

Estero Development Report

Volume 7, Number 12

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

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Monday, April 7 th	1 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners Management and Planning Discussion of Expressway Authority Support	Council Chambers, Second Floor, 2110 Main Street, Downtown Ft Myers
Tuesday, April 8 th	7:30 a.m.	Bonita Estero Market Watch. For tickets call 992-2943	Three Oaks Conference Center, across from the Library on Three Oaks just north of Corkscrew Road
Tuesday, April 8 th	5 p.m.	Monthly Meeting of the Estero Fire Rescue District. 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, April 9 th	1:30 p.m.	DR/GR Steering Committee Meeting. This group is monitoring the DR/GR policy and planning process. Open to Public. 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
Wednesday, April 9 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
Monday, April 14 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
Wednesday, April 16 th	6 p.m.	DR/GR Community Input Kick-off Presentation	Council Chambers, Second Floor, 2110 Main Street, Downtown Ft Myers
Thursday, April 17 th	9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	DR/GR Hands-on Design Session. <u>The public is invited to participate in small group sessions where you can share your vision for the DR/GR area. Estero residents are encouraged to participate since half of Estero is located in the DR/GR</u>	Harborside Event Center, 1375 Monroe Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Friday, April 18 th to Thursday, April 23 rd	9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	DR/GR Design Studio. <u>The public is invited to visit and watch the progress of the DR/GR Plan scenario development.</u>	Harborside Event Center, 1375 Monroe Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Friday, April 18 th	9 a.m.	Joint Collier and Lee County MPO Meeting. For detailed information see http://www.mpo-swfl.org/agendas.shtml about one week before the meeting.	Bonita Springs City Council Chambers, on the south side of Bonita Beach Road just east of US 41
Friday, April	12 pm.	Estero Council of Community Leaders Monthly Meeting	Estero Community Park, located

18 th		. . . Open to the Public...for the full agenda see http://esterofl.org/eccl/minutes/	on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Wednesday, April 23 rd	1:30 p.m.	DR/GR Steering Committee Meeting. Open to public. This group is monitoring the DR/GR policy and planning process. For further information: http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/ComprehensivePlanning/SELeeCounty.htm	Lee County Community Development Building, 1500 Monroe St., Conference Room 1B, in downtown FT. Myers
Wednesday, April 23 rd	4:00 p.m.	ARTS ESTERO monthly meeting is open to the public	Estero Community Park, located on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Thursday, April 24 th	6 p.m.	Lee County Charter Review Committee Public Hearing on their proposed recommendations for amending the Lee County Charter. If these recommendations are approved by the Commissioners the voters of Lee County will be able to vote on some basic changes in the way Lee County is governed at the November 4 th General Election	Estero Community Park, located on the south side of Corkscrew Road midway between Sandy Lane and River Ranch
Thursday, April 24 th	6 p.m.	DR/GR Planning Design Scenarios Wrap-up	Council Chambers, Second Floor, 2110 Main Street, Downtown Ft Myers

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Estero Community Website

During January and February about 16,550 persons visited this site to learn about Estero. During the same period in 2007 only about 12,700 visited the site, thus our website traffic increased by 30% year to year.

On the peak day this year 450 persons visited the site up from 295 in 2007.

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)

Public Participation in DR/GR Planning Sessions

**You Can Make a Difference in the Future of Estero
By Participating in the April 17th Workshop from 9 to 2
at the Harborside Event Center in Downtown Ft. Myers**

In September 2007, Lee County Commissioners adopted an Action Plan to study land use alternatives in the Southeast Lee DR/GR. As part of that plan, Dover, Kohl & Partners has been hired to gather input from property owners, local citizens and others, to use this input to develop land use scenarios for the Southeast Lee DR/GR, and to recommend Lee County's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code changes to the Board of County Commissioners.

The consultants will be in Lee County from April 16 to 24 to obtain the needed public input. Thus we urge you to participate in the following public meetings:

- Wednesday, April 16th, Kick-off Presentation, 6 p.m., Commission Chambers, 2120 Main St., Fort Myers. Come and learn the details about how you can influence the DR/GR Planning Process. Or you can watch this session on County's public service television channel.
- Thursday, April 17th, Hands-on Session for Gaining Public Input, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., Harborside Event Center, 1375 Monroe St., Fort Myers. **This five-hour workshop will allow you to interact with a representative of the Consultant and a small group of Lee County citizens who will participate in shaping the DR/GR development scenarios.**
- Tuesday, April 22nd, Open House, 5-7 p.m., Harborside Event Center. The open house is an opportunity for people to walk through the design studio and see the planners at work and chat with them, ask questions, look at the poster boards of ideas that came out of the April 17th session, etc.
- April 24, Work-in-Progress Presentation, 6 p.m., Commission Chambers
A report by the Consultants on the scenarios that were developed during the week and the path ahead to final approval of a land use plan by the Board of County Commissioners.

