

Estero Development Report

Volume 8, Number 6

Issued November 3, 2008

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 Community website at: <http://esterofl.org/eccl/EDR/>

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Tuesday, November 4 th	7 a.m. to 7 p.m.	General Election	All polling places (see article below)
Tuesday, November 11 th	5 p.m.	Monthly Meeting of the Estero Fire Rescue District. For further information see http://esterofire.org/	Estero Fire Rescue Headquarters... Three Oaks Parkway south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, November 12 th	1 p.m.	Southwest Florida Expressway Authority Meeting. For further information see http://swfea.net/SWFEA_Home/index.html	Bonita Springs City Hall
Wednesday, November 12 th	11:30 a.m.	Estero Community Improvement Foundation Fashion Show	Bice Restaurant at Coconut Point
Monday, November 17 th	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel meeting. See the full agenda at http://esterofl.org/ecpp/ecpp_meetings.htm	Estero Fire Rescue Headquarters... Three Oaks Parkway south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, November 19 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
November 21 st	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO meeting.	1926 Victoria Street in downtown Ft. Myers
November 21 st	1 p.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) meeting. FGCU President Wilson Bradshaw will make a presentation on his plans for the University. See the full agenda at: http://esterofl.org/eccl/minutes/index.htm	Estero Community Park
November 29 th	10 a.m.	Miracle at Coconut Point Holiday Parade	Coconut Point Town Center

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Estero Community Website

From January through August about 64,400 persons visited this site to learn about Estero.

During the same period in 2007 only about 52,250 visited the site, thus our website traffic increased by 23% year to year.

The community groups sponsoring the site are:

- Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPD)
- 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

WAYS YOU CAN STILL VOTE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

If you are here in Florida you may vote on Tuesday in either of two ways:

- **EARLY VOTING:** Due to the large number of voters who want to vote early Governor Crist has increased the hours for Early Voting through Saturday, November 1st. You may cast your vote at:

Supervisor of Elections Office
24951 Old US 41, Suite 10
Bonita Springs.

This office is located on the east side of Old 41 just south of where Old 41 terminates into US 41 near the main entrance to Pelican Landing.

Their office hours are now from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

- **ELECTION DAY VOTING:** Or you may vote at your Polling Place, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on November 4th.

Estero Polling Places

Precinct	Location
12	South County Regional Library, 21100 Three Oaks Parkway
128	Summit Church, 19601 Ben Hill Griffin Parkway
131	Karl J. Drews Community Center, 18412 Lee Road
132	Estero Community Park, 9200 Corkscrew Palms Boulevard
147	Fountain Lakes Center, west side of US 41 south of Williams Road

156	Hope United Church, 7470 Hickory Drive
165	First Assembly South, 21580 River Ranch Road
167	Stoneybrook Community Center, on Stoneybrook Golf Drive within the Stoneybrook community.

Your voter registration card has your precinct number on it. If you can't find your card, call the Election Supervisor's office for you precinct number at (239) LEE-VOTE (533-8683).

2008 Voter Registration in Estero

During 2008 about 4,500 new voters registered to vote in the eight precincts that serve Estero. As a result the total number of registered voters in Estero has increased by almost 2,600 since the 2006 General Election. The largest increases were recorded in the rapidly growing precincts east of I-75 including the Estero communities of Bella Terra, Stoneybrook, Wildcat Run and Grandezza and Miromar Lakes in unincorporated Lee County. Other Estero communities with sizeable registration gains are: Belle Lago, the Reserve of Estero, Copper Oaks, Rookery Point and Villagio. Estero now contains about 7.5% of all registered voters in Lee County whereas it had only about 6.6% in 2006. Since the turnout of Estero voters tends to be higher than other parts of Lee County our political influence exceeds these percentages.

Only 20 Tickets Remain for the Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) Fashion Show

On November 12th the ECIF will hold their second annual Fashion Show and Luncheon at Bice Grand Cafe at Coconut Point. Enjoy a wonderful lunch while Dillard's presents the latest Fall Fashions. Come and receive a Dillard's gift bag containing, among many items, a three day 15% Dillard's discount.

