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# ***HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT***

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

This Historic Preservation Element describes the historical backdrop of Fort Myers Beach and provides a guide for preserving its heritage. A “vision” is articulated for the future of the town that integrates the architectural, archaeological, and cultural heritage of Fort Myers Beach. Goals, objectives, and policies are presented that will enhance the town’s natural, historic, and cultural systems and ensure their sustainability for future generations.

The historic resources of Fort Myers Beach have been surveyed through Lee County historic and archaeological surveys that were conducted in 1986 and 1987 respectively, with a historic update in 1992. The 1989 Lee Plan contained a Historic Preservation Element with extensive information about the history of Lee County and a brief analysis of Estero Island’s historic resources taken from the survey documentation, which had identified about fifty sites of historic interest at Fort Myers Beach.

This new Historic Preservation Element for the Town of Fort Myers Beach focuses on the history of Estero Island and its

environs, maps the one hundred potentially historic structures identified to date, and identifies opportunities for furthering the town’s vision through preservation and stewardship of historic resources. In addition, the element analyzes Lee County’s historic preservation program for its potential use by the Town of Fort Myers Beach.

This element begins with an overview of the history of Fort Myers Beach and its environs, highlighting its evolution from an uninhabited island in the midst of ancient Indian cultures to today’s urbanized resort community.



***Figure 1, Fort Myers Beach School***

## OVERVIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY <sup>1</sup>

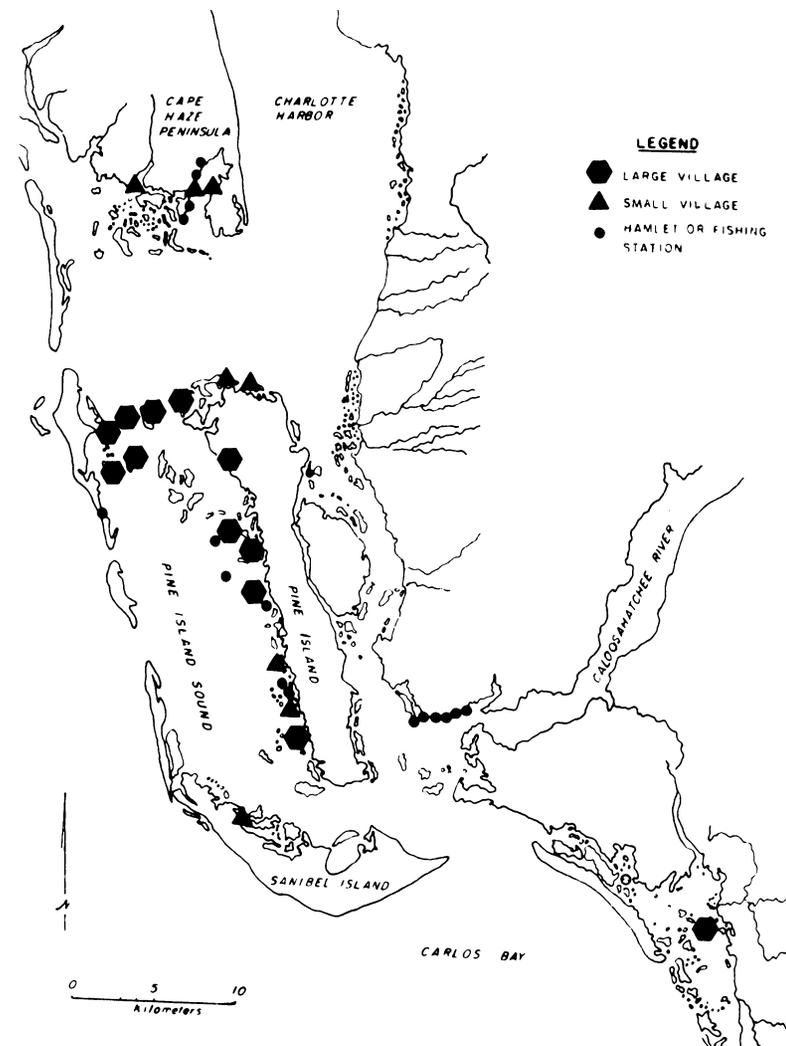
When Spaniards arrived in southwest Florida in the 16th century, they discovered a large well-established society of people, the Calusa. The Calusa were successful hunter-fisher-gatherers but also accomplished engineers and artists; they had sophisticated political and belief systems which included elaborate rituals and the concept of an afterlife. Masks, figureheads, boxes, and bowls unearthed in 1896 at the Key Marco site are among “the most renowned artifacts produced by Native Americans.” (Marquardt 1996, Gilliland 1975, Cushing 1973)