To learn more about the Southeast Lee DR/GR, go to <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/ComprehensivePlanning/SeLeeCounty.htm>.

To learn more about Dover, Kohl & Partners, go to <http://www.doverkohl.com/>

Participate in the following events to help create a better plan for Lee County's DR/GR

Kick-off Presentation
 6PM, Wednesday, April 16
 Commission Chambers, Old Courthouse
 2120 Main Street, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Hands-on Session
 Join members of the public and designers for a planning exercise designed to generate input and discussion
 9AM to 2PM, Thursday, April 17
 Harborside Event Center
 1375 Monroe Street, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Open House
 5PM to 7PM, Tuesday, April 22
 Harborside Event Center
 1375 Monroe Street, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Work-In-Progress Presentation
 6PM, Thursday, April 24
 Commission Chambers, Old Courthouse
 2120 Main Street, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

For more information contact:
 Joan D. LaGuardia, Lee County Dept. of Community Development
 (239) 533-8705 jlaguardia@leegov.com



Located in southeast Lee County, east of I-75, the 83,000 acres of the Density Reduction/ Groundwater Resource Area (DR/GR) host rural neighborhoods, limerock mines, and active farms.

This land also contains valuable ecological and hydrological features including panther habitat and public water supply wells.

With broad public input, a new plan could strike the proper balance for our future. Will you help?

Agripartner's Four Mile Ditch Voluntarily Put on Shelf

On March 26th Agripartners withdrew its South Florida Water Management District ((SFWMD) application for a four mile long, 50 foot wide and six foot deep ditch located on their 4,000 acres just east of The Brooks and I-75 that was approved by SFWMD in December 2006.

The Conservancy and Lee County both immediately filed legal challenges to the ditch's approval by the SFWMD. Construction of the ditch would drain hundreds, if not thousands, of acres of wetlands on the Agripartners property that is estimated to be about 90% wetland.

In addition the ditch would have had negative impacts on the surrounding environmentally sensitive lands, wildlife habitat and water supply from the wellfields located in the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area. It could have led to increased flooding along the Estero River and Halfway Creek. Finally, by impairing the wetlands the water flowing into Estero Bay would be more contaminated and have adverse effects on the health and functioning of this important estuary.

This is an important victory on one of our battles with Agripartners. We have battled Agripartners for several years over the Coconut I-75 interchange and more recently over the I-75 culverts.

This is a happy victory BUT it is probably a temporary one. They will try to turn the DR/GR planning process to their advantage and come back again with this or

another proposal that would allow them to gain maximum advantage from their 4,000 acres.

I-75 Culvert Study Slow to Get Underway

On February 14th a group of residents from The Brooks and other Estero communities took a bus to West Palm Beach to attend and testify at the Governing Board meeting of the South Florida Water Management District concerning the proposed new culverts under I-75.

The water district has agreed to undertake a comprehensive study, with Lee County as an equal partner, which will update the 1998 South Lee County Watershed Plan. This will allow all interested parties, including the City of Bonita Springs, to determine the best way to handle flood waters in our area, and where and how the waters should be directed to reduce flood dangers throughout South Lee County.

The only portion of the final compromise that could be a problem is a clause that requires the study to be completed within 15 months or the District has the right to install the 5 culverts and operate 3 of them.

In the intervening 46 days County and SFWMD staffs have had numerous discussions about the scope or work for the study, but have not yet reached agreement on the scope of the study. Once this is completed both Boards will hold public hearings on the study contact and will vote to amend or approve it.

The Estero Community groups and The Conservancy will continue to monitor the progress of the study so that it is completed within the 15 month time limit.

For further information on this issue see the article in the January edition at http://esterofl.org/eccl/EDR/estero_development_report_january_2008.htm#Does_Estero_Really_Need .

