



Barren Collier Companies

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE SNAPSHOT

Industry insiders explain what's taking shape in eastern Collier County

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA



Habitat Collier

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The Pointe at Founders Square; the new Kaicas neighborhood subdivision under construction by Habitat Collier; and a bird's-eye view of the 55-acre Founders Square at the southwest corner of Immokalee Road and Collier Boulevard (County Road 951).



Barren Collier Companies

For more than 15 years, Collier County has been projecting that more than half of the population will eventually live in the eastern part of the county.

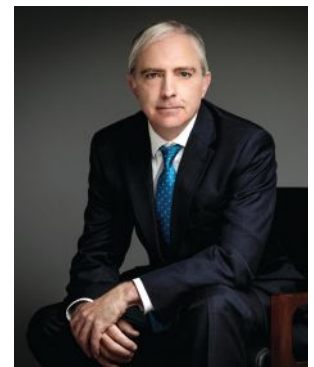
During that time, the town of Ave Maria began to flourish and other towns and large communities, including Big Cypress, SkySail, and Brightshore Village, have been approved.

Subdivisions are popping up along Oil Well Road, and new residences in Immokalee include the Kaicas subdivision by Habitat Collier and Casa Amigos from Rural Neighborhoods.

As REALTORS® know, residential construction on this scale means commercial will follow. Collier Enterprises, which is developing Big Cypress off Oil Well Road, has projected that this town alone could have more than 1.5 million square feet of commercial

and civic uses.

“All along Immokalee Road and Oil Well Road, there are a lot of rooftops planned,” says Stuart Tackett, a commercial broker and Commercial Committee Chair 2024 for Naples Area Board of REALTORS® (NABOR®). “Once they put in the new Publix out there (next to Palmetto Ridge High School) and put in utilities, all the way to Ave Maria will be developed with commercial.”



Stuart Tackett

GROWTH DRIVERS

Affordability is part of what is driving the growth. “The farther you are from the big pond, which is what I call the Gulf of Mexico, the less expensive the land prices are, and that confers to a lesser per-unit price,” explains District 5 Collier County Commissioner William “Bill” McDaniel, whose district includes the areas generally one mile east of CR-951 and north of I-75, encompassing Everglades City, Ave Maria, and Immokalee.

McDaniel is a 43-year Collier County resident in his third term as a Collier County commissioner. He has also been a REALTOR® in the county since 1987, currently owning The Realty Company and working as a broker on residential, commercial, and vacant land.

McDaniel says Collier County’s population is currently about 400,000 but is expected to reach 800,000 to 1 million at buildout. “We’re at the tipping point of our community where we move into the second half of our buildout,” he says.

Residents of these newly developed areas need everything from grocery stores and gas stations to restaurants and medical services.

Founders Square, at the corner of Immokalee Road and Collier

Boulevard (County Road 951), is an 85,000-square-foot, mixed-use development under construction by Barron Collier Companies. It will ultimately incorporate 400 luxury apartments, a Physicians Regional Medical Center, retail shops, and more. Several restaurants create a foodie hub at The Pointe at Founders Square.

Another hot spot is the 13-acre Randall Curve, which “has close to 350,000-square-feet of commercial that’s in the process of being developed,” McDaniel says. “There will be a new health-care facility operated by the Healthcare Network and other permitted uses, including a car wash and two restaurants.”

He says commercial development along Oil Well Road is anchored by Shoppes of Orange Blossom where the new Publix is being built, and future activity will include services such as fast food and a nail salon.