At their peak, the Calusa were dominant over much of the southern half of the Florida peninsula and received “tribute” from towns throughout south Florida. Their paramount chief, called Carlos by the Spanish, ruled his empire from an island town known as Calos, believed to be Mound Key. In 1566 over 4,000 men and women gathered to witness ceremonies in which the Calusa king made a temporary alliance with Spanish governor Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. (Marquardt 1996, Solís de Merás 1964)

The Calusa were a hunter-fisher-gatherer society that did not raise crops. They lived off the rich food resources of the highly productive estuarine environment (see map of their villages in Figure 2). For archaeologist Bill Marquardt, this raised the question that if the Calusa understood the complex and productive environment well enough to prosper for hundreds of years

<sup>1</sup>Special note should be given to the people whose study and writings have contributed directly to this overview: William H. Marquardt Ph.D., Curator in Archaeology for the Florida Museum of Natural History; Randolph J. Widmer Ph.D., archaeologist and author of *The Evolution of the Calusa*; Arden Arrington, public relations chair for the Randell Research Center at Pineland and owner of Calusa Coast Outfitters Educational Tours; Gloria Sajgo of the Lee County Planning Division; Rolfe F. Schell's *History of Fort Myers Beach*; and the 1989 Lee Plan Historic Preservation Element. The photographs in this element were provided courtesy of Lee County except where noted.

without damaging it, how far back did this knowledge go? His research provides solid evidence that the rich estuarine environment was established and was available to people much earlier than 500 BC as previously thought. Marquardt reports that the maritime adaptation of southwest Florida becomes archaeologically visible in deposits that began to accumulate around 4500



**Figure 2**, Late prehistoric settlement pattern (Widmer 1988)

BC, with evidence of oyster shell middens on Horr's Island in that period; he concludes that by 2800 BC, Horr's Island was occupied by people who exploited a variety of fish and shell fish. (Walker 1995, Marquardt 1992)

Further research and new techniques using a fine-screen sifting method revealed that fish as well as shellfish were the dietary staples of coastal peoples, and that plants such as saw palmetto, cabbage palm, and seagrape were used for food, fuel, and raw materials for the manufacture of tools, containers, clothing, shelter, watercraft, weapons, and fishing gear (including nets). Researchers have concluded that early settled people lived on the this coast year-around, much as the later Calusa people did. (Marquardt 1996)

Environmental archaeologist Karen Jo Walker's study of associated species that had lived on shellfish gathered for food, led to the documentation of sea level fluctuations which are important to understanding shallow estuarine settings. We now know from evidence at Pineland that the Gulf of Mexico rose in approximately 300 AD to a level four feet higher than it is today, and then dropped six feet within a 100-year period. Such research provides, in Walker's words, "powerful tools for the investigation of past and future global climatic processes." (Walker et al. 1994, Arrington 1997a)

In Marquardt's words, "The Calusa story lends itself very well to environmental education because the archaeological story is also the story of the Charlotte Harbor estuarine system [*of which Estero Island is a part*]. The Calusa way of life is the result of a long succession of decisions about how to relate to the physical environment and to other people, ...an example of how the study of the past teaches us about today's world." (Marquardt 1996)

Historical records and memoirs help weave together the history of Estero Island and its surroundings following the first known contact with the Spanish explorers. In 1513 Juan Ponce de León explored the area of Charlotte Harbor, Sanibel, and Estero Island

only two months after he made the first European landing on the east coast of Florida. His expedition was met by a hostile aboriginal group of Calusa Indians. Under pretense of arranging a meeting with Carlos, the Calusa were able to muster 80 war canoes to repel Ponce de León (Widmer 1988).

The Freducci map, dated to 1514-1515, appears to correlate with Ponce's voyage of discovery. The map provides a place name in the vicinity of Fort Myers Beach—Stababa, a native word—which was probably the name for Estero Bay. Most modern archaeologists agree that the village called Calos, the capital town of the Calusa Indians encountered by Ponce's expedition, was located on Mound Key, where the large mounds and shell middens can still be seen.

Ponce de León returned in 1521 (following the brief visits of three other Spanish explorers in the interim) with missionaries, domestic animals, and farm implements to establish a settlement. The Calusa attacked the settlement, wounding Ponce de León, who fled to Cuba where he died of his wounds.

Pedro Menéndez de Avilés arrived at Estero Bay in 1566 shortly after establishing St. Augustine. He had come to secure *La Florida* for Spain and to make the peninsula safe for shipwreck survivors, mainly Christians lost from Spain's yearly treasure fleets who were either killed or held captive by the Calusa. (Lyon 1974, Arrington 1997b).