Managing Mining in the DR/GR

The Strategic Aggregate Review Task Force (SARTF) authorized by HB 985 filed their report with Governor Crist and the legislative leaders on February 1st as required by that legislation. On February 21st Harkley Thornton, Chairman of the Task Force, presented the recommendations of the Task Force to the House Committee on Infrastructure.

The Task Force, after conducting four public hearings and 70 hours of deliberation, reached consensus on a wide variety of important aggregate mining issues all at a cost of several hundred thousand dollars. You can review the thirteen (13) Consensus Recommendations at the following website... <http://esterofl.org/eccl/library/Summary%20of%20Consensus%20Recommendations%203-22-08.pdf> In addition to the Consensus Recommendations the Final Report includes many options for consideration regarding Non-Consensus items, many of which would primarily benefit the industry of the presenter.

In spite of Mr. Harkley's presentation to the House Infrastructure Committee the Committee has not developed the legislation necessary to implement the Task Force's Consensus Recommendations.

On the other hand, the Senate Transportation Committee narrowly approved SB 774 that would require a super-majority for County Boards to deny an aggregate mining permit and put unrealistic limits on the time and flexibility for local governments to consider and approve aggregate mining applications. This bill is now in the Senate Community Affairs Committee, the first of three more stops before reaching the floor for a vote.

The House Committee on Environmental Protection, without hearing from the Task Force, on March 19th passed PCB ENRC 8-13, a bill supported by the mining industry that ignores the work of the Task Force and focuses primarily upon removing local government authority over the water resource impacts of limerock mining. The full House Environment and Natural Resources Council has scheduled a hearing on a revised version of this bill for Wednesday, April 2nd

All of these bills are contrary to the recommendation of the Task Force that states: "Future procedures for the siting and permitting of construction aggregate materials mines should be based upon earlier and more inter-agency coordination" and fail to include the Consensus Recommendations of the Task Force. Instead they try to take away the authority of local governments to permit and regulate aggregate mining within their boundaries and assign it to state agencies that have never had the local knowledge or vision to implement such authority effectively.

ECCL and 16 other organizations have communicated our concern about the local government preemption provisions of all these bills to the sponsors, the committees, the legislative leaders and the Governor. In addition ECCL in cooperation with The Brooks Concerned Citizens have initiated two broad-based email campaigns to the Governor and the House Environment and Natural Resource Council using the following website <http://www.brooksconcernedcitizens.com/default.aspx?p=MembersDefault> . If you have not already done so please register on the site so that the email you send will be personally addressed from you to each of the recipients and use the site to send an email to Governor Crist and to the House Environment and Natural Resource Council.

Thus far over 1,100 Florida households have registered to send email through this site. As of March 31st about 300 emails had been sent to Governor Crist urging him to promote the Consensus Recommendations of the Strategic Aggregate Review Task Force.

Outstanding Task Force Member Letter to the Legislature

The following is a letter from Richard Grosso, a member of the SARTF, to the members of the House Environment and Natural Resource Council that makes the case as well as anyone could:

Everglades
Law Center, Inc.
Defending Florida's Ecosystems

and Communities

March 24, 2008
The Honorable Stan Mayfield
Florida House of Representatives
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300.

Re: House Bill PCB ENRC 08-13 (Resource Extraction)

Dear Rep. Mayfield;

As a member of the Strategic Aggregate Review Task Force, I write to strongly urge your Committee not support this bill, which would preempt the ability of local governments to protect their citizens from the impacts of mining activities. This would be completely contrary to the Consensus Recommendations adopted by the Task Force and presented to the Legislature just last month, and would undermine the time and effort put in by myself and the other members of the Task Force in developing thoughtful, consensus recommendations based on the facts and circumstances presented during our intensive deliberations. I would hope that anyone with respect for the integrity of the public policy-making process would view it as very wrong for the Legislature to disregard the Task Force's consensus recommendations in favor of an option that the Task Force chose not to recommend.

Local preemption of aggregate mining was the most controversial issue raised during last year's Legislation session and during the Task Force's deliberations. The Task Force was convened to consider competing interests and to make recommendations for improvements in policy and public investment related to the supply of aggregate materials. It was charged with evaluating the availability and disposition of construction aggregate materials. The Task Force consisted of 19 persons, representing the mining industry, construction industry, transportation industry, elected officials, environmental advocacy groups, and designees of the Florida Departments of Transportation, Community Affairs and Environmental Protection.

