

VILLAGE OF ESTERO, FLORIDA
Planning & Zoning Board
2020 Annual Report to the Village Council

INTRODUCTION

The Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) serves as the Village of Estero's state required Local Planning Agency. The PZB is responsible for conducting all public hearings on zoning requests for proposed Estero land developments and then makes recommendations to the Village Council and/or takes actions itself on variances, deviations and special exceptions.

The PZB usually meets monthly to review action items and conduct Public Information Meetings (PIM). A PIM is a workshop session where applicants can make presentations, questions can be asked but no decisions are made. Public input is invited and encouraged at all meetings.

The PZB is directly accountable to the Village Council. Board members serve staggered three-year terms. The District 2 Village Councilor serves as the liaison to the PZB. The Village Director of Community Development and staff provide necessary staff support, field studies, developer/owner dialogue and reports and recommendations to the PZB. The Village has also retained a prominent land use attorney who advises the PZB on all legal matters that come before the PZB. Their efforts are immeasurably helpful to the PZB, enabling it to conduct its assigned responsibility.

THE GOAL OF THE PZB

The PZB has the goal of overseeing the development, redevelopment and other changes to various properties within the Village in such a way that Estero grows responsibly. This means that proposals need to be consistent with the Village's Comprehensive Plan (CP) and Land Development Code (LDC) and are consistent or complimentary with the values and design concepts that Estero has created over a continuum predating its incorporation in 2014 and continuing as an incorporated government unit.

It also includes monitoring and planning to make sure that the Village infrastructure is able to support new development without overtaxing existing infrastructure. The PZB, being the Local Planning Agency under the State of Florida Community Planning Act, recommends to the Village Council, after review of land development regulations and development proposals, whether they are consistent with the Village Comprehensive Plan. In concert with the Village Council and staff, the PZB properly evaluates development proposals' effect on infrastructure and makes necessary recommendations to the Village Council to ensure that Village growth occurs responsibly and in a fashion that maintains the safe and efficient operation of the Village.

The PZB seeks to effectively serve several constituencies. First the residents, second the Village Council, and third, landowners and developers who wish to develop properties within the Village.

PZB PROCESS

The PZB reviews a wide variety of requests from landowners, developers or their representatives. These items range from minor changes to reviewing complex zoning change proposals and Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

The PZB often conducts zoning hearings in a quasi-judicial capacity. Quasi-judicial hearings occur with regard to site-specific zoning applications. The purpose of a quasi-judicial procedure, which is somewhat more formal than normal public hearings, is to assure due process to all concerned parties and to bring evidence to the PZB (and ultimately the Village Council) that allows the PZB to apply the existing adopted regulations/policies/requirements to a specific application (i.e. to determine whether the application for the requested action meets the existing requirements). Presenters and witnesses are sworn in; ex parte communications and any conflicts of interest are disclosed. The hearing is open to the public with public comment encouraged. Witnesses are subject to cross-examination.

2020 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

During 2020, the PZB along with the Village Council and the Design and Review Board (DRB) continued to operate under the transitional Land Development Code (LDC) which is in use in unincorporated Lee County. As the year closed, Estero completed the development, review and approval of Estero's own LDC. The resulting 539 page document is significant because it sets the standards for the Village's future development and redevelopment.

Estero's LDC is specific to Estero and will implement the policy direction indicated in the Estero Comprehensive Plan which was previously adopted and implemented. It ensures that the Village's development regulations are modernized and aligned with contemporary zoning best practices.

The LDC becomes the adopted law of the Village of Estero that regulates land use, growth and development. It divides the Village into twenty different zoning districts. Regulations for the various zones govern the types of uses and the location and size of development within each zoning district. It also includes procedures for how development proposals are reviewed.

The new LDC is important because it includes the Village's standards for architecture, landscaping, zoning, open space, sidewalks, bicycle/pedestrian improvements, traffic, stormwater and other items which aim to provide and protect the high quality of life in Estero. These standards govern the quality and form of all new development and redevelopment, such as standards for parking, landscaping, building location and architectural design.

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF MAJOR MILESTONES

During 2020, the PZB observed the completion of its first five years as the Village's Local Planning agency. Since its first meeting on May 5, 2015, the PZB has met 61 times with agendas covering a wide variety of topics principally relating to zoning and plan development. The activity numbers below reflect the demand for growth and development in Southwest Florida generally

and Estero in particular. The highlights follow:

- Ten new residential developments of various sizes were approved, eight by Estero, and two by Lee County during Estero's transition as an incorporated government.
- The approved developments, which will take several years to build and occupy, account for 4649 new residential units which with an established multiplier of 2.2 residents per unit will serve to increase the Estero Florida resident population from the present 34,500 to 44,500 (excluding seasonal residents who are not Florida domiciled).
- Thirteen retail store locations or development sites were approved. Five hotel sites were approved. Three storage sites were approved.
- The Village acquired a 62 acre site east of US41 and north of Corkscrew Road to support future responsible development in the new area designated as Village Center while also protecting the Estero River from excessive development. The five acre Happehatchee Center site, contiguous with the 62 acre parcel, was also acquired and will continue its respected mission to provide environmental education enrichment.
- A new church formed, and an existing church completed a major addition and renovation.
- Estero realized a long sought after goal of gaining timely access to healthcare with the opening of the 163,500 square foot Lee Health Coconut Point Medical Center with its 24/7 Emergency Department, Observation Unit and state of the art testing and diagnosis capabilities. Also, three new assisted living communities were approved.
- The Lee County School District developed plans to construct a fifth blended elementary and middle school.
- Several improvements to major roadways were completed, underway or approved including Estero Parkway, US 41, I-75 and Corkscrew Road.
- The Estero Fire District began development work to construct a fifth fire station on the Corkscrew Road corridor to the east.
- The Village's Comprehensive Plan was developed, reviewed by the state, approved and implemented.
- As 2020 closed. Estero's new Land Development Code was approved and implemented. The new LDC combines the PZB and the DRB into a single board, the Planning, Zoning and Design Board to facilitate development review and streamline process.

ESTERO IS GROWING

In 2000, the Florida resident population of Estero was just over 9,000. The 2018 US census update calculation calculated the resident population at 34,631. Most of this growth occurred when Estero's 35 existing, completed and occupied gated communities were built, but development continues principally along the Corkscrew Road corridor, Coconut Point, US41 and Coconut Road.

Adding all current developments pending, approved or under construction in both Estero and unincorporated Lee County immediately east of Estero and along the Corkscrew Road corridor, the total exceeds 8,000 new residential units. Using a 2.2 resident per household multiplier, the potential Florida resident population growth from these developments is over 17,500.

As previously noted, this growth will take several years to mature but it requires advance planning to provide necessary infrastructure including not only roads, storm water management, water supply and utilities but also public safety (police, fire and EMS), public education and other essential

public services.

The work of Village staff, the Village Council and the new Planning, Zoning and Design Board, will grow along with new development activity. All efforts serve the goal of responsible development in Estero.

Respectfully submitted to the Village Council:

The Village of Estero Planning & Zoning Board

Scotty Wood, Chairman
Marlene Naratil, Vice Chairman
Dr. Tim Allen
Anthony Gargano
James Tatoes
John Yarborough