Head: **Housing & Retail Meet In New Estero Oaks Community**

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Photo attached: 3-D rendering of Estero Oaks courtesy of Royal Palm Development

*“If everyone is* *moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.” - Henry Ford*

If Ford had been a community planner, he might have been describing the recent happenings in the Village of Estero, where the once small village’s visionary growth efforts now see the community poised to become a center of industry and education.

These days, young families, students, as well as professionals transferring from up North seem to be flocking to the community, placing Estero on the brink of what appears to be a very bright future. But, as with all growth, there have been a few pains. Until recently, the obvious question has been, with so much growth, where will all these people live?

Estero Oaks, a new mixed-use development set to break ground soon, plans on providing a substantial answer. Slated to begin construction at the corner of Estero Parkway and Three Oaks Parkway, the 36 acre planned community will provide not only a host of complementary commercial uses, but 280 one-to-three bedroom luxury apartments, as well.

Oakbrook Properties, a local owner and developer of residential and commercial properties, manages the investment group for Estero Oaks. The group came together to fund the project in 2008, after the recession stalled the development of what was intended to be a neighborhood shopping center development. A commissioned market study revealed that, for people saving for a down payment on a home or for those recently transferred here, there was a genuine need for an affordable rental community.

With projects including the nearby master planned Coconut Point, (home of the Simon Town Center), Lee Memorial Medical Village and recently, the Hertz world headquarters, Oakbrook Properties’ significant experience in mixed use projects provided the perfect match.

“Estero Oaks will absolutely meet the market need,” says Ned Dewhirst, Senior Vice President of Oakbrook Properties. Additionally, it will provide convenient access to Florida Gulf Coast University, Southwest Florida International Airport and the bustling 1-75 corridor. The project has also benefitted from the recent construction of the new interstate overpass.

It was important to Oakbrook Properties to not lose a sense of community for the project, despite the explosive growth the area is experiencing. According to Dewhirst, they wanted the project to be a compact, cohesive design that encouraged a pedestrian-friendly environment similar to Coconut Point, but on a smaller scale. Strict design standards for architecture, signage, lighting and landscaping will govern the project build out for both residential and commercial uses.

Early into the design phase, Oakbrook Properties met with Daniel Kodsi, CEO and Steven Goldfarb, President of the Gulf Coast Division of Royal Palm Development, who had also developed similar projects. Kodsi and Goldfarb shared their vision for a multi-family apartment community, built around a repositioned four-acre lake and within walking distance of planned retail, entertainment, offices and public open spaces. Unlike some communities, however, residences will not be built on top of the retail spaces. In the Estero Oaks plan, residents won’t need to feel as though their homes are part of a shopping center. Instead, they will enjoy convenient access from their homes.

“We designed landscaped boardwalks for the use of walkers and bikers, so the whole community will be connected. This will include local restaurants and entertainment venues, a small grocery, maybe a nail salon and bank, an urgent care clinic, some office space, and a gas station for ease of use by the residents,” says Kodsi.

 “If you live at Estero Oaks,” he continues, “you won’t walk more than a few steps out of your door to meet most of your needs—and many of your neighbors. We want to foster a sense of community.”

The apartments themselves will be built according to seven floorplans designed to be versatile and maximize space. These will range in square footage from 800 to 1,400. Built with a nod to environmental stewardship, using green practices, the apartments will feature high level, eco-friendly finishes and the latest in building technologies. Community amenities will include a pool/spa and fitness center, with rooms set aside for massage and yoga classes.

“People are interested in an active lifestyle and want to make the best use of our wonderful Southwest Florida weather,” says Goldfarb, himself an area resident for many years. “The site plan for Estero Oaks is one of the most innovative I have ever seen and the project is being built for today’s active Floridians.”

Listing agents for Estero Oaks are Andrew DeSalvo, MBA, ALC (Broker) and his partner, Matt Stepan, CCIM of Premier Commercial, Inc. DeSalvo has had a long relationship with Royal Palm Development, having worked with the company on several projects in the area. He and Matt Stepan brought the ownership group together by connecting long-standing real estate clients with whom they had done business in the past.

DeSalvo and Stepan will handle sales of the commercial outparcels. Currently, there are three pending sales out of the eight available out parcels. The apartment rentals will be handled by Royal Palm Development.

“Estero Oaks is fortunate enough to be completing sales and attracting interest from national companies of such high caliber that I think it speaks volumes about the development itself,” says DeSalvo. “Along with local and regional restaurants, entertainment venues, medical and office retailers, Estero Oaks is proving to be a very attractive location.”

Estero Oaks will have four main entrances: two on Three Oaks Parkway and two on Estero Parkway. “The latter is rapidly becoming a major East-West arterial road, much the same as Corkscrew and Alico Roads,” says Stepan, “and will prove to be a significant corridor in the future, with Walmart on one end and FGCU on the other.”

The powers-that-be in Estero itself applaud the project.

Chamber of Commerce President Jeff Maas says, “With the influx of young people and businesses, and with the Hertz build-out underway, Estero needs just such affordable residences; especially ones that add to the community’s diversity like Estero Oaks.”

Maas has been an Estero resident for more than two decades and served on the Chamber Board for 10 years. Over the years, he has seen a lot of changes and is proud to be serving as Chamber President during such a historic times for Estero.

“With plenty of land still left to build upon in this area,” says Maas, “the Chamber hopes many more have such high design standards as are being used in this project. We welcome Estero Oaks and the contribution they are making to help Estero create a great future.”

Construction has been awarded to Brooks & Freund of Fort Myers. Ground breaking on Estero Oaks will take place soon and the infrastructure is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. The first buildings will be opened in June, 2016 and the others are to be completed by July, 2016.

For commercial sales information, contact Premier Commercial, Inc. at 239-992-1200.

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