Menéndez's first encounter with the Calusa makes a fascinating story. In his first meeting with the Calusa king Carlos, Menéndez invited him to come aboard his brigantine where they exchanged gifts. Menéndez was then invited to visit Carlos. The visit was a "gala affair" to which all Indians in the neighboring areas were invited, in order to put up a great show of strength. Menéndez brought 200 armed men, musicians, singers, and dancers. Carlos then presented Menéndez with his older sister in marriage. According to Rolfe Schell's retelling of this story, "Antonia, as she was named by the Spanish, had also been a

former wife of her brother Carlos. Menéndez, already married, and not wishing to couple with the not-too-comely sister, tried to refuse, but in the end was forced for diplomatic reasons to accept. The marriage was announced and consummated that evening. Later the bride was sent back to Havana for education in Christianity while her husband left to further explore the peninsula. Later, he returned her to her brother, who, incensed that there was no child and offended by Menéndez' neglect of his sister, told the Spanish to leave his country." (Lewis 1969, Schell 1980)

In 1567 the Spaniards established a fort and Jesuit mission, San Antonio de Carlos, in the capital town of the Calusa. The purposes of the fort/mission were to protect shipwrecked Spaniards from the Indians and convert the Calusa to Christianity. Calusa resistance to conversion and mounting tensions between the two groups resulted in conflict. In an attempt to bring the Indians under control, the Spanish soldiers stationed at the mission executed the Calusa king and two high-ranking nobles. This did little to change the deeply rooted problems, and later the Spaniards executed the new Calusa king and many other leaders. After witnessing the murder of a second king, the remaining Calusa burned their village and abandoned it. Shortly after this, the Spaniards abandoned the mission. (Lewis 1969, Marquardt 1994).

Many researchers believe that Mound Key was "Calos," the capital town of the Calusa. Geographically and archaeologically, the island meets a number of requirements that other southwest Florida archaeological sites lack. The Spaniards described the capital town as a village of a thousand people situated on an island in the middle of a bay two days' sail north of Havana. This places the capital somewhere between Key Marco (now Marco Island) and Punta Gorda. Of all the Calusa sites large enough to contain such a village, only Mound Key and Useppa Island are located "in the middle of a bay." However, Spanish artifacts dating to the sixteenth-century mission period have been found in significant quantities only on Mound Key. (Marquardt 1994)

The writings of Jesuit priest Juan Rogel and geographer López de Velasco reveal that the first mission was set up "in the court of the kings, ...two arquebus shots from the north shore." When the 1567 mission was established, the Spaniards probably moved into 36 Indian houses and built one house of their own. A "thicket fence" was constructed around the compound delineating the fort of San Antonio de Carlos. Assuming that the Calusa capital remained in the same location until a later Franciscan mission attempt in 1697, the location of the latter mission may be the same. The Franciscans tell of building their church near the house of the cacique (chief), and other Spanish chroniclers note that the missions were in identical locations. As in 1567, the 1697 missionaries estimated that approximately a thousand people inhabited the capital town. What actually happened to the thousand Calusa people who lived in the village of the king remains a mystery. (Lewis 1969, Hann 1991, Marquardt 1994)

In 1743, a Jesuit expedition from Cuba found a beleaguered remnant of the Calusa alongside remnants of natives of the Florida Keys, facing dissolution as a result of thirty years of attacks by natives identified as Uchise. Many of the Calusa migrated to Cuba and suffered heavy loss of life by disease there. By the 1750s, the Calusa culture as we now understand it had essentially been erased. (Marquardt 1987, Hann 1991)

By 1765, Cuban fisherfolk of Spanish descent had established fishing operations on San Carlos Bay, consisting of thatched homes with extensive sheds for drying fish and storehouses for provisions. By 1824 fishing ranchos were also located at Gasparilla Island, Shell Island, Fisherman's Key, Punta Rassa, and Estero Island. In 1832 a customs district was established to control the fisheries and to control smuggling. Seminoles began to appear in the area as they were forced south by the military and settlers in northern Florida. (Walker 1995, Lee Plan 1989)

Although corsairs and pirates probably visited both coasts of Florida during the late 1700s and early 1800s, much of the lore surrounding their activities in southwest Florida is exactly that — undocumented lore and local legend. Stories include that of the first honeymoon couple, Captain Rackam (Calico Jack) and Anne Bonny and their crew, said to have spent many days on Estero Island in 1720 while repairing their vessel. Stories attributed to Juan Gomez, a hermit who died near Panther Key in 1900 at the age of 73, tell of pirates escaping detection by sailing in behind Estero Island. One pirate, “Black Augustus,” retired to Black Island, south of Estero Island where he lived in poverty. The John Butterfield family, who squatted on Mound Key in the early 1870s, traded food with him until his death in 1884. (Schell 1980)

