

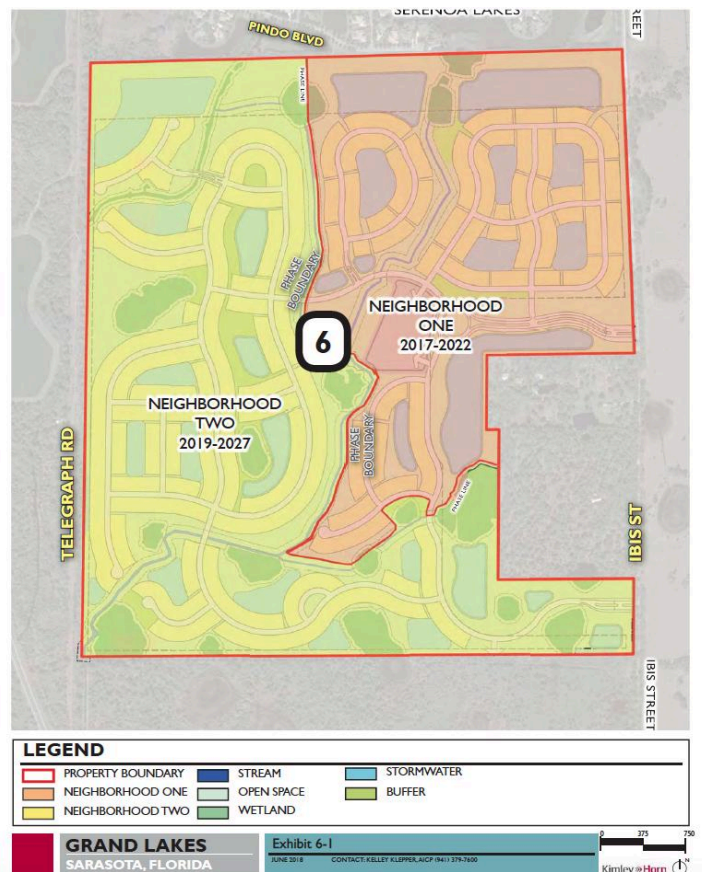
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[1,100-home Grand Lakes project east of I-75 wins County Commission approval on 4-1 vote](#)

July 12, 2018 by [Rachel Brown Hackney, Editor & Publisher](#)

Commissioners Hines and Caragiulo ask a number of questions regarding lack of more than one public road to the planned community



Two Sarasota County commissioners this week asked multiple questions about the fact that a proposed 1,097-home development on 533 acres east of Interstate 75 and south of Clark Road would have only one county road as an access for the residents.

However, after about 44 minutes of a public hearing continued from May 23, only one of them — Commissioner Charles Hines — voted against the proposed Grand Lakes project on which former state Sen. Pat Neal and his [Neal Communities](#) project team have been working for years.

On a motion by Commissioner Michael Moran, seconded by Commissioner Alan Maio, the board members voted 4-1 to approve Grand Lakes, which will be a Village development under the guidelines of the county's 2050 Plan for residential communities east of I-75.

Homeowners in the [Serenoa](#) and [Serenoa Lakes](#) developments to the north of the Grand Lakes site voiced considerable concern about the access issue during the May 23 hearing.

Although an extension of Ibis Street in that area has been added to the county's long-range transportation plan, a number of the speakers also pointed out that county staff has been unable to provide a timeline for its construction. Tom Kibler, past president of the Serenoa Community Association, noted on May 23 that the commission on April 25 approved the project as part of the county's *2040 Thoroughfare Plan*.

On July 11, Hines also questioned Neal's plans for gates at the two entrances for residents of Grande Lakes from Ibis Street.

As he understood it, Hines pointed out, the goal with 2050 projects is connectivity and walkability for county residents. "If you put gates in the front of these two entrances," Hines asked Neal, "how is that going to work. ... Where is the

connectivity with the overall village?” Hines added, referring to other developments planned in the same area under 2050 guidelines.

“The gates are open, of course, in the daytime and closed at night,” Neal said. “We think this is very important for the sale of our homes.”

Neal also pointed out that the 2050 Plan guidelines require “monitored gate access.”

“This is tough,” Hines told him. The 2050 Villages, Hines continued, are “almost like little towns or cities outside the [county’s] Urban Service Boundary.” Hines indicated that he felt public access through the communities should be a priority.

