



Estero Development Report
 Volume 10, Number 2, Issued September 2010
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)
For More Information about Estero
 ...see www.esterofl.org

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Monday, October 4 th	6 p.m.	Special Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting On Free-standing Bar Community Plan Change	Estero Community Park
Tuesday, October 12 th	6:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Meeting	Estero Fire Rescue Headquarters
Wednesday, October 13 th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)	Estero Community Park
Friday, October 15 th	1 p.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)	Estero Community Park
Monday, October 18 th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP)	Estero Community Park
Friday, October 22 nd	9:30 a.m.	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to Adopt 2035 Needs Plan	Cape Coral City Hall
Tuesday, October 26 th	5 p.m.	Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) 2035 Financially Feasible	Three Oaks Banquet Hall

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Estero Community Website

The community groups sponsoring the site are:

Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP)
Estero Community Association (ECA)
Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)
Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

Freestanding Bars in Estero and the November 13th Community Planning Workshop

For the last couple of months several developers and land-owners have been seeking Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) support for a change in the Estero Community Plan that would permit one or more freestanding bars in some of the large commercial developments in Estero.

At present the Community Plan only permits alcoholic consumption on premises of full service restaurants. County staff encouraged the ECP to seek input from the Estero community before approving such a change inasmuch as the provision was added to the Community Plan in 2002 after considerable community comment and review.

As a result the ECP scheduled a Special Public meeting on this issue for Monday, October 4th. About 65 people attended the meeting at the Estero Community Park. The panel chairman, Jack Lienesch, led off the meeting by explaining the background of the issue. Then each panel member expressed their views on the matter followed by comments from the public.

By the end of the meeting it was clear that a majority of the residents of Estero, both those in attendance and those who had sent in e-mails, were opposed to any standalone bars in Estero.

The panel agreed to drop their attempt to have the Lee County Board of County Commissioners change the Estero Plan to allow standalone bars and agreed that any change of this type should be considered as part of a comprehensive review of the Estero Community Plan. The ECP has been organizing such a review with the first public step being a Community Workshop at the Coconut Point Hyatt Resort and Spa on November 13th. The purpose of the Workshop is to get public input on how the existing plan is working and how it should be improved.

If you are interested in having a say about what can and cannot be developed in Estero in the future, including freestanding bars, we urge you to register and attend. All Estero residents are encouraged to register for the Workshop by clicking on the following link <http://esterofl.org/new/Community%20Work%20Shop%20on%2011-13-2010.pdf> and registering.

Protecting Estero's Future by Acquiring and Preserving Edison Farms

During September at least eight (8) Estero community organizations approved resolutions supporting the acquisition and restoration of Edison Farms. Please urge your Community Board to approve the Edison Farms petition that can be obtained on the ECCL webpage at http://www.esterofl.org/Issues/edison_farms.htm.

In addition The Conservancy of Southwest Florida initiated a petition necessary for the project to be considered for funding from the Federal government's "Great Outdoors Initiative" program. Please add your name to this petition by selecting The Conservancy link on the right side of the same internet page... http://www.esterofl.org/Issues/edison_farms.htm.

The Coalition of organizations supporting the Edison Farms acquisition meets once or twice a month in order to pursue every possible funding source.

Background

A coalition of national, state and local environmental and civic groups have united in their support of the public acquisition and preservation of the 4,000-acre Edison Farms site just east of I-75 south of Corkscrew Road.

The Estero Council of Community Leaders, the Brooks Concerned Citizens, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Collier County Audubon Society, Audubon of Southwest Florida, CREW Land & Water Trust, Florida Wildlife Federation and The Trust for Public Land have formed a coalition in support of this effort.

On August 12th The Coalition testified in support of the project before Lee County's Conservation 20/20 Conservation Lands Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee (CLASAC) who subsequently voted unanimously to nominate Edison Farms for acquisition.

CLASAC is a 15-member citizen's advisory committee appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. This committee, along with a sub-committee, recommends to the commissioners which properties should be purchased. Only properties with a "willing seller" may qualify for the Conservation 20/20 program. If the commissioners agree, the Division of County Lands then will initiate the negotiation process.

Earlier this year the state's "Florida Forever" land acquisition program ranked the property and contiguous Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) area as #3 statewide in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives Projects category.

Representatives of Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Land & Water Trust and the Calusa Land Trust announced they will be contributing \$100,000 and \$10,000 respectively towards the purchase of this land. Pledged donations from community and other organizations will help Edison Farms chances for approval by the Committee and the Board of Commissioners. We would urge all Estero community organizations to consider pledging some funds, no matter how small, for the acquisition.

Conservation 20/20 funds were committed in 2009 for the acquisition of a select group of properties using phased acquisition over the next several years. All Conservation 20/20 nominations received since January 1, 2009 have only undergone a preliminary evaluation to be retained and held for future consideration when funds became available again or to be rejected. As a result of the preliminary evaluations, CLASAC has retained a total of 28 nominations, including Edison Farms. About \$20 million per year is raised for the Conservation 20/20 program by a special property tax levy approved by the voters of Lee County in 1996.