Mainland Indians rebelled against pressure from settlers moving deeper south into Florida following its purchase from Spain in 1821. Indians attacked a small group traveling with Major Francis L. Dade, and initiated in 1835 what was known as the Second Seminole War. (The first was a series of skirmishes from 1817 to 1821.) After seven years of fighting a war in the Indian style, seldom in the open, an agreement was made giving the few remaining Indians the territory from Charlotte Harbor and the Peace River on the north to Lake Okeechobee and Shark River on the east. Almost 4,000 Indians were deported during the war period. The Seminole wars broke out again in 1850, and a new post, Fort Myers, was established at Fort Harvie, which eventually became the town of Fort Myers. Other posts including Fort Dulaney at Punta Rassa, were re-established and then finally abandoned after 1858. (Schell 1980, Lee Plan 1989)

The 1862 Homestead Act allowed settlers to claim large homesteads. The first homestead in the general area was Frank Johnson’s, which included all of Mound Key. In the 1870s, the Sam Ellis family lived on the shell mound at what would become the end of Connecticut Avenue; they later moved to Sanibel Island. At that time there is said to have been one family each on Estero Island, Black Island, Mound Key, and Dog Key. In 1894 Dr. Cyrus Teed, leader of the Koreshan Unity, came to Estero Island.

Although he eventually established his religious community on the mainland along the Estero River, he did establish a sawmill on the island (near the current location of Marina Towers) which made lumber from pine trees on the island.

In 1898, Robert Gilbert apparently became the first homesteader on Estero Island to receive a patent for his land from the federal government. Gilbert also lived on the shell mound at Connecticut Avenue.

During the early 1900s there were very few people living on Estero Island. The north end of the island (from Crescent Street north) was reserved by the U.S. government for a lighthouse and quarantine station, which was never constructed. (Schell 1980)

The shell mound at Connecticut Avenue is the site of one of the oldest remaining structures on Estero Island, where a home was built by William H. Case around 1906. (Florida Preservation Services 1986)



**Figure 3**, 166 Chapel Street

The first subdivision of an original homestead was created by H. C. Case in 1911 on a mile-and-a-half-wide piece of property with Connecticut Avenue at its center. The north-south shell road ended at Connecticut Avenue, so to travel further south required driving on the beach. At that time Estero Boulevard was called Eucalyptus Avenue.

Dr. and Mrs. William Winkler built the first hotel in 1912, the Winkler Hotel, later renamed the Beach Hotel, and subsequently torn down in 1980 to be replaced with condominiums. Dr. Winkler left a tract of land to his nurse, Martha Redd; that property is now the Matanzas Pass Preserve.

Thomas H. Phillips, a wealthy inventor from Maryland, platted the Crescent Park and Eucalyptus Park subdivisions and built a casino and amusement pier. Captain Jack Delysle, a recent immigrant from Britain, developed the Seminole Sands subdivision along with a café, dancing pavilion, and 50-room casino hotel. (Historic Property Associates 1994)

Development was relatively quiet until the Florida land boom in the 1920s when the island, then known as Crescent Beach, gained national popularity. In 1921 the first bridge from the mainland was built, connecting to the new road along the shore at Bunche Beach joining McGregor Boulevard. The first cottage built after the bridge was completed stood at the corner of Mango and Cottage Streets; it was destroyed in a 1944 hurricane, but its materials were used to rebuild what became known as the San Castle Cottage, which has been relocated to the entrance to the Matanzas Pass Preserve and now operates as a historic museum (see Figure 8).

The 1920s also saw the start of phone service, postal service, the first grocery and gasoline pump on the island, coquina rock arches near the bridge, and bus service from Fort Myers (it was 30 years later before regular bus service was restored).

By 1925 the Florida land boom was on in earnest and the name of Fort Myers Beach was first used. New subdivisions known as Miramar, Gulf Heights, and Gulf View Plaza all sold out within a month. But a severe hurricane in 1926 wrecked the bridge and many of the homes on Estero Island, and tourism slowed dramatically. Some development efforts continued, with a new concrete swing bridge opened in 1928, but growth had slowed dramatically well before the onset of the depression. (Historic Property Associates 1994)

Other features of that time catered to visitors, including:

- a casino on the Gulf that became the Gulf Shore Inn;
- a 500-foot pier;
- the first canal, which was 1,500 feet long; and
- another 50-room casino hotel on the Case property.