RZ 17-07 – Master Land Use Plan

Sarasota County

March 8, 2018

- 1,097 residential units including five housing types;
- 2 primary entries, 1 emergency access;
- 15% affordable housing units (164 total);
 - 110 for 80% AMI
 - 55 for 100% AMI
- TDRs – 493 units from off-site source;
- 50% open space (267 acres);
- 39 ac of Pine Flatwood and Xeric Hammock plantings;
- 23 ac of Park area;
 - 1 Neighborhood Park (amenity center)
 - 9 Mini Parks
 - 6 ft wide improved and 5 ft wide primitive trails;
- 500-foot Greenbelt Buffers, except where waived or modified or not required by Sarasota 2050.

LEGEND

PROPERTY BOUNDARY	STREAM	RIGHT-OF-WAY
AMENITY CENTER	OPEN SPACE	NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
RESIDENTIAL	PRESERVE AREA	1/4 MILE 15 MIN WALK RADIUS
STORMWATER	TRAIL	SAGLE NEST & BUFFER

GRAND LAKES SARASOTA, FLORIDA

C-1a MASTER LAND USE PLAN

A graphic explains features of the proposed Grand Lakes community. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“To allow our gates to be accessible to the public at large would be a very serious distraction and would be very hard for me,” Neal responded, pointing out that Grande Lakes “will be a very beautiful and expensive [community].”

Neal further pointed out that earlier commissions had approved gates for 2050 Plan developments. “We believe you’ve made this policy decision before, and we ask that you make it again.”

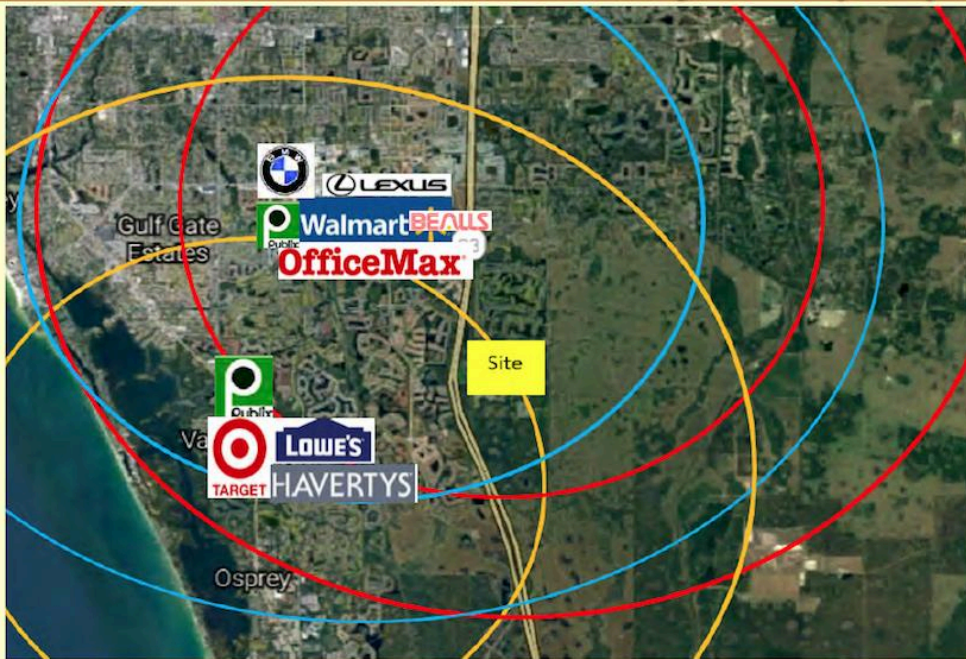
Some of the adjoining property owners also object to County Commission action earlier this year that will allow the Neal team to eliminate a mixed-use commercial center from Grand Lakes, although such facilities are required under the 2050 Plan. The project team pointed out that a sufficient number of retail businesses are in close proximity to the site. More importantly, they stressed, Grand Lakes will not have enough residents to support a retail business such as a grocery store.

