

Lehigh Pride Team
John C. Miller, Chair 334-0313
The Beautification and Conservation Subcommittee
Lehigh Acres Community Planning Corporation
P.O. Box 1408, Lehigh Acres, FL 33970

August 2, 2006

A summary of the public's response to open meetings of the Lehigh Pride Team.

This will be a list with some explanations. Visioning sessions were held at the LSHS cafeteria and Veterans Park. A Planning Officials Training Seminar was conducted by the University of Florida Extension Service at Veterans Park. Meetings were held to discuss citizen's ideas and requests and appeals were made to the public by various means inviting everyone into the various LACPC subcommittee's forums. Beginning with the February 2, 2005 Summary of Visioning Sessions Findings, also see the website address on the footer below where much of this information is available.

1. We should adopt a road as an example to encourage the community to volunteer and take pride in the appearance of our town and join the LACPC work.
2. Attempt to stop building on lots that are underwater most of the year and save those areas for natural green space. This effort failed for several reasons. Reports were published on our findings.
3. Attempt to save wetland lots by trading them for dry lots and encourage water recharge.
4. Convert the old Lehigh Acres Development Corp properties along Lee Boulevard into landscaped county parks where right of ways prevent building.
5. Connect Parks along Canals using ECWCD properties with bike paths with plantings where appropriate.
6. Suggest that canal right of ways could be planted by adjoining property owners with flowers and kept up by those residents.
7. Build launch ramps for canoes and paddle boats going into the canal system. Support attempts to connect the canals to the Caloosahatchee as a canoeing opportunity.
8. Designate parking areas for trucks to get them off of residential lots.
9. Specify uniform signage codes.
10. Encourage garden clubs to take up the beautification of residential and public properties.
11. Locate and coordinate all conservation clubs and associations to beautify the community.
12. Broaden the Code Enforcement effort by participating.
13. Raise money for beautification efforts through the sale of tapes, T-shirts, and postcards.
14. Jim Fleming obtained a donated supply of T-Shirts and Eugene Borosch provided Lehigh Acres post cards and musical tapes for resale and the Newport Business Service donated proceeds from future card sales. Thus \$500.00 was deposited into the general fund of the LACPC.
15. Set up a display at the 2004 Spring Festival to attract volunteers, take suggestions for beautification, and enlist neighbors in the planning effort. A planting demonstration was conducted at the park lake and LPT members participated in adding trees to the property.
16. The Lehigh pride Team sponsored an Earth Day cleanup of Lee Boulevard then later decided by majority vote to suspend community activity. A plan to get landscapers to help the ECWCD bring unwanted Sable Palms to the road intersections with canals was dropped at that time.
17. Set standards for covering and beautifying the many utility facilities that lay exposed along our streets. FGUA offered to paint up the Alabama/Homestead lift station then withdrew their offer.
18. Establish criteria for voluntary homeowner participation in the "Florida Yards and Gardens" conservation and mandate builder's use of more native plants and trees in yard landscaping. The high rate of runoff is contributing to our water problems and could be curbed to an extent by mulching and planting of more gardens.
19. Liberal space allowance should be provided for homeowners to create shade and native plant gardens to cool the areas, add to groundwater restoration, conserve motor fuel, decrease fertilizer use, and beautify the community.
20. The beautification of Duplexes was supported to standards like new single family homes have.
21. The dumping of trash in Lehigh is appalling and the county should take a more aggressive stand against the practice.

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22. A Lehigh Look is presented in the Spikowski Plan for the old Lehigh Acres CRA. A few members who participated in this work stated a desire to continue this kind of architecture in keeping with old Florida custom. Beautification by this means is in opposition to the Mediterranean look that almost all developers have embraced in Southwest Florida today. The Mediterranean practice has gone on unchallenged. It is important for the LACPC to approve some system of established décor because the haphazard choices add to the disorganized appearance as one travels through the town. As chairman I would like for the subcommittee and board to review several comparisons of building style found in Florida with the Planner and pick a few that suit our situation.
23. A used car dealer has complained that he is forced to hide his inventory with plants and a berm because he was faced with a new ordinance while older car lots are obviously plain and ugly. Furthermore cars are parked for sale on street corners all over town. Codes prohibit this practice but are only sporadically enforced.
24. Another eyesore is the dozens of tacky plastic signs sticking up in the road right of ways. Code Enforcement has placed an officer in Lehigh on Saturdays to remove the signs and alert the owners to the fines for doing this. During the week Code Officers always pull up these signs. Citizens are encouraged to remove all signs from right of ways except dated yard sale signs.
25. A Subcommittee member suggested exchanging flower and plant cuttings or seedlings among residents to proliferate the emergence of greenery and flowers. This is a pleasurable way to promote beauty and friendship.
26. A good selection of native plants are provided in publications from the State. They survive well in their original settings. This information is useful in picking plants that survive the winter drought and occasional frost in Lehigh Acres. We are in zone 9a while Fort Myers and areas West of I-75 are wetter and warmer because of the proximity to the Gulf and estuaries. The Florida State Agricultural Extension Service has booklets of plant categories. They are also available at some native plant nurseries. The planting of tropical plants is chancy and disappointing here when they wither or die. Natural Florida has a green look with flowering plants often hidden by the lush shrubs and trees.
27. We have been fortunate to have the advice of professional horticulturalists, Master gardeners, and Landscapers. We can get answers for citizens or tell them where to call.
28. We want nice welcome signs at all of our gateway entrances to Lehigh Acres. The county will not provide these and require that any beautification associated with signs have bonded support in ten year contracts for upkeep. Local citizens and business owners or associations will have to make this happen. Our one sign on Lee Boulevard west is small and neglected. We will have to find a sponsor or the County may remove it.
29. As a point of information, we did make an extensive inquiry as to the nature of certain circular swamps that are surveyed and platted for lots. These are not sinkholes in the sense of limestone washouts found in other areas of Florida. Our swamps are referred to as Cypress bogs and represent a more stable rock system but it is suspected that they do supply water to the higher levels of the aquifer. Hydrologists state that sink holes could develop here if the water levels get too low allowing sandstone layers to collapse. Geologists have told me that some of our swampy areas have unstable composition due to accumulated rotted vegetation.
30. An advisory was given to the ECWCD regarding plants and bike trail design for the Sunshine linear Park. We asked that shade and benches be provided at reasonable intervals to give rest to trail users. We want to see slight undulations in the trail, up down, left, right turns and mild slopes. An example of plants and benches was shown based on the path in front of the County Tax offices on Thompson St. in Fort Myers and on the new linear trail by Metro Blvd.

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