The 1930s saw local residents begin to address the needs of their growing community. The first project of the Fort Myers Beach Property Owners Association, incorporated in 1931 with 60 members, was to plant 600 coconut palms along Estero Boulevard and San Carlos Boulevard. Small industries emerged, including the Ko-Kee-Na canning factory at the corner of Estero Boulevard and Connecticut Street, which made coquina broth which was sold nationwide. The first voting precinct, garbage collection, mosquito control, and telegraph service were estab-



**Figure 4**, 259 Ohio Avenue

lished during this period, and in 1935 the question of incorporation was raised, but considered premature and shelved for another 10 years. “Ma” Turner brought her honeymoon houseboat to land where it was incorporated as part of the Pelican Hotel. (Schell 1980)

In 1937 the first beach school was started in the Page cottage at the end of Chapel Street. When this facility was outgrown, a two-room building was constructed near the present-day Woman’s Club. In 1938 the first services were held in Chapel by the Sea, the first church on the island. (Schell 1980)

In 1940 the first listing of Fort Myers Beach in the U.S. Census showed a population of 473 people. There were four hotels on the island, and the road south from Connecticut Avenue was improved. New shops emerged, including the Gulfview Shop which opened near the Red Coconut in 1946. A new elementary school was built on Oak Street in 1947 and remains in use today. The Fort Myers Beach Property Owners Association raised the incorporation question again in 1945 and 1948, but it was defeated both times. The Mosquito Control District and Fire District were formed near the end of the decade. (Schell 1980)

Florida experienced a destructive series of hurricanes from 1944 to 1950, with 1944 and 1947 storms damaging Fort Myers Beach. (Doehring 1994) Wood siding all across the island began to be replaced with asbestos shingles. New houses were raised further off the ground than older houses, protecting household goods and allowing cars to be parked underneath. The newer pilings were made of chemically treated poles because the “lighter pine” that was used earlier became scarce. (Florida Preservation Services 1986)

In 1948 Leonard Santini purchased the south end of the island from the Koreshan Unity. At the north end of the island, the Island Shores development was started and began to prosper as the Pink Shell complex was established in 1953. “Pink gold” (pink shrimp) was discovered in the Tortugas in the early 1950s,

and dozens of shrimp boats made San Carlos Island their home port, with as many as 150 ships operating from the area. By 1951 overproduction dropped the price of shrimp, and it was a long time before the industry began to recover. By 1950 the population had increased to 711 residents. (Schell 1980)

During the 1950s and 60s many civic organizations were established, some of which are still active today. These included the Kiwanis, Lion’s Club, Rotary Club, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Conservation Association, Volunteer Rescue Squad, Art Association, and Community Organizations Projects (a coalition of organizations to raise funds for a new community center). (Schell 1980)

The first zoning board for Estero and San Carlos Islands was established by the county in 1953, the same year that an effort to incorporate the south end of the island was defeated. Two local representatives served on this board, but this local control was replaced by a 1962 zoning ordinance which retained zoning authority for the county commissioners (who were advised by a county-wide zoning board). The question of incorporation continued to be raised but was defeated again in 1957 and 1960.



**Figure 5**, 261-263 Palermo Circle

Hurricane Donna struck in September 1960. Donna was known as Florida's most damaging storm until Hurricane Andrew struck south Dade County in 1992. Donna was more costly and destructive than all the storms in the 1940s combined. (Doehring 1994)

The first "cooperative" apartment building, the Privateer, was built in 1959. It was the forerunner to the first high-rise condominium which was opened in 1967. By 1969, pre-construction sales were lively for another condominium, the Leonardo Arms. The first high-rise motel, the Island Towers, was opened in 1971 and later converted to interval ownership. (Schell 1980)

In 1965 the south end of Estero Island was connected to Black Island and points south by a new bridge across Big Carlos Pass. The 1970s saw plans for a mid-island bridge; a central sewer system; and a new bridge to replace the swing bridge across Matanzas Pass, which frequently broke down and blocked all traffic. (Schell 1980)

In 1975, the Jaycees tried unsuccessfully to raise enough funds to save and move the coquina rock arches which were in the path of the new sky bridge over Matanzas Pass. Construction on the new bridge began in 1977 once a mid-island bridge was determined to be financially infeasible. The present central sewer system was also begun during this period. (Schell 1980)

In 1984 Lee County adopted its first comprehensive plan that contained a "future land use map." This plan forbade new residential development at densities higher than six units per acre on Estero Island. A flurry of lawsuits were filed against the county, most of which the county lost or settled out of court. Buildings are still being constructed today (for instance, at Bay Beach and Gullwing) based on the results of that litigation.

Voters resoundingly defeating incorporation once again in 1986. Not until a 1995 referendum did voters finally approve an independent Town of Fort Myers Beach.



