

Estero Development Report

Volume 7, Number 10

Edited by ECCL--the Estero Council of Community Leaders

**For More Information about Estero
...see www.esterofl.org**

This Report is available on the Estero Fire Rescue website at www.esterofire.org
and the Estero Community website at www.esterofl.org

February Opportunities for Citizen Participation In Protecting Estero's Quality of Life

Date	Time	Event	Location
Monday, February 4 th	1:30 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners' Management and Planning meeting concerning the I-75 Culverts. Available on TV but without public input.	County Board Chambers, 2 nd floor, Old Lee County Courthouse, 2120 Main Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Tuesday, February 5 th	9:30 a. m.	Board of County Commissioners' discussion and action upon the I-75 Culverts. Public comment is solicited for this meeting	County Board Chambers, 2 nd floor, Old Lee County Courthouse, 2120 Main Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Monday, February 11 th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel meeting See the full agenda at: http://esterofl.org/ecpp/ecpp_meetings.htm	Estero Community Park, located on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Tuesday, February 12 th	5 p.m.	Monthly Meeting of the Estero Fire Rescue District including consideration of a Request For Proposal (RFP) for a consolidation study of the Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park Fire Districts. For further information see http://esterofire.org/	Estero Community Park, located on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Wednesday, February 13 th	1 p.m.	Southwest Florida Expressway Authority Meeting on Ten-laning I-75 in our area. For further information see http://swfea.net/Express_Toll_Lanes/downloads.html	Bonita Springs City Hall on the south side of Bonita Beach Road just east of US 41.
Wednesday, February 13 th	1:30 p.m.	DR/GR Steering Committee Tour of the DR/GR. This group is monitoring the DR/GR policy and planning process. For further information see http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/ComprehensivePlanning/SELeeCounty.htm	Bus departs from the Lee County Community Development Building, 1500 Monroe St. in downtown Ft. Myers
Wednesday, February 13 th	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee review of the following projects: See the full agenda at http://esterofl.org/edrc/agenda.asp .	Estero Community Park, located on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Friday, February 15 th	12 Noon	Estero Council of Community Leaders Monthly Meeting . . .Open to the Public...for the full agenda see http://esterofl.org/eccl/minutes/	Estero Community Park, located on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Wednesday, February 20 th	1:30 p.m.	DR/GR Steering Committee Meeting. This group is monitoring the DR/GR policy and planning process. For further information see http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/ComprehensivePlanning/SELeeCounty.htm	Lee County Community Development Building, 1500 Monroe St., Conference Room 1B, in downtown FT. Myers
Friday, February 22 nd	9 a.m.	Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). For further information see http://www.mpo-swfl.org/agendas.shtml	1926 Victoria Street in downtown Ft. Myers

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Estero Community Website

During 2007 an estimated 74,200 persons visited this site to learn about Estero. During the same period last year only about 48,400 visited the site, thus our website traffic increased by nearly 53% above 2006. Our peak month so far was October 2007 when over 7,700 persons visited the site.

The community groups sponsoring the site are:

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

www.esterofl.org

Does Estero Really Need Five Additional Culverts Under I-75?

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) staff says "Yes".
The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) says "No"
Lee County will decide on February 5th
The Conservancy and the Brooks Concerned Citizens say "Not unless a new study shows they are needed"

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has told the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) that it will not approve its permit application to

widen I-75 to 6 lanes unless they add 5 60" culverts under I-75 just east of the Brooks as part of the I-75 widening project now underway.

FDOT did not want to install these culverts and in fact said they were not needed and that they could be detrimental to the adjacent wetlands.

SFWMD insists that the culverts be installed immediately with the current 6 laning widening, with an understanding that they would be blocked until certain conditions are met, even though the culverts will be installed using the same horizontal drilling methodology whenever they are installed.

For nearly two months The Conservancy, The Brooks Concerned Citizens and many other entities in The Brooks have been meeting with the staff and some of the Board members of SFWMD, FDOT and Lee County in order to persuade the District to use the County's DR/GR water studies and land use planning that are now beginning as part of a needs assessment for the culverts.

These groups made a presentation to the ECCL on January 18th. The ECCL membership voted unanimously to support the efforts of The Conservancy and the Brooks groups to require that the District work with the County so that the DR/GR water and land use studies are considered in determining the need for some or all of the culverts.

The District's staff report is expected to become available tomorrow, February 1st. The Board of County Commissioners will discuss the matter at their Management and Planning meeting on Monday, February 4th and will take a position on the matter at their regular Board meeting on the following day. The SFWMD Board is expected to vote on the matter at their meeting in Ft. Lauderdale on Wednesday, February 13th.