William "Bill" McDaniel

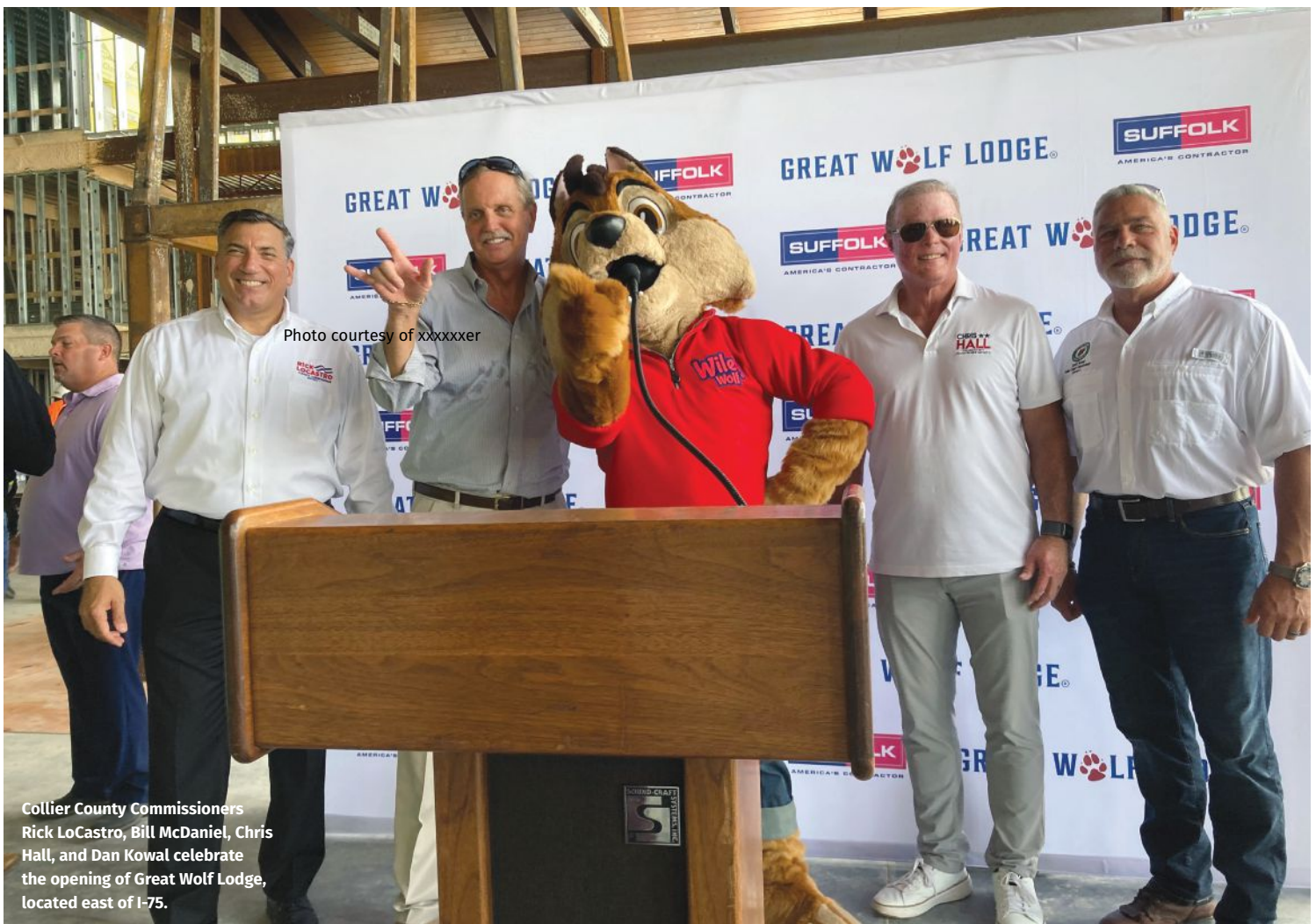


Photo courtesy of xxxxxx

Collier County Commissioners Rick LoCastro, Bill McDaniel, Chris Hall, and Dan Kowal celebrate the opening of Great Wolf Lodge, located east of I-75.

Courtesy of William "Bill" McDaniel



ALL ALONG IMMOKALEE ROAD AND OIL WELL ROAD, THERE ARE A LOT OF ROOFTOPS PLANNED," SAYS COMMERCIAL BROKER STUART TACKETT.