Raffle tickets will be sold for \$1 each or 6 for \$5. Raffle prizes include:

- a \$500 shopping spree at Dillard's,
- dinner for two at Tarpon Bay Restaurant at the Hyatt,
- one complimentary round of golf for four at the Colony Golf and Country Club,
- two \$100 gift certificates for dinner at Angelina's Ristorante.

Door prizes will also be awarded. 100% of the proceeds will benefit the Estero Community Improvement Foundation's [landscaping project](#) around Estero High School.

Seating begins at 11:30 and a lunch of Asian salad with plum dressing, rolls, a luscious dessert of brownie with ice cream and whipped cream plus coffee, iced tea or soft drink will be served at noon.

The ticket price for this event is a donation of \$35. Only 20 tickets out of the 225 available tickets remain! If you don't have yours please call:

- Judy Beach at 948-9366
- Barbara Goodrich at 948-1485
- Dot Dronkers at 949-0383.

Or pick them up at:

- Colonial Bank in the Corkscrew Plaza
- Dillard's office on the second floor,

Arts Estero 2009

Back in 2006 the ECCL sponsored "Arts Estero 2006" at the Hyatt Coconut Point Resort. The event attracted about 15 local arts organizations and gave them an opportunity to present themselves to about 500 Estero residents through information booths and stage presentations.

"Arts Estero 2009" will return this season at the Estero Community Park on Saturday, March 28, 2009. This year ECCL will be partnering with The Estero Art League, Estero Historical Society, Friends of South County Regional Library, Gulf Coast Symphony, Greater Estero Cultural Arts Council, Inc. and Koreshan State Park. Estero residents and guests will be presented with a day full of continuous live entertainment on and off stage. There will be art exhibits, food booths, information booths, art for sale, demonstrations and other displays of interest starting at 11 a.m. and continuing throughout the day. The Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Andrew Kurtz, will bring the day's event to a close at 4:00 PM with a full program of big band sounds.

Commitments have already been obtained from Arts Estero (Greater Estero Cultural Arts Council), the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra and Mud Bone, a jazz and blues group, presented by the South Country Regional Library, Inc funded by a grant from Target.

Bev MacNellis of Marsh Landing, active in many community affairs, has agreed to chair the event along with an advisory committee consisting of representatives of many arts organizations with commitments to Estero. The advisory committee has met twice to begin planning this major community event. The goal of the Committee is to establish "Arts Estero" as Estero's premier, annual community event.

The committee is seeking support from all community organizations, residential communities and individual volunteers. Anyone interested in participating should contact Bev MacNellis at 498-0678 or by email at Beverlyann@comcast.net.

Improving US 41 between Corkscrew Road and San Carlos Park

The Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) long delay in acquiring a detention pond for the US 41 widening project between Corkscrew Road and San Carlos Park caused the ECCL to concede that this road will not be widened until late 2010, when State funding becomes available. This was not an easy decision after working for nearly five years to accelerate funding for the improvement with FDOT, Lee County, Wal-Mart and other land owners along the route.

At that time ECCL decided its top priority would shift to obtaining a traffic signal at US 41 and Estero Parkway in time for the opening of the Estero Boulevard Flyover over I-75, now expected one year from now. At that time both FDOT and Lee DOT agreed to work with us on this project.

This timing is critical because opening the flyover is expected to increase traffic on Estero Parkway by about 25% and result in a sizeable increase in accidents at this already dangerous intersection.

Starting operation of this signal next fall is now threatened by a new complication. FDOT has decided that the existing design of the intersection needs to be changed. The present design calls for a single left turn lane for vehicles traveling south on US 41. FDOT is now convinced that southbound US 41 traffic will require two left turn lanes at Estero Parkway and their plans for the intersection are now being amended to make that change. This change will require FDOT to obtain more right of way at the intersection prior to six-laning the road. In addition it will cause the relocation of power lines before some of the signal poles can be installed.