The following Action Alert suggests how you can help persuade the BOCC to support studying the need for the culverts prior to spending an estimated \$2 million on them prior to a showing that they are needed:

**We need you to attend an important County Commissioners meeting on
Tuesday, February 5th at 9:30 a.m.
And
to send two e-mails (details below)**

Dear ECCL Members and Estero Residents:

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is trying to force the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to install 5 new, large culverts under I-75 as part of the I-75 widening project now underway.

FDOT did not want to install these culverts and in fact said they were not needed and that they could be detrimental to the adjacent wetlands.

At its January 18th meeting the ECCL members voted unanimously for the following position:

The culverts should not be installed until a new comprehensive study is completed that shows that these additional culverts will not

- Endanger the DR/GR wetlands east of I-75 in Estero
- Adversely affect the nearby Lee County Well fields that supply most of our drinking water
- Unfavorably affect the quality of the water passing through Halfway Creek and the Estero River on the way to Estero Bay
- Endanger the life or property of the residents to the West of these culverts...all the communities along Halfway Creek and the Estero River.
We cannot support anything that will increase the possibility of flooded our communities.

We are asking all residents to send 2 e-mails:

- one e-mail to our County Commissioners, and
- the second to the Board members of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and tell them we do not want any culverts installed until it is proven that they are needed and they can be installed without adversely affecting us.

With the help of the Brooks Concerned Citizens we have made sending these emails very easy and fast...

Please go to their web site at WWW.BROOKSCONCERNEDCITIZENS.COM and after signing in click on "E-MAILS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS" (at the bottom of the left hand navigation bar) make sure to send the two e-mails. Anyone can get on to the web site by just entering their name and address (which will not be given out to anybody). The e-mail address of the commissioners and SFWMD are already entered. You can learn more about the issue by clicking on the "Learn More" button on this page and watch the BOCC Management and Planning session on Lee County TV at 1 p.m. on Monday, February 4th...it is the first item on the agenda.

Most importantly we are asking all residents of the communities along Halfway Creek and the Estero River to attend a meeting of the County Commissioner on Tuesday, February 5 at 9:30 AM. (You should be out by 11 AM) The commissioners will be discussing this issue and your attendance will greatly help in supporting our position. We are asking anyone who can wear a **RED SHIRT** to do so.

The meeting will be held on the second floor of the Old Lee County Courthouse, at 2120 Main Street, in downtown Ft. Myers. To reach the Courthouse travel north on US 41 and

make a right turn on Victoria Street (the last traffic signal prior to the Bridge over the Caloosahatchee); travel 3 blocks to Monroe Street; turn left and look for the parking lot on the left. The Courthouse is two blocks north of the northern lot entrance at MLK Boulevard.

We need your help on this important issue. Please send the e-mails (one for each person in your family) and PLEASE try and make the meeting on February 5.

Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) Plans for 2008

The ECIF has raised nearly \$20,000 for landscaping the northwest corner of River Ranch Road and Williams Road so that the ¾ mile chain link fence that surrounds Estero High School can be made to look much more attractive for all Estero residents and the thousands of visitors who travel by there daily on their way to Coconut Point.

This spring, Dan Dronkers and Jim Ramsburg, the prime movers behind ECIF, have planned two innovative fund raising programs to expand this financial base and get the first phase of the landscaping project underway.

The first program is an "Estero...Village with a Vision" automobile license plate holder sales campaign. License plate holders with the "Estero...Village with a Vision" message are now available for \$6 each or two for \$10. You can order your Holders by calling Dan at 239-949-0380 or you can promote the sale of the Holders in your community by posting the flyer that can be obtained from our website at <http://esterofl.org/eccl/ecif/plate-flyer.pdf> . Please call Dan for your Holders and take the leadership on this program in your community.

The second fund-raising project of the ECIF for the 2008 "Season" is the second annual "Spirit of the Gulf" Concert entitled "Sing into Spring" to be held once again in the auditorium of Estero High School at 7 p.m. on March 14th. "Spirit of the Gulf" is the Florida Champion Sweet Adelines Chorus. Once again they will be previewing the program that they will be presenting at the 2008 International Championships.

Tickets for this event will be \$20 with a sizeable share of the proceeds going to the ECIF. For more information on the Concert see the following website <http://esterofl.org/eccl/ecif/ecif%20poster%202008%20copy.jpg> .

