

**The Estero Community Plan
Approved by Lee County and Incorporated into
the Lee County Comprehensive Plan**

VISION STATEMENT:

21. Estero - “To establish a community that embraces its historic heritage, while carefully planning for future growth resulting from Florida Gulf Coast University, the Southwest Florida International Airport, growing population and a unique natural environment. Estero’s growth will be planned as a village, establishing defined areas for tasteful shopping, service and entertainment, while protecting and encouraging residential neighborhoods that encourage a sense of belonging. Weaving the community together will be carefully crafted limitations on strip commercial uses, inappropriate signage and certain undesired commercial uses, while additional design guidelines will be established to ensure attractive landscaping, streetscaping, architectural standards, and unified access points. The implementation of this Vision will help reduce the conflict between residential and commercial areas, as well as allow Estero to emerge as a vibrant Lee County Village.”

MODIFICATIONS TO CURRENT LEE PLAN PROVISIONS:

Policy 6.1.2.10: The Board of County Commissioners may approve applications for minor commercial centers that do not comply with the location standards for such centers, but which are consistent with duly adopted CRA and Community plans.

Policy 6.1.2.1(e): When developed as part of a mixed use planned development, and meeting the use limitations, modified setback standards, signage limitations and landscaping provisions, retail uses may deviate from the locational requirements and maximum square footage limitations, subject to conformance with the Estero Community Plan as outlined in Policies 19.2.3 and 19.2.4, and through approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

PROPOSED NEW GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES:

GOAL 19: ESTERO

To protect the character, natural resources and quality of life in Estero by establishing minimum aesthetic requirements, managing the location and intensity of future commercial and residential uses, and providing greater opportunities for public participation in the land development approval process.

This Goal and subsequent objectives and policies apply to the Estero Planning Community as depicted on Map 16.

Objective 19.1: COMMUNITY CHARACTER. The Estero Community will draft and submit regulations, policies and discretionary actions affecting the character and aesthetic appearance of Estero for Lee County to adopt and enforce to help create a visually attractive community.

Policy 19.1.1: By the end of 2002, The Estero Community will draft and submit regulations or policies for Lee County to review, amend or establish as Land Development Code regulations that provide for enhanced landscaping along roadway corridors, greater buffering, shading of parking areas, signage and lighting consistent with the Community Vision, and architectural standards.

Policy 19.1.2: Lee County is discouraged from approving any deviation that would result in a reduction of landscaping, buffering, signage guidelines or compliance with architectural standards.

Policy 19.1.3: Lee County will work, through the permitting process, with private property owners to establish incentives for voluntarily bringing older projects into compliance with the regulations adopted as a result of the Estero Community Plan.

Policy 19.1.4: The Estero Community will work in conjunction with private developers, public agencies and community service providers to establish one or several town commons that encourage the location of a post office, public meeting hall, outdoor plaza, governmental offices, medical providers and recreational opportunities.

Policy 19.1.6: By 2002, the Estero Community will draft a corridor management plan for the Estero US 41 corridor to advance development in a manner that promotes a safe, high quality urban environment. Plan elements will include roadway and median landscape standards, residential buffering standards, access management guidelines, street lighting, sidewalks, and insuring safe and effective pedestrian crossings within the context of a comprehensive pedestrian and bikeway system.

Policy 19.1.7: By 2004 Lee County will evaluate historic resources, and draft a proposal for their designation under Chapter 22 of the Land Development Code.

Objective 19.2: COMMERCIAL LAND USES. Existing and future County regulations, land use interpretations, policies, zoning approvals, and administrative actions must recognize the unique conditions and preferences of the Estero Community to ensure that commercial areas maintain a unified and pleasing aesthetic/visual quality in landscaping, architecture, lighting and signage, and provide for employment opportunities, while discouraging uses that are not compatible with adjacent uses and have significant adverse impacts on natural resources.

Policy 19.2.1: All new commercial development that requires rezoning within the Estero Planning Community must be reviewed as a Commercial Planned Development.

Policy 19.2.2: All retail uses must be in compliance with the Commercial Site Location Standards. A finding of a “Special Case” must demonstrate a community benefit in addition to the requirements outlined in Policy 6.12(8).

Policy 19.2.3: By the end of 2002 the Estero Community will submit regulations that encourage mixed use developments along Corkscrew Road for Lee County to review, amend or adopt.

Policy 19.2.4: With the exception of the Commercial Nodes identified on Map 19, Lee County will discourage new retail uses along Three Oaks Parkway, in favor of office and residential uses.

Policy 19.2.5: The following uses are prohibited within the Estero Planning Community: “detrimental uses” (as defined in the Land Development Code); nightclubs or bar and cocktail lounges not associated with a Group III Restaurant; and retail uses that require outdoor display in excess of one acre.

Policy 19.2.6: Lee County encourages commercial developments within the Estero Planning Community to provide interconnect opportunities with adjacent commercial uses in order to minimize access points onto primary road corridors; and residential developments to provide interconnect opportunities with commercial areas, including but not limited to bike paths and pedestrian access ways.

