
CONA COMMENTS



SARASOTA'S ONLY COUNTY-WIDE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

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Sheriff Tom Knight answers questions from neighborhood leaders at March 8 CONA meeting

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight will talk about neighborhood safety and answer questions at CONA's March 8 meeting, 7 pm at the Sarasota Garden Club at 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts). Many CONA neighborhoods are concerned about increases in crime incidents, and this meeting will be a good opportunity for neighborhood leaders to ask our new sheriff about his future plans for dealing with neighborhood crime.

CONA, the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, is a county-wide coalition of over 70 neighborhood and condominium associations and individuals, organized around making Sarasota County more neighborhood friendly. Members of the public and the media, as well as CONA members, are invited to attend and ask questions.



Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight talks about neighborhood safety at March 8 CONA meeting.

South County HOA protecting Englewood

By Bill Zoller

Englewood seems to be the focus of a lot of activity these days with attempts in the Englewood area to move some ill-conceived land use changes forward. Recently, two rezoning petitions involving the **776 Corridor Plan**, which applies to Englewood, were unanimously denied by the county commissioners. Both proposals were variations on ones that had been in the works for the past few years. They had first been proposed back when overdevelopment efforts were going gangbusters, and they finally made their way to a hearing the week of February 15th. Fortunately, CONA member **Olde Englewood Village HOA** organized powerful facts to present to the BCC to provide solid reasons to deny these petitions. CONA individual and homeowner members who deserve recognition for this effort include **Dawn Moore, Cathy Cevoli, Don Schilke, John Quinn, CONA board member Carolyn Pope**, and others who do the homework required to counter the rosy (and often inaccurate) information provided by developers, and present the information to the BCC with respectful eloquence.

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Has your neighborhood joined CONA? Costs \$35 per year. Go to CONA's website for info on www.conasarasota.org

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The View from South County: Englewood's neighborhoods need more community redevelopment help

By Don Schilke

There are days when I walk about my Englewood neighborhood and am convinced that I live in the trash capital of Florida's southwest. This is because of the imaginative mixture of trash that too many of my neighbors throw in the swales. You would not believe the things that I find along the roads. I've lived in 18 different places during my life and never have I been anyplace where such refuse has been thrown out car windows, including actual bags of garbage. Does this happen where you live?

My street, Artists Ave in Olde Englewood, is posted for 30 mph. Far too many cars greatly exceed that speed, 40, 50 & even 60 mph. And then there are the morons who risk everybody's life and property who do not even slow down, but rather roll through, or recklessly blast through the 4-way stop signs which are three lots from my home. (I was the one who got the 2-way stops changed to 4-way).

I have collected the published crime reports in the CRA district and am about to place pins in the blocks where these perpetrators live. Since June, 2009, I have collected 62 such crime reports. Three of my personal friends in this defined area have had their homes burglarized. I don't know where I'm going with this, but I've visited with the new community deputy sheriff, who expressed interest. I am glad Sherriff Knight will be at CONA's 8 March meeting.

Over the last three years I have reported 99 housing, vehicle, refuse and grass violations to code enforcement. My morning walks keep me alive and help clean up the neighborhoods. The vast majority of my citations have been cleaned up but it remains a whack the mole game. Most of the problem is because this county has almost no ordinances to enforce renter's violations. Most of the municipalities across the U.S. have such codes. Why doesn't Sarasota County?.

Indian Mound Park, the midden itself, has been allowed to become a shambles covered with exotics. I have become Chairman of **Friends of the Indian Mound Park**, a group of volunteers from the **Lemon Bay Garden Club**, the **Olde Englewood Village Homeowners Association**, the **Lemon Bay Historical Society** and the **Native Plant Society**. We are now making progress, but the park never should have been allowed to get ugly. Schilke, *next column*

CONA's Mission Statement



CONA exists to: (1) further the overall interests and provide a voice for homeowner and condominium associations and neighborhood groups throughout Sarasota County, Florida; (2) provide practical association-related information to and encourage networking between member associations on common concerns and issues; (3) urge local and state government to encourage sensible growth and protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible development, adverse environmental impacts and other actions adverse to Sarasota County's neighborhoods and the overall public interest.

Schilke, continued

County Commissioner Shannon Staub is aware of our efforts at Indian Mound Park and has been supportive.

Dearborn Street and its businesses have been the entire focus of the **Englewood Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)** efforts, in spite of the simple fact that blight and deterioration are the governing findings for its establishment. don't Englewood's neighborhoods deserve more attention.

The surrounding neighborhoods, where crime and housing deterioration prevail, are now being addressed by an effort initiated by the **Olde Englewood Village Homeowners Association**. It is promoting the County Home Repair program through the good offices of the CRA. It is too early to report success.

Did you know? CONA is Sarasota County's only county-wide neighborhood coalition!

Get involved. Join CONA today?

- Costs only \$35 per year for neighborhood group or association.
- Personal (nonvoting) memberships are available for individuals (not organizations) for only \$20 per year.

[Go to CONA's website for membership forms](#)



County Commissioner Nora Patterson thinks 776 plan should be revisited

Zoller continued from P 1

The 776 Corridor Plan continues to generate a great deal of dissatisfaction among Englewood residents, and many are now calling for the county to scrap this plan entirely. One aspect that causes a lot of concern is that some of the very county planning staff who developed the Plan have since left the county and now represent the petitioners who come forward to ask for changes that increase density and intensity in the Englewood area. While this might appear to be a conflict of interest, there is nothing to prevent it. Attending a hearing with this situation in play can seem like watching an "in" game with the residents the ones on the outside.