Estero Historical Society High Tea

On Monday, March 3rd the Estero Historical Society will once again host "High Tea" for all of their members and supporters. This year "High Tea" will be at the Embassy Suites on Corkscrew Road near the I-75 interchange. Come and win a \$500 wardrobe from Dillard's at Coconut Point. For further information see the announcement at <http://www.esterofl.org/new/tea.pdf> .

Consolidation of Estero, Bonita Springs and San Carlos Park Fire Districts

To the surprise of many Estero residents staff members of the three Fire Districts produced a "White Paper" citing numerous advantages, benefits and economies that would result from consolidation of the Estero, Bonita Springs and San Carlos Park Fire Districts. The full "White Paper" can be reviewed at <http://www.esterofl.org/eccl/agendas/feb2008/WhitePaper011508%20.pdf> . This document was made available to the press and public prior to a joint meeting of the three Fire District Boards.

On January 15th the Boards of the Estero, Bonita Springs and San Carlos Park Fire Districts met together to discuss and act upon the "White Paper". After considerable debate and some public input the Board members approved the following motion put forward by Commissioner Ed Fitzgerald of the Bonita Springs Fire District:

"I make a motion that our three fire district boards prepare a RFP (Request For Proposal) to engage management consultants, with successful histories of merger/consolidations of small to medium sized fire departments in the United States, to Conduct a Cooperative Services Feasibility Study for the Bonita Springs, Estero, and San Carlos Fire Control and Rescue Districts of Florida, for the stated purpose of consolidation or merger of our three districts.

I would propose that the above recommended RFP be drafted to follow the recent work completed by the merger/consolidation committee formed by Bonita Springs and North Naples Fire Departments."

It was agreed that each of the Fire District Boards must approve an RFP and the necessary funding to implement it.

The draft RFP may be viewed at the following website <http://www.esterofl.org/eccl/agendas/feb2008/MergerRFP1-17-07.pdf> .

On January 18th the Estero Council of Community Leaders unanimously approved a motion to endorse the consolidation study initiative approved at the Joint Board meeting and to encourage each of the Fire District Boards to approve an RFP at their next meeting and provide the funding necessary to complete it.

The following section summarizes the advantages, benefits and efficiencies expected to be obtained by consolidation of the Estero, Bonita Springs and San Carlos Park Fire Districts. It may also be found on the ECCL website at <http://www.esterofl.org/eccl/agendas/feb2008/PotentialBenefitsEfficiencies1-21-08.pdf> .

Potential Advantages, Benefits and Efficiencies Identified by the Merger and Consolidation White Paper Prepared by the Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park Fire Districts

- Implement closest unit response, basically eliminating the territorial boundaries and allowing the closest available unit to respond to any specific emergency,
- Districts could realize cost reductions through volume purchasing,

- Maintenance and repair could be accomplished through one central repair facility for vehicles and apparatus,
- Estero and San Carlos Park are exploring additional stations further east in their respective current districts when one station may serve both their needs,
- Fire Prevention and Life Safety could implement Pre-Fire planning programs for operations across all districts,
- All Public Education Divisions could be moved within the Fire Prevention Division,
- Adoption of unified standard operating guidelines and procedures for operational functions,
- Incorporation of standard operating guidelines and procedures for administrative functions,
- The administrative process could begin functional consolidation of additional shared information and services dealing with information technology, human resources, finance, in addition to prevention, life safety, public education and public information sharing,
- Consolidation of the districts can result in consistency and decreasing duplication of services such as: customer service, fire protection, employee hiring, employee orientation, employee testing and advancement, training and purchasing,
- Use of only one accounting program for payroll, expenses, etc,
- Preparation of a single budget would result in a single audit,
- Purchases may be tracked more efficiently through the person or persons doing the job they are assigned and not having to be responsible for other jobs,
- Tracking of all purchases through one delivery center would result in central receiving, inventory, and distribution control.
- Consolidation of administrative and operations management personnel into fewer centralized facilities within the merged districts will likely reduce administrative costs,
- Merger can increase the number of resources deployed for initial response,
- Increase the number of responders for all emergency tasks from the initial call, thus reducing the burden on the initial commander to call for more units and reduce radio traffic as well,
- Consistent medical training and equipment would decrease the need for three different trainers to duplicate lesson plans, outlines and classes,
- Easier sharing of 'best practices' guidelines for all planning and operations activities,
- The training staff would be able to concentrate solely on education and training,
- Mutual training facilities will eliminate the need for Estero to build one as Bonita Springs and San Carlos Park have existing training facilities,

