

COMMENTS BEFORE GROWTH MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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By Neville Williams

Member, Collier Citizens Council (CCC)

& CCC Growth Management Committee, Charlette Roman, chair

1. New Urbanism and Smart Growth Principles have been clearly defined by America's leading town planner, Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) of Miami, FL and Kentlands, MD. (DPZ's Andres Duany oversaw the redevelopment of Naples 5th Ave.) The first principle is to end gated communities and sprawling suburban subdivisions.

DPZ writes, "More than 8 million American households are located within gated communities. Although somewhat on the wane, these enclaves are still being built...there are a number of strictly technical reasons why they are not considered smart growth. First, they disrupt the road network, acting as huge cul-de-sacs and impeding an efficient distributive transportation network. Second, they don't mix uses and thus contribute inordinate amounts of traffic to surrounding road systems. Finally, they generally provide only a narrow range of housing types and therefore forestall the socioeconomic robustness that accrues to places with a full spectrum of ages and incomes...the gates are provided less for internal safety than as a marketing ploy that serves only to reinforce socioeconomic segregation."

We don't believe the public wants more cookie-cutter gated communities oozing across the rural lands.

2. Think about separating "developers" from "builders." Lely Resort was created by a land developer with a good plan -- at the time -- and a dozen outside builders and contractors were invited to build out the property's many different communities; Pelican Bay was similarly designed by a single developer which sold the land to builders. While they are both nice communities, they do not represent New Urbanist planning or values.

The New Urbanist masterpiece, Kentlands, Maryland, with 10,000 residents, was created by a farsighted developer, working with the landowner, the city, the county, and DPZ; the developer himself built nothing. Involving many builders results in a multiplicity of dwellings, from houses, to townhomes, to apartment buildings, to condominiums, to workforce housing. A variety of architectural styles follow, based on approved design guidelines.

Encourage land developers with vision, not just production builders which have dominated the Florida landscape for half a century. Think about Disney's Celebration, or DPZ's Seaside, in the Panhandle, where numerous approved custom builders were engaged to construct the projects.

3. Our little committee identified one overarching fact: You are looking at virgin lands, where anything is possible. This is, of course, why you are working so hard to implement the creative and complex TDR program. Once the TDR system is perfected, these virgin lands, some of the last in Florida, can be developed as the county wishes, not just as builders, landowners and real estate investors want. This is an extraordinary opportunity. Collier County could excel at intelligent growth.

TDRs have worked well elsewhere: Montgomery County, Maryland and Boulder, Colorado are good examples. TDRs were enacted in San Miguel, County, Colorado in the early 1970s, and entire valleys and mesas were saved from rapacious developers. With a New Urbanist vision, everyone's lands become more valuable since all the players know there is a true smart growth plan in place that protects everyone's investment including the TDR trades (and TDR Bank?).

In the end, developers love New Urbanism because you can cram more people into less space, economically winning the density vs. sprawl debate, while preserving agriculture, open space, and wild lands. Witness Mangrove Bay in Naples (off Goodlette) or the new multi-story single-family homes under construction in Old Naples, designed by Matt Kragh, which look exactly like most of the houses in Kentlands or in the hundreds of walkable New Urbanist neighborhoods around the country as shown in DPZ's excellent **The Smart Growth Manual (& Sprawl Repair Manual)**

4. Think about controlled growth and not just managed growth. The success of smart, new urban developments around the country came about because counties took an active roll in controlling growth, not just "managing" it. They controlled who, what, when, and where growth took place, and took an active roll in planning. They did not "let the market decide." In any case, markets love well-planned smart growth, and when the word gets out that Collier County has a great plan for its virgin, undeveloped available lands, the best kind of investors, developers, and builders will arrive, looking for help and guidance, and possibly some incentives (to be discussed at another time)

5. The CCC will propose to its 30 members that it sponsor a county-wide public forum in Sept. or Oct. this year to review the extraordinary work being done by the Growth Management Department and its planners and the Oversight Committee. Mark Strain has given a number of public talks about the rural fringe, the stewardship areas, and the ensuing challenges, but community participation has been limited save for the current process you oversee and which the general citizenry needs to better understand.

More than just landowners, developers, investors, and county staff need to participate in this process. Ultimately the public, through its elected officials, will have a say about the form that future growth takes in the eastern and rural lands of Collier County. It is a huge challenge that needs wide public involvement since everyone in the County will be impacted no matter how or where the growth takes place.