**Figure 6**, 2090 Estero Boulevard

## **THE TOWN'S VISION FOR PRESERVING ITS HISTORY**

This plan's vision for the future of Fort Myers Beach evolves from its history, incorporating lessons from ancient civilizations as well as from more recent history of homesteading, development, and people working together to build their community.

This plan's primary goal is to preserve "the best of the old" as the community evolves and redevelops over time. A secondary goal is share the legacy left by previous residents with today's visitors and the broader community, and to do so in a way that preserves the local culture and environment and enriches visitors' experiences. The rich archaeological, historical, and scenic resources of the town and its surroundings are of national significance and are an integral part of a regional and statewide network of resources envisioned as a cornerstone of eco-heritage tourism, scientific exploration, recreation, and education. While most of the remaining buildings within the town are of only local interest, they provide the context for the small-town atmosphere and friendliness and inspiration for the "old Estero Island" scale and design of renovations and new construction.

The following is part of the town's vision for the future:

*"Approaching Estero Island over the Sky Bridge, we have a spectacular view of Estero Bay, Times Square, and the Gulf beyond, a view uncluttered by overhead wires and excessive signage, which reveals examples, both original and new, of the "old Estero Island" design character and lively public spaces. Brochures, attractive informational panels, and walking/bicycle self-guided tours allow visitors to appreciate the local treasures of refurbished beach cottages and early homes in the downtown, beachfront, and near-town neighborhoods.*

*"Refurbished small cottages provide a human scale to the beachfront and provide in-town housing for persons living and working downtown. Some structures find new uses as small-scale*

*shops and galleries. Distinctive plaques identify historically interesting structures such as "Ma" Turner's houseboat within the Pelican Hotel. Informational panels help us remember where places of interest once were, such as the Koreshan's saw mill, the Winkler Hotel, and the Ko-Kee-Na canning factory. Visitors can imagine the town's early life as it evolved from fishing village to "Crescent Beach" with dance halls, gambling casinos, and beach recreation; from a very small community with a 1940 population of 435 to today's "living park" existing for the comfort and quality of life of its residents and the peaceful enjoyment of its visitors.*

*"Many of Estero Island's original settlers located in what is now referred to as the near-town district between Primo Drive and Tropical Shore Way. On the Bay side of Estero Boulevard, many of the original buildings are still in use. Homes on some blocks sit directly on private canals that were dredged when the lots were created. Renovations and infill development have borrowed from the design tradition of cottages, using porches and decks, with fronts of houses facing the street. Pedestrian*



**Figure 7**, 110 Mango Street

and bicycle paths have been created which link to an interconnected network.

*“These older near-town neighborhoods have shed the blight that had begun to appear in the 1980s. Their pleasantly varied housing types are just steps away from lively Estero Boulevard. Apartments for tourists and local employees mix congenially with new and renovated homes, many of which contain quiet home offices. A new urban code promotes renovations of older structures to capture the spirit of the original designs. Renovations and new homes mix gracefully with the old in these now highly desirable neighborhoods. Neighborhoods have truly achieved a higher ambition, becoming places where the streets are shady and public spaces are friendly, unified in design by rows of street trees, with little traffic and well-used porches.*

*“Estero Boulevard has become the premier public space on the Island, with a strong sense of place, shaped as a memorable ‘Avenue of Palms’ reminiscent of the 600 coconut palms planted in the 1930s by the Fort Myers Beach Property Owners Association. Estero Boulevard is lined with new and refurbished older structures, in the spirit of the Huston Studio and Hussey Tourist Information Center, which frame the street and contribute to the pedestrian scale and ambiance of the community.*

*“A civic complex has expanded around the school and library and serves as the “other end” of the revitalized portion of Estero Boulevard. It is the keystone of the system of interconnected pedestrian and bicycle paths extending throughout the island, linking the historic and natural resource and recreation areas. School Street provides the primary entry into the “heart of the island,” the special place where the school, recreation center, the Matanzas Pass Preserve, historic cottage, and public library are centered. School Street has become a key visual connection from the bay to the beach, a palm-lined showcase of restored and new cottages. Motorists catch a glimpse of a replica of Fort Myers Beach’s original rock arches. The town’s cooperative*

*spirit is captured in this project, a civic effort that memorializes its pride in civic life and its historic past.*

*“Existing and new infill development of School Street is in the spirit and scale of the Beach’s classic cottages, which can be used as homes or live-work spaces such as studios and galleries, or for small-scale retail uses consistent with the historic theme.*

*“The Estero Island Historic Society continues to operate its Historic Cottage and Nature Center at the entrance to the Preserve. Through the dedicated efforts of the Historic Society, the cottage was moved to its present location and now houses the island’s historic memorabilia and serves as the interpretive center for the preserve. Guided interpretive walks and classroom and research experiences are offered along the trails and boardwalks to the fishing pier and observation deck. Guided tours using canoes and kayaks have overtaken the popularity of noisy jet-skis.*