- One well-equipped training center with a qualified teaching staff can provide better, more consistent training than two or more training centers scattered around the same area,
- Consolidation of training divisions brings together the best staff to provide specialized training. Organized and professional trainers can provide a much more efficient program and better service to the overall community,
- The combined districts will be able to better facilitate coverage during emergency and non-emergency events such as station back-fill, addressing large gatherings such as concerts, training with the medical director in-services and scheduled events through public education,
- The districts will be able to reduce the number of reserve apparatus to maintain ISO ratings and possibly decrease the ISO rating to benefit residents as a whole,
- A merger would also provide the possibility to increase all response apparatus to advanced life support capabilities, could potentially provide a fully staffed and equipped hazardous materials team, trench rescue team, and aerial apparatus,
- Consolidation efforts can also enhance the functionality of specific types of apparatus,
- The Consolidated districts may have the ability to comply with National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710 and 1500 that references staffing applications for emergency response,
- A larger department would need fewer pieces of reserve apparatus for an equal number of front line units, this would result in lower apparatus replacement requirements,
- Consolidation reduces the expense of specialized apparatus like aerial trucks and hazardous materials vehicles,
- A larger department allows standardization of vehicle make and design, thus allowing bulk purchase of parts in larger quantities for generally more efficient operation. Standardized equipment would allow for easier and bulk purchasing,
- Standardized equipment would also result in the ease of training,
- A consolidated district could realize the possibility of fewer fire stations because of larger scale planning,
- Other support services, such as general supplies, offices and facilities maintenance could be purchased on a larger scale thus saving by bulk purchasing,
- Consolidation would permit a twelve month inspection cycle for all existing occupancies and standardized fire code enforcement and interpretation,
- Consolidation of plan review efficiency would ensure that reviews are done within a more effective time frame using standardized inspection processes, including fire code interpretation and procedures,
- Consolidation would result in one database and blue print archiving program and one computer database reporting system for fire prevention use, and
- Standardized inspections for new construction or existing occupancies would result from consolidation.

Increasing Estero's Electoral Participation

If Estero is to maintain the support of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) at the level it has historically received, the community must register and vote intensively in the August 26th Republican Primary election and later in the November 4th General Election.

Persons interested in voting in these Florida elections, especially "Snowbirds", need to register to vote between now and July 28th. Over the next couple of weeks the Supervisor of Elections will identify the "inactive voters" that voted in the January 29th election and add them to the registration lists. We will make those lists available to all our community leaders so you can identify the possible new registrants in your communities and inform them how to become registered Florida voters.

Estero's present registration totals are almost 1,500 voters lower than two years ago. Thus much registration work needs to be done in order for Estero to vote in the County Commission races as actively as we have in the past.

The following section describes how Estero's unregistered voters can register to vote in Florida later this year.

How to Register to Vote in Florida

Any person at least 18 years of age, who is a citizen of the United States and a permanent resident of Florida and of the county where he wishes to register, is eligible to register with the Supervisor of Elections. Once registered, if you vote at least once every four years, your registration is active and permanent.

The Easiest Way to Register

A voter registration application may be obtained at the following website...
<http://election.dos.state.fl.us/RegToVote/webappform.pdf> . Just print a copy of the form, complete it and mail it to:

Lee County Supervisor of Elections
P.O Box 2545
Fort Myers, Florida 33902

Other Ways to Register

Forms may be obtained and completed at the Lee County Supervisor of Elections satellite office at 24951 Old US 41 Suite 10, Bonita Springs. This office is open from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. It is located on the east side of Old 41 about two blocks south of the US 41/Old 41 intersection...just north of the railroad tracks.

Registration forms can also be obtained at public libraries, Chamber of Commerce, Dept of Motor Vehicles, AAA Motor Club sites throughout the county.

Information on registration forms may be obtained by calling (239) 533-8683.

How to Request Lee County Absentee Ballots For the Primary Election, August 26th and General Election, November 4th

To request an absentee ballot, or for answers to questions about absentee ballots that are not covered below, please contact the Lee County Supervisor of Elections Absentee Department at 239-339-6315 or contact their Main Office by phone at 239-339-6300, or by fax at 239-339-6322.

To obtain an absentee ballot application form that you can mail to the Supervisor of Elections, go to the following webpage:

<http://www.leeelections.com/absballot.htm>

and click on "Click here to go to the Absentee Ballot Request Form page".

Applications are accepted until 3 days prior to the election.

Absentee Ballot Rules and Procedures

Any registered voter in Lee County may request absentee ballots. Requests for absentee ballots may be requested for the primary election, the general election, both of them and for all elections within a calendar year.