Objective 19.3: RESIDENTIAL USES: Lee County must protect and enhance the residential character of the Estero Planning Community by strictly evaluating adjacent uses, natural resources, access and recreational or open space, and requiring compliance with enhanced buffering requirements.

Policy 19.3.1: In order to meet the future needs of Florida Gulf Coast University, Lee County encourages higher density residential developments, with a mix of unit types, including affordable housing, in close proximity to Florida Gulf Coast University, between Three Oaks Parkway and I-75.

Policy 19.3.2: By the end of 2002, The Estero Community will draft and submit regulations and policies for Lee County to review, amend or adopt as regulations in the Land Development Code to provide for greater buffering between distinctly different adjacent commercial and residential properties, modified however when a project is of mixed use nature.

Policy 19.3.3: Lee County will protect the large lot residential areas between Koreshan Parkway and Corkscrew Road by requiring significant buffers between

existing lots and higher density residential developments, and/or the placement of transitional density to adjacent units between the uses.

Objective 19.4: NATURAL RESOURCES: County regulations, policies, and discretionary actions affecting Estero must protect or enhance key wetland or native upland habitats.

Policy 19.4.1: By the end of 2003, Lee County will review, amend or adopt Lee Plan or Land Development Code regulations to provide the following:

- All future development proposals adjacent to the Estero River or its tributaries must include floodplain protection plans prior to zoning approval.
- All new development adjacent to the Estero River or its tributaries must provide an additional buffer which preserves all of the native vegetation within that buffer, adjacent to the top of bank, with the exception of passive recreational uses. This is intended to prevent degradation of water quality within these natural water bodies.
- Lee County will encourage on-site preservation of indigenous plant communities and listed species habitat. When site constraints are such that off-site mitigation of indigenous areas is deemed necessary, the mitigation will be of similar habitat, provided whenever possible, within one mile of the Estero Fire District Boundary.
- Lee County will provide significant incentives (for example increased density, Transfer of Development Rights, etc) for the protection of wetlands, historic flow ways, native habitat or other significant natural resources within the Estero Planning Community.

Policy 19.4.3: Lee County, or another authorized agency, will work to provide alternative irrigation sources (re-use, Aquifer Storage and Recovery Water, or mixed-non-potable) or financial incentives to provide non-potable water to uses within the Estero Community. This is desired to discourage the proliferation of private, single user wells.

Policy 19.4.4: Lee County will continue to enforce wellfield protection requirements, monitoring, and other applicable provisions to ensure that future wellfield drawdown zones are protected.

Objective 19.5: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION. Lee County will encourage and solicit public input and participation prior to and during the review and adoption of county regulations, Land Development Code provisions, Lee Plan provisions, and zoning approvals.

Policy 19.5.1: As a courtesy, Lee County will register citizen groups and civic

organizations within the Estero Planning Community that desire notification of pending review of Land Development Code amendments and Lee Plan amendments. Upon registration, Lee County will provide registered groups with documentation regarding these pending amendments. This notice is a courtesy only and is not jurisdictional.

Accordingly, the County's failure to mail or to timely mail the notice, or failure of a group to receive mailed notice, will not constitute a defect in notice or bar a public hearing from occurring as scheduled.

Policy 19.5.2: The Estero Community will establish a “document clearing house” in Estero, where copies of selected zoning submittal documents, staff reports, Hearing Examiner recommendations and resolutions will be provided for public inspection. The County's failure to provide or to timely provide documents to the document clearing house, or failure of the document clearing house to receive documents, will not constitute a defect in notice or bar a public hearing from occurring as scheduled.

Policy 19.5.3: The owner or agent for any Planned Development request within the Estero Planning Community must conduct one public informational session where the agent will provide a general overview of the project for any interested citizens. Lee County encourages zoning staff to participate in such public workshops. This meeting must be conducted before the application can be found sufficient. The applicant is fully responsible for providing the meeting space and providing security measures as needed.

Subsequent to this meeting, the applicant must provide County staff with a meeting summary document that contains the following information: the date, time, and location of the meeting; a list of attendees; a summary of the concerns or issues that were raised at the meeting; and a proposal for how the applicant will respond to any issues that were raised.

Objective 19.6: COMMUNITY FACILITIES. Lee County will work with the Estero Community to provide or facilitate the provision of a broad mix of Community Facilities.

Policy 19.6.1: The Estero Community will work with the State of Florida to provide appropriate passive recreational opportunities within the Estero Scrub Preserve, potentially enhanced by a public/private partnership. This should include easy access, parking, trails, and other non-intrusive uses.

Policy 19.6.2: The Estero Community will work with the State of Florida to encourage the integration of the Koreshan State Historic Site into the fabric of the community. This may include landscaping, aesthetically pleasing archways along US 41, the provision of a “gateway” at US 41 and Corkscrew Road, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access, or programmed activities for the community.

Policy 19.6.3: Lee County will work with the community and private landowners to identify opportunities to maintain public access to the Estero River and Estero Bay.

Policy 19.6.4: Lee County will work with the community to ensure that the development of the Estero Bonita Springs Community Park is integrated into the surrounding development and open space areas. The concept would be for the park to act as a hub, connected to other open space/recreational opportunities through pedestrian or bicycle linkages, either along public rights of way or through adjacent developments.