[The commissioners on March 14 approved a county Comprehensive Plan amendment that would make it possible not only for a Village under the 2050 Plan to be constructed without a commercial center but also to allow such a development even if it will not be contiguous to a Village community with such facilities.](#)

In a news release issued this week, the Serenoa Lakes Community Association continued to protest the change allowed for Grand Lakes. In that release, Dave Anderson of Serenoa Lakes says, “[T]he county is ignoring its own rules.” The release points out that Serenoa Lakes residents have “engaged an expert planner and Ralf Brookes, an attorney specializing in land-use matters, to help them.”

#2. More than 500,000 Sq. Ft. Nearby Commercial Centers

Two Power Centers & One Neighborhood Center
within Three Miles of the Subject Property



Palmer Crossing Shopping Center has 300,000 sq. ft. of retail.

The Plaza at Palmer Ranch has 150,000 sq. ft. of retail.

The Market at Northridge has 65,000 sq. ft. of retail.

Rymer Strategies
Real Estate Advisors

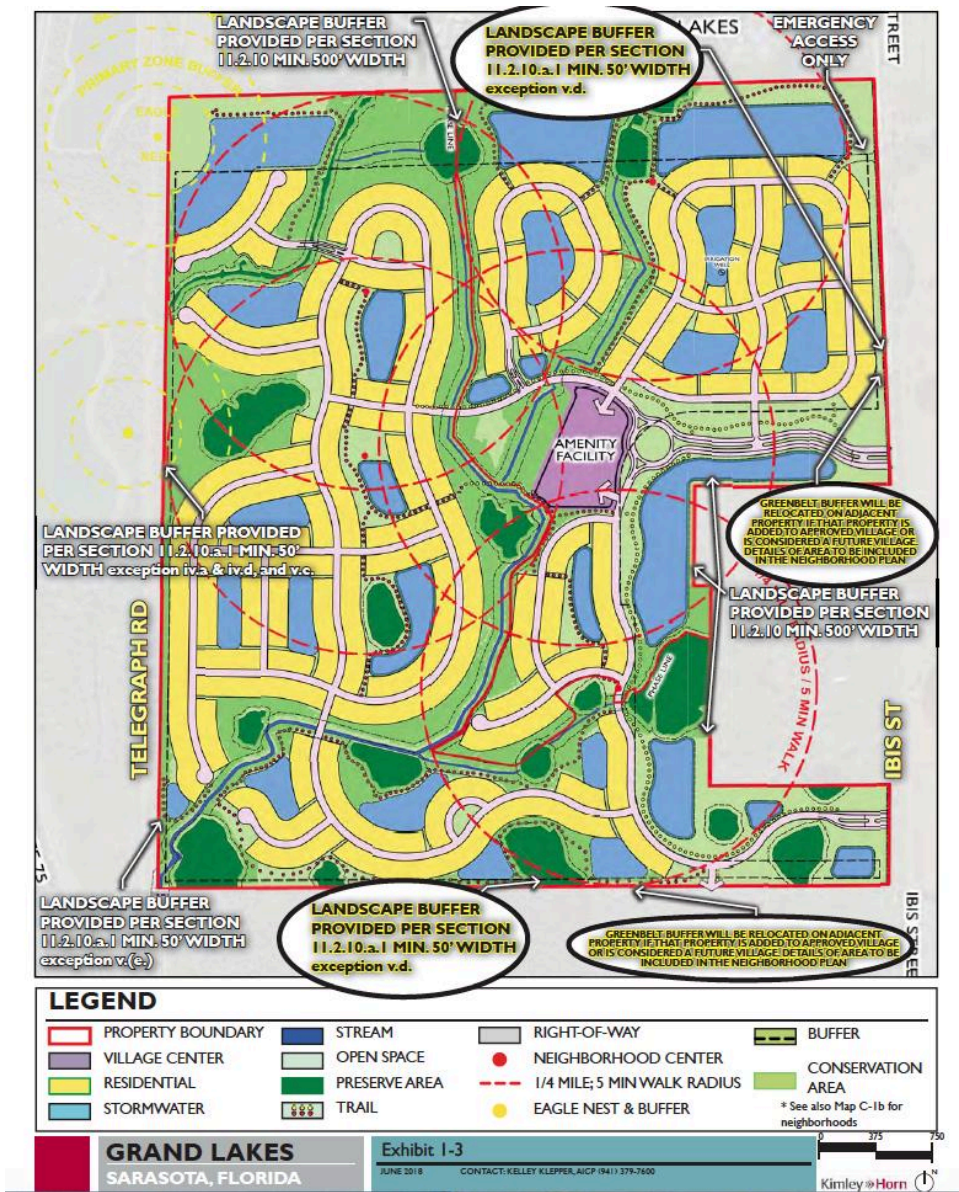
A page in a market study undertaken for Grand Lakes shows details about businesses that will be within close proximity to the property. Image courtesy Sarasota County