**Figure 8**, San Castle cottage today  
(photo courtesy of Estero Island Historic Society)

*“Through a similar community effort, the town has purchased and refurbished the Mound House on the Long Estate. This was one of the first homesteads on Estero Island, with the William Case home built in 1906. The 2.8-acre site is composed largely of a Calusa Indian shell mound of national archaeological significance. Now known as a cultural and environmental learning center, the estate has become an anchor for tours of Estero Bay’s ecological treasures and archaeological sites. Operated by a foundation, the center provides a museum and botanical garden and offers year-round educational programming and camps for children and adults and hands-on environmental education projects operated in partnership with the Estero Bay Marine Laboratory. It also hosts festivals and special events and, through a partnership with the University of Florida’s Randell Research Center at Pineland, gives the public opportunities to participate in local archaeological research with scientists from the Florida Museum of Natural History. Residents, visitors, tourists, and schoolchildren learn about Florida pre-history, Calusa Indian culture both before and after contact with European explorers, and early pioneer settlements and life on Estero Island, allowing them to better understand what is happening today in the environment and to sustain the viability of these resources for the future.*

*“Nearby Mound Key State Archaeological Site, considered the spiritual and political center of the ancient Calusa empire at the time Europeans arrived, has proven to be a rich resource for archaeological research and is linked to islanders through the cultural and environmental learning center. Town residents form a core of volunteers that assist Florida Museum of Natural History scientists in the study and documentation of Mound Key for the international archaeological community.*

*“Visitors can easily experience the ecological and heritage resources of the area. They can arrive by water taxi from off-island parking areas, bicycle or walk through the interconnected network of paths throughout the Island, or arrive by*

*trolley or car. They can even arrive via a county-wide system of canoe and kayak trails from Pine Island to Matanzas Pass and Hell Peckney Bay.*

*“Through the dedicated efforts of the community, the Town of Fort Myers Beach has created a partnership with the past that provides a focus for the future.”*