Because of the size of this property funding will be necessary from a number of sources, local,

state and national. In addition in this down economy most of these projects will be paid off over several years, not all at the time of purchase.

The Lee County Long Range Transportation Plan (The 2035 Plan)

In Lee County transportation planning is performed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), a panel of 17 members consisting of public officials from Lee County (all 5 Commissioners) and the five Lee County municipalities. Every five years they update the County's long run transportation plan reaching out 20 to 25 years in the future. The current 2030 Plan expires on December 11, 2010.

The planning process starts out projecting demographic and development trends and the transportation needs that they produce, the "Needs Plan". The second step requires estimation of transportation revenues from all sources, local, state and Federal, these estimates are used with the needs in the "Fiscally Feasible Plan".

The draft 2035 Needs Plan contains many projects that will impact Estero over the next quarter century including the following:

- 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

The MPO staff never included the Coconut I-75 Interchange and its related roads in the 2035 Needs Plan.

On the other hand the draft Needs Plan did include CR 951, a planned 4 lane north-south limited access road just east of I-75, that would be built through the Edison Farms property which is about 80% wetlands and is now being considered for acquisition and restoration funding by the County and State.

At the September 22nd MPO meeting Commissioner Manning moved to remove CR 951 between the Collier County line and Corkscrew Road from the 2035 Needs Plan. The MPO voted 12 to 4 to remove that segment of CR 951 from the Plan. Final action on this segment will take place at the MPO's October 22nd meeting. These meetings are open to the public. All concerned Estero citizens should attend.

On October 26th the MPO will conduct a public hearing on the Fiscally Feasible Plan at the Three Oaks Banquet Center between 5 and 7 p.m. All are encouraged to attend.

Background

On January 27th members of ECCL and several environmental and growth management groups met with Don Scott, Executive Director of the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and their 2035 Plan consultant. The purpose of the meeting was to learn about the MPO's community demographic and commercial development baseline estimation process and the transportation needs assessment projection process for each 5 year period between now and 2035. Five years ago the system then in use did not anticipate the tremendous growth that the Estero community would experience in the just completed decade.

As a result of the meeting the MPO will provide the ECCL and its allies with detailed information on each of the census tracts within the Estero community for review by the members of all Estero planning bodies in order to further validate the estimation process.

The 2035 Plan must be approved by the MPO by late 2010 so that it can be forwarded to FDOT and the Federal Highway Administration for their approval by year end.

Airplane Noise Progress Report

In October 2008 the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) changed the flight patterns for commercial aircraft departing to or arriving from the northeastern section of the United States. As a result many Estero communities began to be impacted by noise from these aircraft. At that time the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) and the Brooks Concerned Citizens (BCC) formed a committee to work on this problem.

During the last two years the Committee has worked with the Regional Office of the FAA in an effort to reroute these flights or to alter these flight patterns so that they will provide noise relief for the residents of Estero. As a result of this effort some of the flights are being rerouted while other planes are flying higher than before. In addition the FAA has initiated a monitoring system that will soon be providing the Committee with periodic reports that will allow the Committee to assess the impact of the changes.

In the process of its work the Committee learned that many comparable airports have installed flight tracking systems that permit residents living in the airport's flight paths to use their personal computers to learn the altitude of any of the flights over their home. If that information indicated that the flight was below the required altitude the resident may then report it to the FAA and the Port Authority.

Recently the Lee County Port Authority, the operators of Southwest Florida International Airport, received a grant offer from the FAA for the purchase of a flight tracking system. The Authority has finalized the paperwork with the FAA Airport District Office and anticipates taking the grant to the Port Authority Board in November.

The Authority has requested proposals for the system's purchase and have received a proposal from Bruel & Kjaer Environmental Solutions. The proposal has been reviewed by staff and submitted to the FAA for compliance assurance. On September 28th the Airport Special Management Committee approved the purchase of the tracking system.

Every five years the Airport Authority is required by the FAA to update its Part 150 Noise Study. At the September 28th meeting of the Airport Special Management Committee four noise consultants were interviewed and the Committee voted to rank ESA Airports first among the applicants for the job. Upon approval by the Port Authority Board staff will negotiate the terms of a noise study contract with ESA.

Members of the ECCL and BCS spoke with the ESA Airports representatives after the meeting. They are well aware of the noise issues produced by the 2008 landing pattern changes and promised to hold one or more hearings in Estero to determine what alternatives might be

feasible in order to address the communities concerns.

Key Estero Roadway Landscaping Projects Move Ahead

During September the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) included two important Estero roadway median landscape projects in its approved 2011 Budget. Both of them were planned as part of the road improvements completed in 2009 but were not implemented then. The budgeted projects are:

- Three Oaks Parkway from Corkscrew Road and Alico Road
- Estero Parkway between Three Oaks Parkway and Ben Hill Griffin Parkway.