The release added, “If approved, this proposal will have far-reaching effects. It will allow developers to reap the private benefit of additional density without providing an offsetting public benefit. It will allow traditional subdivisions to be built in the village areas, and it will promote sprawl and encourage disjointed patchwork development — exactly the things the 2050 plan is meant to discourage,” says another critic, R. N. Collins.

As part of the July 11 motion that will allow the Grand Lakes project to proceed, the County Commission formally adopted the Comprehensive Plan amendment.

Neal indicated during his remarks to the board this week that he anticipated a lawsuit over Grand Lakes, if the project won board approval.

Responding to challenges



A graphic shows details about the Grand Lakes buffers. Image courtesy Sarasota County

The May 23 public hearing on Grand Lakes was continued at the Neal team's request after one group of opponents submitted an approximately 400-page document citing a number of facets of the project that the group believes violate the 2050 Plan Zoning Code rules.

On May 23, Mary Anne Bowie of Sarasota, a long-time urban planner and consultant, represented the group.

"We were surprised and dismayed by the volume [of material given to the clerk to the board] in the last 3 or 4 minutes of the hearing," Neal told the commissioners on July 11.

During the 17-minute rebuttal the commission had agreed to for the July 11 meeting, Kelly Klepper, a professional planner with the consulting firm Kimley-Horn and Associates of Sarasota, took most of the time to step through the objections. "I'd love to stand up here and say ... in response to the 400-plus pages that literally everything was false, but I will say, to their credit, there were some very good comments," he told the commissioners.

The document essentially covered 14 objections, Klepper explained. In almost every case, he pointed out, the Grand Lakes team had complied with the 2050 Plan guidelines. The primary change necessitated by the objections was a relocation of the boundary between the two neighborhoods that will comprise Grand Lakes.

STATISTICS

TOTAL SITE AREA: +/- 533 ACRES (100%)

DEVELOPMENT AREA: +/- 266 ACRES (50%)

OPEN SPACE: +/- 267 ACRES (50%)

NOTE: 50% MINIMUM PROPOSED PER ZONING REGULATIONS 11.2.3.3

NEIGHBORHOOD 1: 213 ACRES GROSS; 119 DEVELOPED

VILLAGE CENTER: 17.9 ACRES GROSS; 13 DEVELOPED

NEIGHBORHOOD 2: 320 ACRES GROSS; 147 DEVELOPED

TOTAL DWELLING UNITS: 1097 DU

1. ALL ACREAGES SHOWN ARE APPROXIMATE
2. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THE ATTACHED MAP SERIES.

RESIDENTIAL TYPE

TYPE	NH1	NH2	TOTAL
1 ESTATE HOUSE	1	0	1
2 FRONT-LOADED DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL GREATER THAN 10,000 SF	80	60	140
3 FRONT-LOADED DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL GREATER THAN 6,000 SF, LESS THAN 10,000 SF	250	230	480
4 FRONT-LOADED DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL LESS THAN 6,000 SF	110	100	210
5 REAR-LOADED DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY GREATER THAN 6,000 SF, LESS THAN 10,000 SF	0	0	0
6 REAR-LOADED DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY UP TO 6,000 SF	0	0	0
7 ATTACHED RESIDENTIAL - AFFORDABLE UNITS	66 25	90 30	156
8 ATTACHED RESIDENTIAL 2 OR MORE STORIES - AFFORDABLE UNITS	110 110	0 0	110
9 MULTI-FAMILY	0	0	0
TOTAL	617	480	1097

NOTE:

1. THE PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL RESIDENTIAL HOUSING TYPES DEPICTED ABOVE MAY BE ADJUSTED UP BY A MAXIMUM OF 10 PERCENT.

A graphic shows more project details. Image courtesy Sarasota County