After approximately 70 hours of meetings and presentations, we found that facts did not support any claim that there existed a crisis of unavailability of aggregate. Last year's ruling by a Federal Judge temporarily limiting mining in a portion of the Miami-Dade "Lakebelt" region has had little or no impact on the amount of rock extracted from the area, as production simply increased in areas not subject to the court's order. The slowdown in the construction industry has also reduced demand for aggregate. Concern about a crisis in the availability of aggregate assumed a long-term, complete, shutdown of mining in the Lakebelt, which is not likely. The FDOT staff and consultants and other speakers explained that there is no comparison of projected future demand to the already permitted and available supply of aggregate from which one could identify an actual projected

deficit of aggregate. In fact, one of the key Consensus Recommendations of the Task Force is to perform such an inventory. In short, the facts do not demonstrate that there is any need for the Legislature to intervene and disenfranchise local governments and citizens relative to one of the more intrusive and intensive land uses known to the state of Florida.

Next, the Task Force's findings make it clear that state law leaves major gaps in public protections related to mining, and that only local governments have the current legal authority to address issues such as community compatibility, safety, upland habitat protection, smaller wetlands, water supply, and other issues currently unregulated by the state. However, this bill would preclude local government from applying any ordinance, policy, rule, or regulation to address these issues if it would "prohibit or prevent" the "construction or operation" of a limestone mine "based on issues or subject matters regulated by ... [the state, under Chapter 378 or Chapter 373, Part IV.]" While this current draft of the Bill would not expressly pre-empt local authority over upland habitat and land use compatibility issues, it would preclude local governments from protecting wetlands that – due to their size – are not protected by state law and from enacting planning and regulatory standards that are based on an analysis of long-term cumulative and regional impacts and on mitigation measures that are superior to those performed under the states "one – size – fits – all" standards. It also could preempt local authority to deny mining approval that could pollute or reduce local water supplies.

Even the most limited reading of this bill would prohibit local governments from enforcing local protects for wetlands and related issues even though there is considerable concern on their part that state regulators do not possess the staff and budget resources to consistently analyze local and regional conditions, make decisions and apply conditions based upon them, or timely and adequately inspect permitted operations and enforce permit conditions. Given the looming state budget cuts, this would seem an ill-advised time to preclude local governments from supplementing the state's limited ability to protect our water resources.

In short, this law is unnecessary and harmful to Florida's communities and environment, and to the integrity of the public policy decision-making process. I would ask the Legislature not to ignore these facts or the work of the Task Force.

The Task Force's Consensus Recommendations included things like the preparation of an inventory of "mineable" aggregate resources and improved coordination among local and state agencies. These and other recommendations represent smart, sensible, useful responses to the facts and circumstances related to the full range of important issues raised by aggregate mining. They made sense to the Task Force members, the majority of whom represented the mining industry or industries dependant in large part on the mining industry, and all of whom showed great respect for the need to balance all competing

interests and issues. To disregard and disrespect all of the time, effort and consensus – building that produced the Task Force Report would be to undermine the integrity of the Task Force / Commission process that is so often and wisely employed by the Legislature to address controversial or difficult issues.

I thank you very much for considering my comments.

Sincerely,
/s/ Richard Grosso, Esq.
Executive Director & General Counsel
Everglades Law Center, Inc.

cc: Members of the House Environmental and Natural Resources Council
Members of the Strategic Aggregates Review Task Force
Representative Trudi Williams
Senator Burt Saunders
Ms. Stephanie C. Kopelousos, Secretary of Florida Department of Transportation

Transportation Progress Report

The Estero Council of Community Leaders Transportation Committee met with Dave Loveland, Lee County DOT's Director of Planning, on March 31st to discuss all of Estero's outstanding transportation projects and issues. The following italicized sections were prepared by Mr. Loveland for this meeting. The underlined sections were added as a result of the Committee's discussion of Loveland's report.

Road Projects...

