

Cost-Benefit Study of Platted Lands

Platted lands subdivisions. This Study will quantify and analyze the costs and benefits associated with the continued build-out scenario development of antiquated platted lands subdivisions in the State of Florida. The purpose of this Study is to provide economic guidance for the Legislature and local governments to make appropriate fiscal policy and decisions for the sustainable future occupation of these problematic lands. For purposes of this Study, ‘antiquated platted lands subdivisions’ are defined as follows:

A platted subdivision of land, recorded or approved by a county governing body prior to July 1, 1985, that is determined by the governing body or bodies of the local government(s) having jurisdiction there over as meeting the following criteria: (a) the subdivision was originally marketed as a land sales community; (b) the subdivision was originally divided into a minimum of 5,000 residential lots; (c) the subdivision, as platted, is marked by an inadequate supply of land for commercial, industrial, civic, public education, or utilities uses to serve the anticipated built out population; and (d) the subdivision evidences an inefficient and fiscally unbalanced land use pattern.

The above definition is intended to include the state’s largest land sales subdivisions, including incorporated municipalities. Examples of these communities include Port Charlotte and Rotonda in Charlotte County, Golden Gate in Collier County, Palm Coast in Flagler County, Cape Coral and Lehigh Acres in Lee County, Poinciana in Osceola County, Port St. Lucie in St. Lucie County, and North Port in Sarasota County.

Lehigh Acres. The Study will focus on Lehigh Acres in Lee County, taking advantage of the extensive investment Lee County has already made in this unincorporated platted area. The March 2009 *Lehigh Acres Comprehensive Planning Study* by Wallace Roberts Todd, LLC, with extensive participation from County government and local residents, provides an analytical basis upon which this Study can build. The *Lehigh Acres Comprehensive Planning Study* divided the community into three growth tiers for planning purposes—*Tier 1*, which evidences the most development, and which was expected to approach built-out conditions within ten (10) years; *Tier 2*, which is marginally developed, and was expected to approach build-out within 20 years; and *Tier 3*, which is sparsely developed and will not reach build-out within 20 years-- 60 years after these lots were originally subdivided for sale to the public.

Deliverables. The Study will:

1. Determine the *total* and *per unit revenues* from Tiers 1, 2 and 3, on an annual and accumulated basis, according to the following assumptions:
 - *No Growth Scenario*—current populations remain constant (i.e. zero growth) each year for 30 years.

- *Moderate Growth Scenario*—occupational populations continue to increase at a 1-2% annualized basis for a period of 30 years, but will not reach a built-out point.
- *Build-out Scenario*—occupational populations increase at a constant rate until 90-95% of all platted lots are occupied.

The term ‘revenues’ embraces sales taxes, *ad valorem* taxes, impact fees, special district assessments, MST/BUs, utilities fees, and other fees and assessments that are currently charged to Lehigh Acres residents and property owners, for vacant and developed lands. In all three scenarios, existing revenue sources will be assumed constant over time, and will be adjusted for inflation. Existing service providers (e.g. the Lehigh Acres Fire District) will be assumed to continue in existence and performing their duties as they do at present. Revenues specifically attributable to certain cost centers, e.g., special district assessments, impact fees, etc., will be sequestered to those cost centers

2. Determine the expected *total* and *per unit cost of infrastructure and services* from Tiers 1, 2, and 3, on an annual and accumulated basis, according to the criteria in item #1, above. These services will include, at a minimum:

- Public education, as provided by the Lee County School Board.
- General government core level of service, as provided by Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BCC).
- Law enforcement, as provided by the Lee County Sheriff’s Department.
- Water and Sewer service.
- Solid waste service.
- Fire suppression, as provided by Lehigh Acres Fire District.
- Emergency management, as provided by Lee County EMS.
- Road construction and maintenance, as provided by Lee County DOT
- Community and regional parks, as provided by Lee County Parks and Recreation.
- Drainage as provided by the East Lee County Drainage Authority.
- Street lighting, as provided by the Lehigh Acres Street Lighting MSTU.

3. **Compare the total benefits with the total costs.** Determine the **mean value** and minimum *ad valorem* tax rate and other fee rates at which platted lands in Tiers 1, 2 and 3 will generate sufficient revenues to cover the costs of infrastructure and services.

Qualifications:

The successful project team selected to perform this Study will have expertise in urban economics urban planning, and Florida’s growth management and planning laws.