Only the voter or a designated member of his or her immediate family or legal guardian can request an absentee ballot for the voter. Immediate family means the voter's spouse, or the parent, child, grandparent, or sibling of the voter or of the voter's spouse or legal guardian.

A request from the voter must include the following information:

- *Name
- *Date of Birth
- *Driver's License Number
- *Last 4 digits of Social Security Number (optional)
- *Address and phone number where the ballot is to be sent (the ballot may not be forwarded)
- *Election(s) Requested
- *Signature (written request only)

In addition, if the voter has designated an immediate family member or legal guardian to request an absentee ballot, the designee must provide the following information:

- *Name
- *Address
- *Driver's License number
- *Relationship to voter
- *Signature (written request only)

Returning an Absentee Ballot

Absentee ballots must be returned to the Supervisor of Elections' office by the voter, either in person or by mail no later than 7 p.m. on Election Day.

A VOTED BALLOT CANNOT BE ACCEPTED AT A POLLING PLACE

Roadway Progress Report

- Construction of Imperial Street in Bonita from East Terry to Bonita Beach Road began July 17, 2006 and was opened for traffic on Thursday, January 24th.
- Construction of Three Oaks Parkway (also called Imperial by the City of Bonita Springs) south of The Brooks to East Terry Street started May 8, 2006 and was opened for traffic on Thursday, January 24th. The completion of these two segments provides a third four-lane north-south corridor from Corkscrew Road south to Radio Road in Naples.
- The Three Oaks widening project between Corkscrew Road and Alico Road began December 4, 2006. The project will widen Three Oaks Parkway to four lanes and should be completed by the late summer/early fall of 2008. According to Lee County DOT "numerous developments have popped up that we have coordinated with adding time to this contract but Posen Construction is making steady progress".
- The Estero Parkway Flyover between Three Oaks Parkway and Ben Hill Griffin began construction after approval by the BOCC on August 7, 2007. The contract calls for project completion in 540 days, which would open the road for use in February 2009. According to Lee FDOT "the Estero bridge is a coordination issue at this point with the I-75 widening project. We plan to set the bridge beams over the interstate in October, so all efforts are to make that schedule happen."
- DOT/Traffic installed a traffic signal at the intersection of Three Oaks Parkway & Coconut Road. The signal began full operation on January 24th along with the Imperial Street extensions mentioned above.
- Lee County DOT Operations recently completed the installation of irrigation and landscaping in the median of Corkscrew Road around the I-75 Interchange.

DR/GR - Density Reduction Groundwater Resource Area

Lee County, while growing rapidly, in 1989 set aside about 150 square miles (over 90,000 acres) in the southeastern area of the county for low density and groundwater resource protection. Half of Estero, its eastern end, is located within the DR/GR. For a map of the DR/GR area see <http://esterofl.org/EsteroLife/environment.htm#DRGR> .

The Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) in 2005 committed itself to seeking County approval of a research program that would provide the County with the information that it needs to properly plan the area and protect the natural resources within it.

Development pressures on the DR/GR have grown rapidly during the last decade and they continue to mount. Some pending threats to the DRGR are:

- An attempt to construct an interchange at Coconut Road and I-75 in order to open up the land to the east for development,
- A plan to build a four-mile canal along the east side of I-75 in order to drain all or a major part of 4,000 acres of mostly high quality wetlands,
- Five, and maybe more, pending applications for new dirt and aggregate mines along Corkscrew Road east of I-75,
- SFWMD's effort to force FDOT to add 5 sixty inch culverts under I-75 as a part of the current six laning project, and
- A County comprehensive plan change application that would authorize a 2,800 acre mixed use development south of the intersection of Daniels Road and County Road 82, the northern boundary of the DRGR.

The following sections detail some of the recent activities associated with these threats and actions.

Implementing the DR/GR Action Plan

During November the Lee County Commissioners appointed all 15 members of the DR/GR Ad-hoc Advisory Committee. Each Commissioner appointed three members, one each from the following three categories:

- Mining, industry, FDOT, large landowners in the Southeast DR/GR,
- Residents of the Southeast DR/GR and Estero area, and
- Other countywide interests including environmental, water management district, general citizens.

Estero residents appointed to the Advisory Committee are Linda Tanner, a resident of The Brooks with environmental engineering and environmental scientist training and experience, Kevin Hill, who is active with the Corkscrew Road Rural Community and Don Eslick, Chairman of the ECCL. The Advisory Committee will work with County staff and their consultants to prepare recommendations to the BOCC that satisfy the DR/GR Action Plan approved by the Board on September 11, 2007. A copy of the approved Action Plan may be viewed at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Downloads/Information/SELeeActionPlan2007911.pdf> .

