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## BOARDROOM REPORT

*News from recent REIS board meetings*

**Luncheon Programs:**

"Building America's Newest Children's Hospital - and what it means for Southwest Florida" is the topic for the February 12th luncheon, sponsored by [Forge Engineering, Inc.](#)

March 12th luncheon will be sponsored by [Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.](#)

REIS welcomes suggestions for programs from members. Please convey your ideas to [Sean Ellis](#), 239.337.3850. Sponsorships for future luncheons, workshops and social events are available. Contact [Jean Gruss](#), 239.275.2230, for details.

**Scholarship Programs:**

Additional contributions are needed to fund 2013 awards. We also need students at Southwest Florida colleges and universities to apply for scholarships to be awarded in the fall. Details are on the [REIS website](#). The deadline for applications for FGCU foundation scholarships is March 1.

**Membership:**

A limited number of memberships are now available to new members. The [membership application](#) is on the REIS website.

**Horizon Council:**

REIS continues to be a member of the Horizon Council and the REIS board has approved a \$500 annual contribution to the Council, a public-private board that advises the Lee County Board of Commissioners on economic development issues. Immediate Past President Kim Donnelly represents REIS on the Council this year.

**Marketing Opportunity:**

Two banner ads are available on the REIS website and one ad is available on the REIS REPORT, offering an economical way to maintain a presence at the forefront of an important audience. Contact [Bill Burdette](#), 239.936.1404, for details.

## IMPACT FEE PUBLIC HEARING

Lee County commissioners will consider a proposed 2-year suspension of impact fees at a public hearing on February 12. The suspension would apply to Road, Park, School, Fire and EMS impact fees and would become effective February 13, 2013 if approved. The meeting begins at 9:30 in Commission Chambers in the County Courthouse.

At the same hearing, commissioners will also consider adopting proposed amendments to the Land Development Code, proposed by the Horizon Council Business Issues Task Force to reduce red tape and streamline the permitting and development approval processes. Review the amendments at [Community Development Dept.](#)

## LEE PLAN UPDATE UNDERWAY

Proposed amendments include substantial changes to the Transportation and Parks, Recreation & Open Space elements which may impose on development to provide additional bike paths, walkways and recreation or green space. Proposed amendments may be viewed at Dept. of Community Development [website](#), with the exception of the Future Land Use Element which county staff is still preparing. Comments may be submitted at any time at the [Town Hall website](#). The proposed Future Land Use amendment will be reviewed by the Local Planning Agency (LPA) in the next few months. Public hearings on all of the proposed amendments will be posted on the [REIS website](#) calendar of events.

## SPECIAL REIS GUEST INVITATION

Now is the perfect time to treat a colleague, customer, or perhaps a student to a great lunch, an interesting program, and the camaraderie of fellow professionals. REIS members are encouraged to bring guests to the March luncheon and any guest registered by a member may attend at the member rate of \$25. Just select the "guest of member" ticket when registering your guests on the REIS website.



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## MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Stay at the leading edge of the economic recovery by attending programs to analyze economic and real estate trends. Check the calendar on the [REIS website](#) for more information and links to event sites.

**Bonita/Estero Market Pulse** offers presentations by Federal Reserve Bank 4th District President Sandra Planalto; Dr. Gary Jackson, director of Regional Economic & Research Institute at FGCU; and Bradley Hunter, director of Metrostudy's South Florida Division on February 15.

**MarketWatch: Real Estate 2013** reviews and forecasts local trends, with former REIS President Stan Stouder, CCIM, and REIS member Randy Thibaut, on Feb. 26.

**Cape Coral VIZ Forum** offers updates on development opportunities surrounding the new VA Healthcare Center. Presented by Cape Coral Economic Development Office on Feb. 28 at Cape Coral Yacht Club.

## NEW CATALYSTS FOR GROWTH

Plans for major development projects are advancing throughout Southwest Florida and offer potential for further infrastructure development and collateral commercial and residential growth.

America's Gateway Logistics Center is an international distribution center planned on a 4,700 acre site in Moore Haven. The site fronts on US 27 and SR 78, with 4 miles of railway frontage. The project is being developed by landowners Lykes Bros. and A. Duda & Sons.

[www.americasgatewaylc.com](http://www.americasgatewaylc.com)

Airglades International is a planned storage and distribution center planned at Airglades Airport just west of Clewiston. The airport is owned by Hendry County, who also owns the 4 adjacent sections of land. The site is at the crossroads of major state and US highways.

Hacienda Lakes is a mixed use project planned for a 2,262 acre site east of Naples. The project has received approval from US Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District for 1,760 homes, 327,000 sf of retail space, 70,000 sf of office space, 135 hotel rooms, 140,000 sf of business park or educational facility, a public school, and 1,500 acres of preserves.

## ENDING COMMERCIAL LEASE TAX

Legislation (SB656 / HB 629) has been filed to phase out the sales tax on commercial rental property. The bills would provide for incremental reduction and eventual repeal of the tax. According to Florida Realtors, Florida is the only state that taxes commercial rents, which is a competitive disadvantage in economic development efforts. In addition to the 6% state sales tax, some counties also charge a discretionary surtax. Sales tax is assessed on "total rents paid," which may include related charges such as insurance, property taxes, and maintenance. Florida Realtors is also seeking legislation to specify that pass-through charges should not be taxable as rent if the landlord does not mark them up.

## BONITA LOOKING FOR GROWTH

The Bonita Springs City Council has approved a package of 11 incentive programs to encourage business relocation and expansion, including cash referral fees for leads.

City Council is also looking into creating a master plan to increase density and improve the environmental function of 5,000 acres in the Density Reduction / Groundwater Recharge Area (DR/GR). City Manager Carl Schwing and Mayor Ben Nelson assert that regulated development could improve the area's natural resources.

## CHARLOTTE ENTERPRISE ZONE

The Florida Dept. of Economic Opportunity has approved the Charlotte County Enterprise Zone, which provides incentives for businesses to locate there. The Zone runs from Charlotte County Airport to Murdock Village, including large areas along the US 41 corridor. The Enterprise Zone Strategic Development Plan was adopted by County Commissioners in December and is posted on the [Economic Development Office website](#).

## MONTGOMERY APPOINTED TO WATER RESOURCES BOARD

Former REIS President Neale Montgomery has been appointed to the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Water Resources Advisory Committee. The Committee advises SFWMD and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force on water resources.



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