Many Englewood residents care passionately about their "village", and they work hard to fend off attempts to turn it into just another "growth" hub. While they want successful businesses in their village, they do not want to sacrifice the small-town, old-time feel. Fortunately, the BCC heard and understood their concerns at the recent hearings. There will be more pressure, though, as developers look at vacant properties in the area and calculate the profits to be made through the stroke of a pen (or 3 votes) to increase density or intensity on those properties. This may well be the time for Englewood and the county to re-think the future plans for the area. In order for that to happen, the residents need to let the county know that they might want to consider that task. It was mentioned by residents at the hearings and by **Commissioner Nora Patterson**, so there may be some momentum at this time. Commissioner Patterson's remark about revisiting the 776 Corridor Plan was tempered by a cautionary note that there may not be funding to be able to undertake the planning at this time, but I suspect that it would be possible to make a decision to undertake that project. Step one: decide to re-do the Plan; Step 2: figure out how to accomplish it.

Let's hope that the Englewood community will come together to support a new plan for their village and surrounding area. It has become obvious that the current plan is liked by very few people.



Should you vote yes on Amendment 4?

What is Amendment 4 and why is it important to neighborhoods?

Amendment 4 is a proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution sponsored by Florida Hometown Democracy, a non-partisan, grass-roots group. Over 1,000,000 Florida voters signed petitions to place this citizens' reform on the November 2010 ballot. If passed, Amendment 4 will give Florida citizens a vote on future growth in their communities.

Each of us has a huge stake in growth decisions that can drastically alter our community's future. Each community has adopted its own comprehensive plan, a long-term master plan for sensible growth. Currently, elected city and county commissioners have exclusive power to make changes to the plan. Rising taxes, falling home values, gridlocked roads, dwindling water supplies and Florida's disappearing beauty are just some of the consequences of politicians' often rubber stamping developer initiated speculative changes to the master plan. Simply stated, approving Amendment 4 gives voters **veto power** over such growth changes in the future.

One citizen's opinion on why Amendment 4 should be approved

Amendment 4 should be approved. Why? It's so simple. **We ordinary citizens have found that, with some notable exceptions, our elected representatives seem to forget about us as soon as they are elected.** They start remembering us again when it is time for re-election. It's like clockwork. Just follow the money.

Amendment 4 will give power back to the people, finally. Changing and toughening growth-management laws will not work because soon the politicians will gut them all over again.... Rather, trust the wisdom of the people and vote for Amendment 4 in November. Florida can be protected only if Amendment 4 is in the Florida Constitution. It's so simple. Whom do you trust more, the people or the politicians?

Richard T. Creedon, Feb 25: reprinted from Letters to the Editor *Orlando Sentinel*



Environmental center grounds in North Port could look like this.

CONA supports proposed North Port environmental center in

A plan by a North Port environmental group, People for Trees, to establish an "Environmental Heritage Center" near North Port has been endorsed by CONA's Board of Directors. Alice White, founder of People for Trees, said she hoped the proposed environmental center which might eventually include interactive exhibits and tree houses, would become "a place that would teach people what we have out there, how to embrace the real Florida."

The group wants North Port to buy the land, which is north of the city limits on the west end of Tropicaire Boulevard, bordering a 500-acre parcel of county-owned protected land that connects to the 25,000-acre Carlton Reserve. The City, whose financing was based on permitting new development, is in tough financial straits and is now seeking financial support from Sarasota County on the acquisition.

The property, previously platted for development, is said to have been once under contract for development for \$770,000. People for Trees has proposed that North Port annex and purchase the land for the environmental center, which would be administered by People for Trees, the Lemon Bay Conservancy and possibly others.

If approved by the City and Sarasota County, the acquisition would dovetail with Sarasota County's possible acquisition of almost 6,000 acres of wetlands and environmentally valuable lands previously annexed by North Port to encourage a massive, now failed, 13,000 home proposed development known as Isles of Athena.

Public input sought on new Sarasota gateway landscaping on U.S. 301

Sarasota, FL: The public is invited to provide input on a significant landscape improvement project which will be located along U.S. 301 in North Sarasota. The discussion will take place Thurs., March 11, 2010 at 6:00 pm at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex, 1845 34th Street.



Guess who gets hurt when big money gets into local politics? Hint: it's not the big money folks.

Developers back Siesta Key architect in county commission race

They are at it again. The sponsors of a political fundraiser often tell a lot about a candidate's potential views and actions once elected. A list of those sponsoring a fundraiser for Siesta Key architect **Mark Smith** in his upcoming county commission race against incumbent **Nora Patterson** makes for interesting reading. The list includes many of the same folks that organized or supported electioneering PACs which sponsored misleading TV ads in earlier county commission races. This group, is apparently hoping their candidate, **Mark Smith**, will bring a return to a boom and bust fast growth county commission beholden to developers. Sponsors of the event include construction contractors **Donnie McDonough and Fred Derr**. Real estate magnate **Tom Dabney** was the host of the event.

Helpful tips for being a good condo or HOA association member

- Get involved and make sure your association has correct contact info for you.
- Read , understand and comply with governing condo or HOA documents.
- Pay your assessments on time. Do not be a straggler.
- Get to know and be courteous to fellow association members.
- Try and understand your board's positions and why they have taken them. Be supportive if you can.