On December 12th the DR/GR Advisory Committee met for the first time. The Committee selected three Chairpersons to head the Committee:

- Dennis Gilkey of the Gilkey Organization and a representative of some of the large DR/GR land-owners,
- Brenda Brooks, Executive Director of the CREW Land and Water Trust, and
- Cullum Hasty, active in Bonita Springs planning, environmental and river preservation matters, among other activities.

On January 9th the DR/GR Committee heard a presentation on mining by Ron Inge of Land Solutions, Inc. of Fort Myers who has more than 20 years experience working with mining operations. The presentation discussed the basics of mining, including how lime

rock is excavated and processed, how lakes are excavated and used, and how Lee County regulates the process.

On January 23rd the DR/GR Committee heard a presentation by Scott McCaleb, a member of the Committee and also the state's Strategic Aggregate Review Task Force. Mr. McCaleb, an employee of Florida Rock Industries, discussed the draft report of the Aggregate Review Task Force, whose report must be submitted to the Governor and the Florida legislature on February 1st. A copy of the Task Force's draft recommendation may be seen at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/statematerialsoffice/administration/resources/library/issues-trends/aggtaskforce/meetingthree/outline.pdf> .

Following Mr. McCaleb, the Committee heard presentations from Kevin Erwin, a Consulting Ecologist from Ft. Myers, who has an international clientele. Mr. Erwin talked about the great potential rewards from restoration and conservation of farmland. Finally the Committee heard a presentation by James Beever of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council who discussed the implications that many Federal, Regional, State and Local water studies and plans have for the DR/GR and the rivers, streams and Estero Bay that are downstream of the DR/GR.

Meanwhile the BOCC approved an increase in the amount allocated to DR/GR consulting efforts from \$750,000 to \$1,400,000 with most of the increase being devoted to water supply and quality research.

For more information on the DR/GR Advisory Committee see the following website: http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/CommunityPlans/SELC_DRGR/subcommittee.htm .

FDOT Strategic Aggregate Study and Lee County's Authority over Mining

In 2006-2007, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) conducted research into the current and future availability of limestone aggregate materials used for road construction. The study was presented to the Florida Legislature and Governor Charlie Crist during the 2007 Legislative Session. The report recommended the creation of a Task Force to evaluate mining and transportation issues that may affect the supply of aggregates within the State of Florida and impacts on future generations. The economic section of the report documents the strategic nature of aggregate materials to the state.

The Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate each appointed one person to the Task Force for a total of three individuals from each of the following categories:

- mining industry,
- construction industry,
- transportation industry,
- elected officials from rural, mid-size, and large counties with limestone or sand resources, and
- environmental advocacy groups.

Separately, the Florida League of Cities could appoint one member. When finalized, the 19-member Task Force also includes the Secretaries or designees of the Florida Departments of Transportation, Community Affairs and Environmental Protection.

On December 18th, 19th and 20th the Strategic Aggregate Review Task Force held its first of four statewide meetings in Tampa. On the 19th the Lee County Community Development Department and a representative of the Corkscrew Road Rural Community were asked to testify to the Task Force. Mary Gibbs, Lee County Director of Community Development told the Task Force about the County's DR/GR planning effort and the moratoria that the BOCC had just adopted. Kevin Hill of the Corkscrew Road Rural Community urged the Task Force to continue local government authority to regulate and permit mining activities within their jurisdiction and to focus on helping counties with high quality aggregate to develop aggregate supply plans for their jurisdiction while taking into account the impact mining has upon the area's water supply, environment and habitat, transportation facilities and upon the neighboring communities. During the public input session Don Eslick of the ECCL reiterated these points while noting that the FDOT Aggregate Study found that Lee County limestone is not as hard as that desired by FDOT for road building.

The Task Force's second meeting was in Miami on January 8th and 9th. Neal Noethlich attended both days and testified on behalf of the Estero community.

The Task Force met again on January 15-16 and January 29-31, 2008. By the 30th of January a Draft Final Report and Recommendations was considered by the Task Force. This report is as follows:

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/statematerialsoffice/administration/resources/library/issues-trends/aggtaskforce/meetingfour/draftrecommendations.pdf> .

The Final Report of the Task Force is scheduled to be transmitted to the Governor and the Legislature on February 1st.

Commercial Construction Now Underway in Estero

As the following table indicates commercial construction in Estero continues unabated in spite of the residential construction slowdown. At present there are at least 39 commercial projects under construction or just completed in Estero.