Darren Schoof



Chip Olson

The 13 acres of Randall Curve in the Orangetree section along Immokalee Road has a McDonald's and 7-11, with restaurants, retail, medical, and more planned.

INDUSTRIAL SPACE & INFRASTRUCTURE

Oil Well Road has also become attractive to light manufacturing companies which create jobs for residents moving to the area. Though headquartered on Immokalee Road near Goodlette-Frank Road, Arthrex also has a manufacturing facility on Oil Well Road near the entrance to Ave Maria. Dialum, a Chilean company, is building a glass processing factory on 10 acres within Ave Maria's Innovation Zone.

Available industrial space is tight. "Collier County has a 1 percent vacancy rate for industrial, and that's unheard of," says Tackett.

Eastern Collier County is attractive for manufacturing, production, and shipping companies because they can bring in raw materials and ship out finished goods easily by road access east to Miami and north through Fort Myers—by air through the Immokalee Airport. "We initiated an Internal Transaction Number for the Immokalee Airport, and myriad industries come with that expansion," McDaniel says of the designation that helps with international exportation and importation of goods.

He notes that 30,000 square feet of new hangars were constructed in spring 2024, with 100,000 square feet of hangars planned for 2025 and almost 200,000 square feet

of hangars in 2026. "The Immokalee Airport is going to carry Collier County off into economic stability," McDaniel predicts.

He added that road improvements and expansions to CR-951 and the I-75 exit 101 interchange; diverging diamonds at the 951, Pine Ridge Road, and Immokalee

Road interchanges; the 8-laning of I-75 commencing in 2026; the State Road 29 loop around Immokalee; and four-laning of State Road 29 to State Road 82—all funded by federal dollars—are important infrastructure enhancements that will help commercial and industrial businesses in eastern Collier County.

The location of Immokalee to Lee County and Lehigh Acres—with its affordability, residential development, and road widening—is going to bring more commercial investment to the area, says Darren Schoof, director of brokerage for RE 1 Advisor. He emphasizes that investors are ready: "People are out there with cash to spend but nothing to spend it on."

Chip Olson, CEO and broker of RE 1 Advisor, agrees. "There's nothing available and there is a limited number of real estate owners," he says. Olson noted that Barron Collier Companies is a major landowner and makes its own deals with investors wanting to fund strip malls and other commercial sites.

"It's in Barron Collier's court to decide what end uses will be for different parcels on Immokalee Road and that whole corridor," Tackett says.

Olson notes that his customers want to invest "where there are rooftops, and where they can get appreciation. Florida and Texas have demand because of our growth and because we are both business-friendly, tax-friendly states."

Olson says he has a medical client that needs to be near their client base and where

their employees live, which now tends to be North Naples and eastern Collier County. "They are looking at opening two more campuses in this area to retain and obtain employees who won't drive downtown," he says. "Nobody can afford to live along the coast, so they are moving inside and commercial follows those rooftops."

Managing traffic as the growth happens will be key, Schoof says. "This area was never meant to be built this way. The infrastructure was not thought of on a macro scale, so we've got to reassess and figure out how we can make this area more accessible." Environmental concerns and studies are important as development happens, he adds.

For residential REALTORS® interested in pursuing commercial business, Olson emphasizes that it can be complicated work. The issues can include zoning not allowing the proposed use, or not enough parking for the type of business, such as a gym where people spend a lot of time.

Tackett says it takes time to become established in commercial work and often years for a deal to close and the REALTOR® to get paid. "In residential, you might make a lot of money in your first year," he says. "Commercial takes several years to establish yourself and build relationships."

Schoof notes that residential closings might have one simple contract while a commercial deal could have a 25-page contract. "I encourage residential REALTORS® to take classes to learn about this and not dive in without doing that because you can get into trouble."

Ultimately, the industry insiders agree that commercial real estate is a vital market in Southwest Florida. "Collier County wouldn't have this growth without these investors," Olson says. "They're driving construction."