State

- Six laning of I-75
Construction is well underway between Golden Gate Parkway and Colonial Boulevard, to be completed by the end of 2010. FDOT has tentatively programmed a continuation north from Colonial to SR 82 in FY 12/13.
- US 41 from Corkscrew to San Carlos Park
6-laning remains programmed for construction by FDOT in FY 10/11 (which starts July 1, 2010). The design phase has been on hold at about 60% level as FDOT tries to resolve the pond site location, and the permitting process has not yet started. Recent discussion has focused back on the Boomer site, which the County acquired through the Conservation 20/20 program and can't voluntarily sell – FDOT would have to condemn it. There is some interest in going beyond the standard FDOT retention pond design and creating something more aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly, but that raises questions about the site acquisition, since FDOT can only condemn what it needs for retention purposes. Once the pond site issue is resolved, FDOT can proceed through permitting and complete the design, and acquire the site, which FDOT has estimated would take about a year. Discussions have been recently renewed about the possibility of the County borrowing the \$33 million needed for the construction phase in order to advance it,

with area developers paying the interest costs on that loan. The timing is critical in terms of the County's financial standing at that point and ability to borrow \$33 million for this purpose, and the interest rates and amount needed from developers. FDOT has also recently indicated that the repayment to the County would have to be in the standard format of 10 quarterly payments (2 ½ years beginning July, 2010). The finalization of any advancement/ reimbursement agreement with FDOT and interest payment agreement(s) with a developer or developers would not happen until the project was closer to being production-ready. See also the section below regarding the traffic signal at Estero Parkway and US 41.

Southwest Florida Expressway Authority (SWFEA)

- Ten laning of I-75

The SWFEA is currently waiting for the results of an investment-grade traffic & revenue study for an initial 10-lane project from Immokalee Road to Daniels Parkway, being conducted by the Florida Turnpike Enterprise (under its particular financing rules) and to be done in August. The SWFEA has also discussed having its general engineering consultant look at a lesser alternative (i.e. a reversible 7th lane in the median) based on the premise that the current economic downturn might result in lower short-term growth projections and needs (which Lee DOT doubts). Such an option might not require tolling lanes 5 and 6. At its meeting of March 25th, the Collier BOCC decided it didn't want to contribute any more funds to the SWFEA's operation and didn't want the SWFEA to pursue any more studies or any projects within their boundaries. To date, Collier has provided a \$150,000 loan for the SWFEA's administrative activities, and Lee County has provided \$775,000, even though originally the contribution for both was supposed to be equal. The SWFEA's engineering and public outreach efforts have been paid for by loans from the State's Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund. Based on the Collier withdrawal of support for the SWFEA, the Lee County Commission is going to be given an opportunity to decide if it wants to continue to be the sole administrative support for the SWFEA, or if it wants to let it be de-activated and work directly with FDOT and the Turnpike Enterprise to define a feasible interstate expansion project. The Lee County Board will discuss this issue at their Management and Planning meeting at 1 p.m. on Monday, April 7th.

- Bonita Beach I-75 Interchange

The SWFEA doesn't have any activity going on at this interchange – if the 10-lane project moves forward, it will require reconstruction of all the interchanges (except Alico). Funding for the expansion of this interchange is not included in FDOT's 2035 SIS cost feasible plan. Bonita Springs has hired URS to define some interim improvements at the interchange, and has been trying to negotiate with developers to build the improvements, but nothing definitive has been established. The ECCL has been working with the Bonita Springs Chamber of Commerce and others to ensure that this project and the Corkscrew I-75 Interchange are included in any toll-financed alternatives being studied since traditional funding sources are not likely to provide the necessary funds prior to 2030.

- Corkscrew I-75 Interchange

The SWFEA doesn't have any activity going on at this interchange – if the 10-lane project moves forward, it will require reconstruction of all the interchanges (except Alico). FDOT has prepared 90% design plans for the ultimate improvement at this interchange (accounting for the future 10-laning), and has identified its right-of-way

needs based on those plans with the intent to purchase those lands as part of IROX project. Unfortunately, complications related to landscaping buffering requirements are increasing the right-of-way needs beyond what is affordable under the IROX project, so not all the needed lands for the ultimate improvement will be acquired at this time. Nothing is programmed for additional right-of-way acquisition or the construction phase in FDOT's 5-year work program, nor is it included in FDOT's 2035 SIS cost feasible plan. The ECPP and the EDRC has heard presentations about this issue and is working with FDOT to try to reach a compromise satisfactory to all parties.