They are the following types of projects:

- Eleven (11) are office buildings,
- Nine (9) are freestanding retail buildings,
- Nine (9) are shopping centers or multi-tenant retail buildings,
- Three (4) are freestanding banks,
- Four (4) are freestanding restaurants,
- One (1) is a superstore (Target), and
- One (1) is a hotel (Hyatt).

Twenty-one of the 39 projects plan to be open in time for most, if not all, of the 2007-08 "Season". They are identified in the table in bold print.

- Seven (7) are office buildings,
- Six (6) are freestanding retail buildings,
- Three (3) are shopping centers or multi-tenant retail buildings,
- One (1) is a freestanding bank,
- Three (3) are freestanding restaurants,

- One (1) is a superstore (Target), and

Eighteen of the 39 projects have been started more recently and will be completed later in 2008. They are composed of:

- Four (4) are office buildings,
- Three (3) are freestanding retail buildings,
- Six (6) are shopping centers or multi-tenant retail buildings,
- Two (3) are freestanding banks,
- One (1) is a freestanding restaurant, and
- One (1) is a hotel (Hyatt).

Development	Location	Project
<u>Coconut Point</u>		
Coconut Point Town Center	Northeast of US 41 -- Coconut Road intersection	Florida Gulf Bank...building, parking lot and landscaping complete...(1-08)
Coconut Point Town Center	Northeast of US 41 -- Coconut Road intersection	CJ Banks store interior outfitting complete (12-07)
Coconut Point Town Center	Northeast of US 41 -- Coconut Road intersection	Sites are being prepared for the following three businesses along U.S. 41: Jared Jewelers; a Hyatt Hotel and a Wachovia Bank
Coconut Point Market Area	Northeast of US 41 -- Coconut Road intersection	CNL Bank...site prep complete; walls erected
Coconut Point Lakefront	Northeast of US 41 -- Coconut Road intersection	Pagelli's Cucina and Hemmingway's Restaurants open (1-08)
Coconut Point Market Area	Northeast of US 41 -- Coconut Road intersection	Super-Target and TGI Friday's Restaurant nearly complete
Coconut Point South Village	Southeast of the Intersection of Coconut Road and US 41	The Shoppes of Coconut Point building, parking lot and landscaping complete; Tijuana Flats restaurant and Alltel preparing to open.
<u>Corkscrew Palms</u>		
Corkscrew Palms	South side of Corkscrew east of the Park entrance	Two multi-story office buildings...second floor structures underway
<u>Galleria</u>		
Galleria and Design Parc	North side of Corkscrew east of Sandy Lane	Five Office Buildings including Empire Builders Headquarters complete and partially occupied
<u>Estero Interstate Commerce Park</u>		
Multi-tenant retail shops along the I-75 exit	Northwest corner of I-75 and Corkscrew	Site prepared without underground utilities
<u>Estero Town Commons</u>		
Corkscrew Road Outlot	Southeast corner of Three Oaks Parkway and Corkscrew	Restaurant building framed, parking lot underway; exterior decoration underway
<u>Miromar Developments</u>		
Phase VI Miromar Outlets	Northwest corner of Ben Hill Griffin and Corkscrew Road	Building structure and Parking Lots nearly complete

Paradise Shoppes		
Walgreens	Northwest corner of Williams and US 41	Completed and open for business (10-07)
Mobil On The Run	Northwest corner of Williams and US 41	Completed and open for business (12-07)
Multi-user retail building	Northwest corner of Williams and US 41	Completed and Mattress Giant and ABC Fine Wines and Spirits open for business (12-07); Jimmy John's restaurant being outfitted.
Bank of America	Northwest corner of Williams and US 41	Site preparation and underground utilities complete; walls going up
<u>Corkscrew Commerce Center</u>		
Estero Bay Chevrolet	Southwest corner of I-75 and Corkscrew	Completed and open for business (11-07)
Advance Insurance	Southwest corner of I-75 and Corkscrew	Site preparation, underground utilities and three-story structure complete.
Others		
Estero Fire Rescue Office Building	West side of Three Oaks Parkway south of Corkscrew	Building exterior construction complete; roof underway
<u>Coconut Point Ford Used Car Facility</u>	US 41 in front of Fountain Lakes	Building, parking lot and landscaping completed
Brooks Town Center	Northwest corner of Three Oaks and Coconut Road	Anchor store and smaller stores exterior structures complete; roof underway
Estero Ridge Shopping Center	Southeast corner of US 41 and Estero Parkway	Building, parking lots and landscaping nearly complete.
Broadway Grand Shoppes	Northeast corner of US 41 and Broadway	Four building structures nearly complete; one being painted
Estero United Methodist Church Thrift Shop	South side of Broadway at Highland	Building completed and open for business (10-07)
Estero Animal Hospital	South side of Corkscrew west of River Ranch Road	Building nearing completion...roofing underway
Park Circle	North side of Corkscrew west of River Ranch	Site clearing complete
Picaya Bay Medical Center (Gulfcoast Orthodontists)	North side of Corkscrew Road just west of Three Oaks	One large medical office building complete; second smaller building structure complete and roofed.
Tuscany Park	Northwest corner of Three Oaks and Estero Parkway	Site work including underground utilities and rear barrier wall complete
Coconut Crossing	Northwest corner of Coconut Road and US 41	Site preparation and underground utilities completed
Coconut Trace	West side of US 41 north of Coconut Road	Site preparation and underground utilities completed