Acquiring the additional right-of-way and moving the utilities cannot be completed in time for the signal to be installed next year. As a result Lee DOT has suggested that a temporary signal be installed prior to the opening of the flyover to be replaced by the full signal when US 41 is six-laned. Lee DOT has asked FDOT to approve this approach and is awaiting their approval before the materials for the signal can be ordered from the supplier. There is a long lead time on mast arms for these signals because they must be able to withstand hurricane force winds. ECCL will continue to monitor FDOT and Lee County progress on this important safety issue.

Improving I-75

Six laning of I-75 continues about 100 days ahead of schedule and is expected to be completed in about two years, August 2010.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Activity

On October 17th the Lee and Collier County MPO's met to discuss the use of the \$10 million temporarily and improperly set aside by Congress for a Coconut I-75 Interchange. FDOT District 1 Superintendent Stan Cann presented a revised proposal for improving the I-75 Bonita Beach Interchange that reflected a cost of about \$8.2 million, much lower than past estimates. He suggested that the \$9.2 million now available from the Coconut I-75 earmark be allocated so that both the Bonita Beach and Immokalee I-75 Interchanges could be completed with small local contributions toward the total cost of the two projects. He asked for \$300,000 for the Bonita Beach Intersection and \$500,000 for the Immokalee Road project. This proposal was rejected primarily by a vote of the Lee County delegation that is larger than the Collier County delegation.

Subsequently the City of Bonita Springs has voted to allocate \$150,000 from monies set aside for Bonita Beach Road improvements to this need in the hope and expectation that Lee County will supplement this action with another \$150,000. These funds may be recovered from impact fees paid by developments surrounding the Interchange. As of this date the Lee County BOCC has not acted on this matter. The ECCL has supported this project with the expectation that the City of Bonita Springs will support our efforts to improve the Corkscrew I-75 Interchange as its traffic becomes more congested after some relief from the Estero Parkway Flyover.

The Bonita Beach I-75 Interchange improvement will greatly decrease the backups for Bonita Beach eastbound vehicles seeking to make the left turn onto I-75. If the funding

gets approved the project will be added to the I-75 six-laning contract and be completed by 2010, along with all the other improvements. It is projected to solve the congestion problems at this Interchange until 2016.

Background

At the September 19th MPO meeting Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff presented plans for improving the Bonita Beach Road I-75 Interchange. FDOT's study proposes a two phase plan to improve the interchange. The first phase, to be completed in 2012, would alter the existing I-75 bridge over Bonita Beach Road so that additional lanes could be constructed under that bridge. Most importantly another east bound left turn lane is badly needed and would be provided by this improvement. This modification is expected to maintain an acceptable level of service (Level D) until 2016.

According to FDOT another lane will be required in each direction on Bonita Beach Road after 2016, thus necessitating replacement of the I-75 bridge over Bonita Beach Road. This project is estimated to cost about \$43.4 million.

South Lee County Hospital Committee Formed

Last summer Ben Nelson, Mayor of Bonita Springs, and Don Eslick, Chairman of the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL), agreed to jointly form a Committee to improve hospital services in south Lee County. The first step in the process was to recruit residents of Bonita Springs and Estero to join the Committee. The response was significant and enthusiastic. Thus far 36 persons have volunteered to serve on the Committee, many with extensive backgrounds in a wide variety of healthcare professions.

The first meeting of the Committee was held on July 18th. Most of the meeting was devoted to a request for community support for a Lee Memorial discussion of a free-standing emergency department on property owned by that system in south Estero. In addition the Committee adopted the following mission statement:

“The mission of the Committee is the establishment of a Community Hospital to serve the community's health care needs as soon as possible and a 24/7 free-standing emergency department during the period prior to the hospital's opening”.

Recently the Committee leadership has decided to ask all three regional hospital systems...Lee Memorial, Naples Community Hospital and Physicians Regional... to develop a proposal detailing their interest in helping the Committee reach its goals and outlining the collaborative steps that need to be taken in this process. Once this written proposal has been completed the hospital system is asked to meet with the Committee within the next two months. In addition the Committee is preparing a free-standing emergency department/hospital needs assessment and a statement summarizing the talent and experience on the Committee.