County

- Three Oaks from Corkscrew Road to Alico Road
The 4-laning project is proceeding and on schedule to be completed by late Summer. The scope has had to be expanded to accommodate a series of new driveway requests for development that wasn't approved at the time the design plans were developed.
- Estero Parkway from Three Oaks and Ben Hill Griffin
Construction is underway, with the project scheduled to be completed in November, 2009.
- The Estero Parkway Extension to CR 951 and Corkscrew Road
The County has identified an alignment for this extension and has had some discussions with Miromar about possible right-of-way acquisition, but construction is prohibited until after 2011 under the terms of the Stock property purchase. No funds are currently programmed for design, right-of-way or construction in the County's CIP.
- Sandy Lane from Coconut Point to Old 41...also the City of Bonita Springs
Nothing new has happened with this project beyond the approved alignment study and the securing of the right-of-way on the County side of the City boundary through the Coconut Point DRI obligation. Any progress would require a prioritization by the Bonita Springs City Council and dedication of City funding for this project that is mostly within the City limits. The County has not committed any of its limited funding to this improvement in its five-year CIP. The Estero leadership group that meets with the City of Bonita Springs on a quarterly basis will discuss this issue at their next meeting (sometime after the mayoral run-off election) to see if some of the landowners along the alignment are interested in partnering with the City and County on the design of the road.
- Corkscrew Road from Ben Hill Griffin to the eastern boundary of Bella Terra
The BOCC discussed this CRSA project at the March 13th Management & Planning Committee meeting because of the September deadline for starting construction identified in the assessment resolution. They were given two options to consider: amending the resolution to extend the construction date to January, 2011; or rebidding the project to meet the September deadline. The Board asked DOT to come back with a draft bid package that would consider ways to cap the costs for their review at the April 7th M&P meeting.

- Truck Traffic Pattern and Volume Study...also Lee County Community Development Department

The consultant has just begun the data collection effort, so there is nothing yet to report.

- CR 951

The draft EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) has been submitted to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for review, and the County is now preparing responses to the FHWA comments. Voluntary right-of-way acquisition has proceeded where funding allows. There is no funding included in the CIP for the phases beyond the PD&E (Project Development and Environmental) Study, although Collier County has recently indicated some interest in trying to move forward with the section from Immokalee Road to Bonita Beach Road.

- The Alico Extension

The County has identified a number of alignment alternatives as part of the on-going study, and is currently working with major property owners in the area to narrow them down. There is no funding included in the CIP for the phases beyond the alignment study.

Traffic Signals...

State

- US 41 and Estero Parkway

A signal at this location is planned as part of FDOT's US 41 6-laning project, currently scheduled in FY 10/11 but which may be advanced by the County. The County has also had some discussions with FDOT about the possibility of separately advancing this signal work for later reimbursement, in conjunction with the County's on-going Estero Parkway Extension project. However, the County is not sure it will have the funds available for advancement, and there is an issue about adjusting FDOT's design to allow for dual southbound-to-eastbound left turns, which ideally would be done as part of the signalization project. The ECCL Committee agreed that this project should have a higher priority than the acceleration of the US 41 six-laning project because of all the delays in approving the US 41 pond site and the uncertainty about funding the advancement of the US 41 widening project.

- US 41 and Pelican Colony Boulevard

The developer is required under his DRI approval to install this signal when FDOT determines that it meets warrants. Prior to that determination, the developer could submit traffic signal plans for advance approval, and possibly install some of the supporting infrastructure. The ECCL Transportation Committee will work with the adjacent developers and the adjacent communities in order to accelerate this improvement.

- Coconut Point Fire Station Emergency Signal

The County doesn't have any information on this proposal. According to representatives of the Estero Fire Rescue District this project will be completed by late this year. The initial cost will be borne 50%/50% by the Fire District and Oakbrook Properties, the developer of Coconut Point, to be reimbursed later by the projects that benefit from the improvement.

County

- Three Oaks and Williams Road

Due to next year's revenue uncertainties, the County is not proceeding with an advancement agreement with The Brooks CDD. The County is anticipating having the funds available for this signal in FY 08/09, but cannot obligate uncertain future year funds at this time. It could be possible for an agreement to cover the added pole/mast arm costs to be executed with the CDD by September 30th to allow the design to move forward right at the start of the fiscal year. The Brooks CDD is committed to working with the County to accomplish this objective.

Intersection Improvements...

State & County

- US 41 and Williams Road

No word from Paradise Shoppes or the adjacent property owner concerning reaching a partnership to construct the proposed interim improvement. The County has no funds available. This is a very dangerous situation that needs to be addressed as soon as possible so that it does not get worse.

- US 41 and Coconut Road

The developer-funded improvements are proceeding. This project should be completed in about 6 months and will allow the developer of Coconut Crossings (on the northwest corner) to proceed with several projects.

