering Committee will

- Identify gaps in emergency services provided to the community,
- Complete a five year projection of patient visits, revenues and expenses,
- Complete a capital budget and identify funding requirements, and
- Develop recommendations for next steps towards the development of a Freestanding ED.

On January 29th representatives of the Committee met with the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) Board to discuss how the owners of this facility would begin to implement a Freestanding ER on the BCHC property. About a week prior to the meeting Suzanne Bradach,

Acting Executive Director of the Center, provided the Committee with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two hospital systems, NCH and Lee Memorial, that contains their “plan that provides the framework for the development of a freestanding ER” to serve the area.

The plan provides our Committee with three members on a broad based Committee, called the “Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee”, that would, over a period of about 6 months, do the research needed to address all the questions that must be answered prior to obtaining the approval of the project by the Boards of the two hospital systems.

Estero’s Housing Permits Continue Extremely Slow Pace

During September, only seven single family homes with a building value of only \$1.1 million were permitted in Estero. This is the second straight single digit month for homes permitted and one of the lowest monthly dollar values since Lee County began keeping records in 2000. This continued slowdown in construction of new homes is helping to reduce the inventory of unsold new homes constructed in Estero during 2005 when 2,833 units were permitted.

Housing units permitted on a year-to date basis during 2010 are up modestly over the two prior years, but the figure remains far below the comparable figures for 2000-2006 and equals only 16% of the figure during 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001. In addition, the average building value, exclusive of land, has fallen precipitously this year to compete with the low price of existing housing units available on the market.

During the last couple of years, the major active developments have been the two Toll Brothers developments along Estero Parkway, Belle Lago and The Reserve of Estero, and Lennar’s Bella Terra, out east on Corkscrew Road.

The following table shows how the first nine months of 2010 compares with the same period of the prior ten years:

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	1,710	\$235,670,871	\$137,819	38%
2001	1,748	168,379,460	152,442	46
2002	1,124	190,366,447	169,365	56
2003	1,255	193,968,479	154,557	42
2004	1,253	277,114,447	221,161	65
2005	2,273	496,004,626	218,216	52
2006	1,191	304,502,383	255,670	36
2007	407	113,869,229	279,777	36
2008	120	41,425,009	345,208	85
2009	123	42,664,643	346,867	77
2010	151	31,273,441	207,109	79

The County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

Estero's Permitted Commercial Building Values Continue Decline

During September, less than \$1 Million of permits were issued for Estero commercial buildings. As shown below, for the first nine months year-to-date, the value of [commercial buildings](#) permitted in Estero totaled only \$7.0 million, by far the smallest year-to-date total on record.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$74,151,127	\$77,250,835
2001	37,092,953	44,116,526
2002	21,072,649	23,135,139
2003	16,744,565	23,234,725
2004	40,419,085	60,859,820
2005	65,174,286	111,037,977
2006	170,836,515	184,709,240
2007	145,211,071	157,614,045
2008	37,205,446	39,261,677
2009	8,772,659	9,752,556
2010	6,957,329	?

As the above table indicates, Estero's commercial development started to expand rapidly in 2004 and peaked in 2006 with a total of \$184.7 million. (All figures are exclusive of the underlying land). Total commercial investment in Estero has fallen precipitously since 2007 and continues to fall below the very low level of 2009.

From January through September, the major projects that contributed to the 2010 year-to-date total are:

- \$3,769,000 in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#)
- \$1,200,000 for improvements to the Lee County Corkscrew Road Wellfield
- \$1,815,000 for [Miramar Outlets](#) expansion
- \$800,000 for a new bank in the Coconut Trace Center
- \$619,000 for Villages of Country Creek Water Storage System
- \$638,000 for Meadows of Estero
- \$400,000 for Wildcat Run Country Club
- \$247,000 for remodeling Bonita Health Center
- \$202,000 for The Brooks Town Center
- \$128,000 for Corkscrew Palms
- \$104,800 for Estero Park Commons
- \$48,000 for Hyatt Equities Improvements

REMINDER: The building values understate the cost of each residence or commercial building because it excludes the value of the underlying land.