Midtowne Estero Rezoning Proposal Drops “Big Box”

On September 15th the BOCC voted unanimously to deny Ascot Development's application to rezone the Midtowne Estero development, located on the southwest corner of Three Oaks and Corkscrew. This rezoning application would have dramatically changed the zoning on the property by:

- Increasing the amount of commercial on the property from 90,000 square feet to about 300,000 square feet including a 140,000 “Big Box” store, and
- Reducing the number of housing units from 234 to 92 units.

In late September Ascot met with representatives of the ECCL, many of whom had testified against the big box, to propose an amendment to the existing zoning what would retain the existing 90,000 square feet of commercial and 234 housing units. The suggestion would change the 9 acre commercial parcel from a single parcel into several outlots wrapping around the Three Oaks/Corkscrew corner.

On October 3rd representatives of ECCL and the Brooks Concerned Citizens (BCC) joined Ascot in a meeting with Lee County Zoning staff. The purpose of the meeting was to determine if County staff would consider making this change “administratively”. Administrative approval of the change would permit the developer to rezone the property without the change being reviewed by a Hearing Examiner and final approval by the BOCC, thus saving the developer considerable time and money.

In the course of these meetings Ascot agreed to the following additional changes at the request of the community:

- All the buildings would be constructed up close to the road with the parking behind them, away from the roads,
- The buildings would be oriented so that the longest side would be parallel to the roads,
- The buildings would be connected by a decorative connecting link...fence, arbor etc.
- A water feature will be added at the corner of Three Oaks and Corkscrew,
- The number of drive-throughs would be reduced from three to two, and
- If a drive-through is located on the corner parcel it will not be a fast food, liquor store or dry cleaners.

Ascot agreed to present the proposal to the ECCL on October 17th and the ECPP on October 20th. The residents of Estero attending these meeting made the same points as were made at the earlier meetings. In addition representatives of the Estero Fire Rescue Department sought a commitment from Ascot to pay for an emergency traffic signal in front of their Three Oaks station if a full median and signal could not be installed between Midtowne Estero and Lowe's Three Oaks entrance. The developer's agreed to pay half the cost of an emergency signal and to join the community and Fire Department at a meeting with county staff regarding the issue. As we go to press this meeting has not been scheduled.

Developer Appeals the BOCC Decision to Deny Zoning For the Estero Group Mine

On October 21st Jim Nulman, a professional mediator assigned to this case, convened the first Hearing on a petition by the developers of this planned 300 acre Corkscrew Road mine to obtain a recommendation that would resolve the rezoning impasse between the developer and the County. The role of the mediator is to determine if the impasse can be overcome and to prepare a report that includes his recommendations for the BOCC to accept or reject. If the matter is not resolved through this process the developer may then seek a remedy in the courts.

Members of the public who testified on the rezoning case when it was heard and unanimously rejected by the Lee County Hearing Examiner and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) were permitted to observe and testify at this Hearing.

The day focused primarily on the “negotiation phase” of the process. The Special Master began by explaining that it was his job to try to determine what the differences were between the positions of the applicant (Estero Group) and the County on this matter, and to try to work out an agreement that both sides could accept.

He began by asking Estero Group to explain their position and what they believed to be the issues in dispute. Estero Group responded that the issues which resulted in the denial of the zoning were “water and truck traffic”. They were prepared to modify their application to address these concerns by:

- changing the configuration of their pits,
- retaining their storm water runoff on site, and
- paying an off-duty deputy for increased traffic enforcement.

County Staff agreed that issues related to water and truck traffic would have to be a part of any agreement, but stated that there were many other aspects of this case which would have to be addressed by the applicant to the satisfaction of all parties. Members of the public were then invited to comment. Several members of the Corkscrew Road Rural Community, ECCL and interested environmental organizations were present and offered a fairly extensive overview of the broader issues which resulted in the denial of the zoning.

The Special Master then met privately and separately with Estero Group, followed by County Staff, and finally members of the public in order to gain a better understanding of what common ground might exist between the parties. After those private sessions, Estero Group discussed their expectations with respect to the Land Development Code amendments related to mining (Chap. 12) adopted in September by the BOCC. They essentially felt that they should be exempt from these new regulations. This was unacceptable to County Staff.