- Corkscrew Road and Ben Hill Griffin

This is Estero's most dangerous traffic area. The Committee questions the appropriateness of County approval of additional phases of the Miromar Outlet Mall development without significant improvements in access to and from this development. Many alternatives were discussed but none would improve the situation satisfactorily without some on-site improvements.

- Coconut Road and Health Center Boulevard...County Only but relates to Coconut and US 41

The County is proposing changing the median opening to a "Directional Left-In" with a "No Left-Out". Complete closure is also a possibility, but would need to be reviewed by LCDOT and discussed with the adjacent land owners. Nothing will happen until the road transfer to Lee County is complete. The Brooks CD, the present owner of the road, would like the County law department to complete its review of the transfer agreement so that ownership of the segment can be completed and the problem addressed.

Roadway Landscaping

County

- Three Oaks from Corkscrew Road to Alico Road

Landscaping to follow completion of the roadway construction and acceptance from the contractor.

- Estero Parkway from Three Oaks to Ben Hill Griffin

Landscaping to follow completion of the roadway construction and acceptance from the contractor.

- Via Coconut Point from Corkscrew Road to Pelican Colony Road
Based on a draft of the project ranking process for FY 09/10 County funding, this project ranked 9th. The anticipated funding for FY 09/10 is \$1.5 million (subject to change!!!), which would fund the first 2 or 3 projects on the list, meaning it could be quite a while before this project is funded. The developer is interested in pursuing a grant application for this project.

State

- US 41 from Corkscrew Road to San Carlos Park
This is an FDOT project, and the County is working with the local FDOT office to get involved/coordinated. The County anticipates FDOT doing the core level of landscaping upon completion of its 6-lane project (currently funded in FY 10/11), with the County then doing the enhanced level consistent with other parts of US 41.

Estero’s Housing Permits Start To Improve in February

During February 28 housing units, all single family homes, with a value of \$5.3 million were permitted in Estero. Bella Terra and The Reserve of Estero initiated most of these permits with 19 units for Bella Terra and six (6) for The Reserve of Estero.

While small, this is the largest number of housing units permitted in Estero in 8 months, since June of 2007, when 90 units were permitted. In the intervening 7 months only 65 units were permitted in Estero.

Housing units permitted during 2007 were by far the lowest in the 9 years that the County’s system has tracked Estero’s permits. This result reflects the declining trend that began in early 2006, nearly two years ago. 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 the first two months of 2008 compare with the prior eight years:

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	329	\$42,541,090	\$129,304	32%
2001	289	48,480,616	167,753	57
2002	191	35,231,265	184,457	56
2003	376	58,389,301	155,291	31
2004	248	46,184,756	186,229	76
2005	491	104,218,898	212,258	43
2006	165	35,590,118	215,698	27
2007	139	34,406,017	247,525	20
2008	37	12,238,274	330,764	89

Not only are the 2008 total housing units far below all prior years, they equal only 19% of the quantity during 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001.

On the other hand the average building value, excluding the land beneath it, continues to increase, up 34% from the prior high set last year and over two and one-half times the average in 2000.

Permitted Commercial Building Values Improve In February

January and February building permits of all types continued at a very slow pace. The value of [commercial buildings](#) permitted in Estero during the January and February period totaled \$15.7 million.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$6,224,692	\$77,250,835
2001	10,191,033	44,116,526
2002	1,913,907	23,135,139
2003	1,011,631	23,234,725
2004	1,079,434	60,859,820
2005	5,214,576	111,037,977
2006	56,324,955	184,709,240
2007	33,162,359	157,614,045
2008	15,674,464	?

As the above table indicates Estero commercial development started to expand rapidly in 2004 and peaked during 2006 with a total of \$184.7 million. (All figures are exclusive of the underlying land). Nonetheless, 2007 was still Estero's second highest commercial development year, far ahead of the third place year, 2005, with \$111 million. Thus far 2008 is running ahead of 2005. Clearly Estero's commercial growth is far from over.

During January and February the major projects that contributed to the year to date total are:

- \$10.19 million for the Hyatt Garden Hotel at Coconut Point
- \$1.85 million in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#);
- \$2.24 million for [Miromar Outlets](#) expansion
- \$217,000 in the Estero Ridge Shopping Center
- \$155,000 in the [Brooks Town Center](#) (retail) at Coconut Road and Three Oaks Parkway
- \$90,000 in the [International Design Center](#)

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