Permitted Commercial Building Values Continue Slow Increase in December

December building permits of all types continued at a glacially slow pace. The value of [commercial buildings permitted](#) in Estero during December totaled \$2.1 million. Nonetheless during 2007 Estero's total commercial permits were valued at \$157.6 million. Estero's commercial permits peaked during 2006 with a total of \$184.7 million. (All figures are exclusive of the underlying land). Thus 2007 was Estero's second highest

commercial development year, far ahead of the third place year, 2005, with \$111 million.

The major projects that contributed to the annual total are:

\$44.6 million in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#);
\$24.2 million for the [WCI Headquarters](#) building on west Coconut Road
\$6.8 million for the [Argonaut Chevrolet Dealership](#) at I-75 and Corkscrew
\$3.2 million of the [Estero Ridge Shopping Center](#) at US 41 and Estero Parkway
\$2.9 million for the renovation of the [Villages of Country Creek](#) Clubhouse
\$1.8 million for the [Animal Hospital of Estero](#) on Corkscrew Road
\$3.8 million for Broadway Shoppes on US 41 near Broadway
\$2.4 million for [Corkscrew Palms](#) on the south side of Corkscrew
\$2.2 million for commercial buildings at [Coconut Trace](#) on US 41
\$4.8 million for the renovation of the [Country Creek Clubhouse](#)
\$2.9 million for Empire Builders office complex at the [Galleria](#) on Corkscrew
\$4 million for the [Estero Fire Rescue](#) Headquarters on Three Oaks Parkway
\$8.8 million for retail stores at [Estero Interstate Commerce Park](#)
\$7.5 million for [Miromar Outlets](#) expansion
\$4.1 million for the three story Advanced Insurance building at I-75 and Corkscrew
\$3.02 million for [Paradise Shoppes](#) projects on US 41
\$6.6 million for the Brooks Town Center (retail) at Coconut Road and Three Oaks Parkway
\$1.3 million for the Copperleaf Golf Club improvements
\$1.08 million for the [Park Circle](#) development on the north side of Corkscrew
\$840,000 for the [Estero Medical Center](#) on the north side of Corkscrew
\$670,000 at the [International Design Center](#)
\$850,000 for the Lee County Utilities facility on east Corkscrew Road
\$791,000 for [Estero Park Commons](#) projects

The permits issued in 2007 are widely distributed throughout Estero unlike 2006 when most of the commercial construction activity was at Coconut Point.

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

Estero's Housing Permits Continue Very Slow Growth

During December only 4 housing units with a value of \$1.4 million were permitted in Estero. Throughout the year 432 housing units with a value, exclusive of land, of \$123 million have been issued. This slowdown in construction of new homes should help reduce the inventory of unsold new homes constructed in Estero in 2005.

[Housing units permitted](#) during the year were by far the lowest in the 8 years that the County's system has tracked Estero's permits. This result reflects the declining trend that began in early 2006. The County permitting information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>.

The following table shows how 2007 compares with the prior seven years:

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	2,088	\$291,811,402	\$139,756	41%
2001	2,104	325,403,253	154,659	47
2002	1,500	278,888,919	185,926	51
2003	1,425	231,712,400	162,605	47
2004	1,646	365,109,979	221,816	60
2005	2,833	627,683,225	221,561	46
2006	1,310	343,633,334	262,316	39
2007	432	123,231,025	285,257	38

Not only are the 2007 total housing units below all prior years, they equal only 29% of the quantity during 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001 and the third lowest year.

In spite of the decline in the number of housing units permitted this year, the average building value, excluding the land beneath it, continues to increase, up 9% from the prior high set last year and more than double (up 104%) the average in 2000, in spite of a slight decline in the share of more expensive single family homes