By mid-afternoon, the Special Master stated that he wanted to meet privately with the applicant and County Staff together for further negotiations. At that point he excused the public, and said that the proceeding would most likely continue with the “fact-finding” phase at a later date which he would announce to all parties and participants in advance. We later learned that the negotiations had reached an impasse and resulted in “no agreement”.

It is expected that the Special Master soon be scheduling the fact-finding phase of the proceeding at which time the public will have an opportunity to present our complete testimony in support of the BOCC's decision to deny Estero Group's mine rezoning.

Estero's Housing Permits Continue Stall

During September only 4 housing units, all single family homes, with a value of \$1.2 million were permitted in Estero. The first nine months of 2008 continue the downward trend in new housing construction in Estero that began over two years ago, in the spring of 2006.

[Housing units permitted](http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm) during 2007 were by far the lowest in the 9 years that the County's system has tracked Estero's permits. It would appear that 2008 will be only about a quarter of that prior minimum performance. 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 nine months of 2008 compare with the prior eight years:

Month	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Jan	77	146	83	109	153	176	75	59	9
Feb	252	143	108	267	95	315	90	80	28
Mar	177	295	101	156	123	392	404	79	3
Apr	227	159	161	162	135	178	79	40	7
May	125	292	146	178	125	214	54	28	9
June	116	155	191	98	165	190	139	90	18
July	148	209	115	63	253	180	128	8	33
Aug	202	221	90	97	106	279	117	21	9
Sept	386	128	129	125	98	349	105	2	4
October	151	115	231	49	140	288	44	9	
November	95	207	63	61	92	138	33	12	
December	132	34	82	60	161	134	42	4	
Annual Total	2088	2104	1500	1425	1646	2833	1310	432	120

Not only are this year's total housing units far below all prior years, they equal only 11% of the comparable number in 2002, the season immediately following the tragedy of 9/11/2001 and is only 29% of last year's total for the period.

Permitted Commercial Building Values Continue Slow Growth

The building permits of all types issued during the nine months of 2008 continued at a very slow pace. The value of [commercial buildings](#) permitted in Estero during the nine months totaled \$37.2 million.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$74,151,127	\$77,250,835
2001	32,092,953	44,116,526

2002	21,072,649	23,135,139
2003	16,744,565	23,234,725
2004	40,419,085	60,859,820
2005	65,174,286	111,037,977
2006	170,836,515	184,709,240
2007	145,211,071	157,614,045
2008	37,205,446	?

As the right hand column of the above table indicates Estero's commercial development started to expand rapidly in 2004, peaking in 2006 with a total of \$184.7 million. (All figures are exclusive of the underlying land). The 2000 calendar year was exceptional because it was the year that the Hyatt Coconut Point Hotel and Resort was permitted.

2007 was Estero's second highest commercial development year, far ahead of the third place year, 2005. Thus far 2008 is Estero's fifth ranked commercial development year. While Estero's commercial development has slowed considerably since last year, many commercially zoned properties along US 41 and Corkscrew Road have been cleared, the sites prepared and the designs approved by the Estero Design Review Committee. Estero's commercial growth is poised for expansion once the current slowdown is over.

During the first nine months the major projects that contributed to the year to date totals are:

- \$10.19 million for the Hyatt Garden Hotel at Coconut Point
- \$8.0 million for Extra Space Storage in Coconut Point
- \$6.82 million in the [Coconut Point Town Center](#);
- \$4.95 million for [Miromar Outlets](#) expansion
- \$1.7 million for Finemark National Bank at the Brooks Town Center
- \$1.06 million for Lee County Utilities
- \$950,000 for Wachovia Bank at Coconut Point
- \$549,510 for Chick-Fil-A in Paradise Shoppes
- \$450,382 for 24231 Walden Center remodeling
- \$376,000 for Estero Chevrolet
- \$300,000 for West Bay commercial development
- \$240,000 in the Estero Ridge Shopping Center
- \$241,600 in Estero Town Commons
- \$626,000 in the [Brooks Town Center](#) (retail) at Coconut Road and Three Oaks Parkway
- \$209,000 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.