These projects will supplement roadway segments completed years ago as part of the County's effort to satisfy the Estero Community Plan goal to landscape the median in all Estero's major thoroughfares.

Estero Parkway from US 41 to Three Oaks was landscaped in 2004 as a result of contributions by several major landowners along the route. The Three Oaks project is the third and final landscaping project on that roadway extending the outstanding job implemented by the Bonita Bay group and the residents of The Brooks through that community and the County's landscaping of the segment between Williams Road and Corkscrew Road.

Estero will also benefit from the US 41 roadway landscape project now underway between San Carlos Park and Gladiolus Parkway. This project will be followed by another joint Florida DOT/ Lee DOT landscaping and irrigation project of US 41 between San Carlos and Corkscrew in conjunction with the six lane widening project now being bid and expected to begin construction by the first of the year.

We are fortunate that the BOCC recognizes that even in these tough economic times we must keep our community looking as attractive as we possible in order to maintain our property values, attract new residents to the area and support our large and vital tourism industry.

Estero Fire District Finances

On September 9th the Estero Fire Rescue Board voted to approve the District's 2010-11 Budget and the 2.0 property tax rate that is the same as the prior year in spite of the 15% decline in the district's property tax base. As noted below this action will require the District to use about \$1 million from its reserves, reducing them to a very low level.

If Estero's property tax base continues to fall the Fire District Board and administration will have to consider some rather draconian cuts next year.

Background

On August 9th Estero Fire Chief Scott Vanderbrook widely distributed a letter to Estero residents summarizing the District's financial condition and plans for its 2011 Budget. The following are some key statements from that letter:

- Estero Fire Rescue has seen a reduction of property values over the past two years in

the excess of 25.15% resulting in \$2,524,546.00 less revenue over the same period.

- In an effort to reduce costs, we have not filled eight open positions, reduced our operating budget, held wages, changed our health insurance carrier, joined other agencies on bulk purchasing of supplies and continue to work on functional consolidation items with surrounding departments.
- On July 21, 2010, Estero Fire Rescue held its budget workshop to set the tentative millage rate for the upcoming year. The Estero Fire Board of Commissioners agreed to set the tentative millage rate at 2.0, which is our current millage rate. By setting the millage rate of 2.0, it will produce roughly one million dollars less than the current budget year. This means that Estero Fire Rescue will need to use approximately \$1,000,000.00 out of its reserves for the upcoming 2010-2011 budget year.

In July and again on August 20th Chief Vanderbrook made a presentation to the Estero Council of Community Leaders concerning the District's 2011 Budget. All in attendance appreciate the efforts that the Chief and the Fire Board have made to keep their taxes low while maintaining their historic high level of service.

Estero's Housing Permits Continue Slow Pace

During August, only five single family homes with a building value of \$1.9 million were permitted in Estero. This is the lowest number of permits in over 2 years. This slowdown in construction of new homes should continue to help reduce the inventory of unsold new homes constructed in Estero during 2005 when 2,833 units were permitted.

Housing units permitted during the first eight months of 2010 totaled 144, up from 104 in 2009 and 116 in 2008. While this increase is not sizeable, it reflects a steadier demand for new housing in Estero, especially less expensive single family homes. 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 County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

The following table shows how the first eight 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	1,324	\$185,979,596	\$140,468	44%
2001	1,620	247,128,734	152,549	45
2002	995	170,674,374	171,532	58
2003	1,130	173,165,820	153,244	41
2004	1,155	252,025,813	218,204	64
2005	1,924	402,498,096	209,199	52
2006	1,086	270,683,985	249,249	30
2007	405	112,048,147	276,662	36

2008	116	39,664,561	341,936	84
2009	104	36,972,442	355,504	77
2010	144	29,055,466	205,326	78

The 2010 total housing units are still far below all prior years except for 2008 and 2009. They equal only 15 % of the quantity permitted during 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001.

It should also be noted that the average building value this year has fallen greatly from all recent years, and is back to the average experienced during 2003 and 2004.

Permitted Commercial Building Values Continue Decline

The first eight months of Estero building permits of all types continued at a very slow pace. The value of [commercial buildings](#) permitted in Estero during these eight months totaled \$6.0 million.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$73,093,826	\$77,250,835
2001	26,322,473	44,116,526
2002	16,986,322	23,135,139
2003	14,032,515	23,234,725
2004	16,385,992	60,859,820
2005	51,712,399	111,037,977
2006	163,043,204	184,709,240
2007	144,142,654	157,614,045
2008	36,229,679	39,261,677
2009	7,924,236	9,752,556
2010	6,021,412	?

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 2009 level.

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

- \$3,674,000 in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#);
- \$1,200,000 for improvements to the Lee County Corkscrew Road Wellfield
- \$1,686,000 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
- \$398,000 for [Meadows of Estero](#)
- \$400,000 [Wildcat Run Country Club](#)
- \$202,000 The [Brooks Town Center](#)
- \$128,000 [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.