**Figure 9,** Estero Boulevard near Mandalay Road



**Figure 10**, 1270 Estero Boulevard (the Gulf Shore)



**Figure 11**, 2101 Estero Boulevard



**Figure 12**, Coconut Drive at beachfront



**Figure 13**, 259 Carolina Avenue

# IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN'S VISION

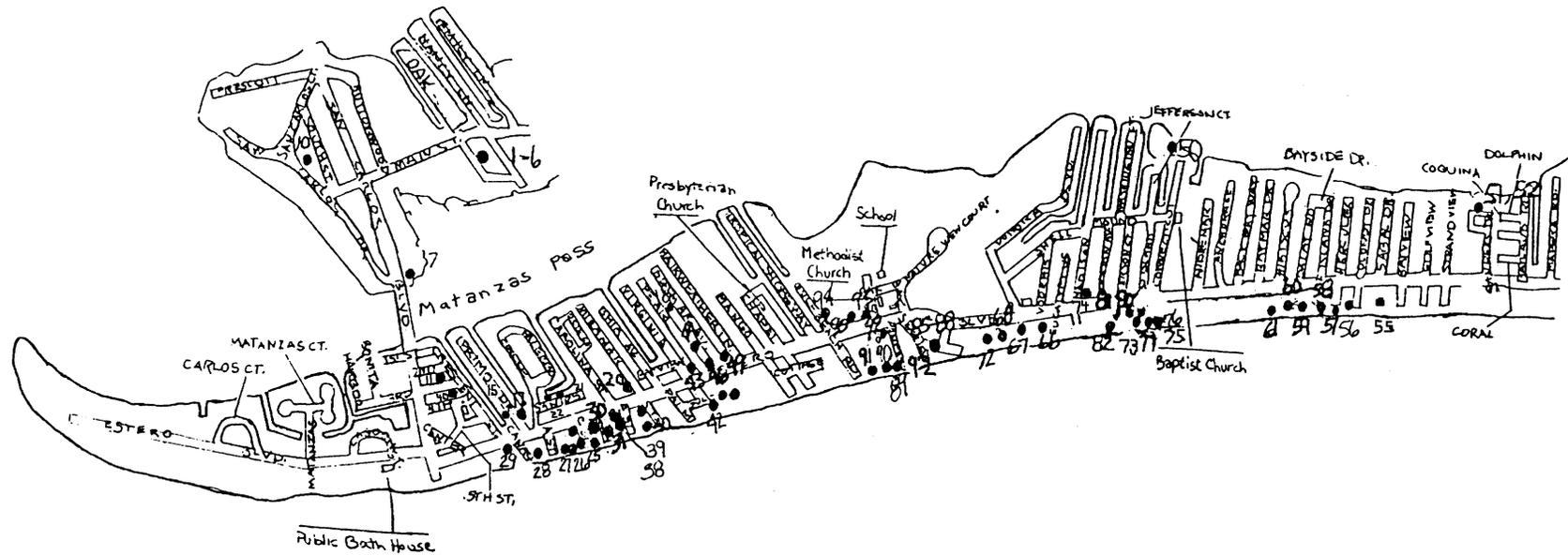
## Identification

The first step in preserving historic and archaeological resources is identifying them and their historic context. The most common method for identifying historic resources is a field survey conducted by specialists in historic preservation.

A *Lee County Historic Sites Survey* was prepared for Lee County in 1986. (Florida Preservation Services 1986) This was the first systematic attempt to identify buildings of potential historical significance throughout unincorporated Lee County. Figure 14 shows that survey's map with the approximate location of the 54 buildings it documented, which were mostly located near Estero

Boulevard from Crescent Street to Coconut Drive. Table 13-1 provides a list of sites identified in this survey.

In 1992 another survey was conducted, with more thorough documentation of 47 additional sites on Estero Island. (Janus Research 1992) These sites were primarily on the residential side streets northwest of Connecticut Street. The field inventory for each recorded structure contains an architectural description, historical overview (if known), site location map, and photograph (many of which are reprinted throughout this element). The new sites on Estero Island are listed in Table 13-2 and mapped in Figure 16.



**Figure 14**, Site map from 1986 Lee County Historic Sites Survey (with old ID numbers)

**Table 13-1 — Historic Buildings Identified in 1986 Survey**

Site Number		Street Address	Comments
OLD	NEW		
LEFB011	8LL01103	323 Crescent Street	
LEFB012	8LL01104	340 Crescent Street	
LEFB014	8LL01116	Estero Boulevard	<i>The Beach Store (stucco)</i>
LEFB015	8LL01153	1207 Primo Drive	<i>Silver Sands Resort</i>
LEFB016	8LL01154	124 Primo Drive	<i>(or 140?)</i>
LEFB018		233 Delmar Avenue	
LEFB019	8LL01142	205 Pearl Street	
LEFB020	8LL01133	81 Miramar Street	
LEFB021	8LL01156	1401 Santos Road	
LEFB022	8LL01155	1339 Santos Road	
LEFB030	8LL01125	I Avenue	
LEFB031	8LL01126	I Avenue	
LEFB038	8LL01107	E Avenue	
LEFB039		Estero Boulevard	<i>Norman's TV</i>
LEFB040	8LL01134	61 Miramar Street	
LEFB042	8LL01143	Pearl Street	<i>near beach</i>
LEFB043	8LL01141	125 Pearl Street	
LEFB044	8LL01144	Pearl Street	<i>Beach Comber (stucco)</i>
LEFB045	8LL01106	2101 Estero Boulevard	<i>Huston Studio see Figure 11</i>
LEFB050	8LL01101	Connecticut St.	<i>William Case home</i>
LEFB051	8LL01151	Sanders Drive	<i>Mid Island Marina</i>
LEFB052	8LL01152	Sanders Drive	<i>Mid Island Marina</i>
LEFB055	8LL01148	Sabal Drive	
LEFB056	8LL01100	Coconut Drive	<i>see Figure 12</i>
LEFB057	8LL01118	Estero Boulevard	<i>Solymar</i>
LEFB058	8LL01119	Estero Boulevard	
LEFB059	8LL01120	Estero Boulevard	<i>see Figure 9</i>
LEFB060	8LL01121	Estero Boulevard	
LEFB061		Estero Boulevard	
LEFB066	8LL01109	3107 Estero Boulevard	
LEFB067	8LL01108	3048 Estero Boulevard	
LEFB068	8LL01122	Estero Boulevard	<i>Pelican Hotel</i>
LEFB069	8LL01123	Estero Boulevard	<i>Pelican Hotel</i>

LEFB072		3000 Estero Boulevard	
LEFB073	8LL01127	125 Madison Court	
LEFB074	8LL01128	3311 Estero Boulevard	<i>at Madison Court</i>
LEFB075	8LL01102	Connecticut St.	<i>(beachfront)</i>
LEFB076	8LL01129	Connecticut St.	<i>(beachfront)</i>
LEFB077	8LL01124	Estero Boulevard	
LEFB078	8LL01115	3370 Estero Boulevard	
LEFB079	8LL01113	3370 Estero Boulevard	<i>see Figure 18</i>
LEFB080	8LL00789	Estero Boulevard	
LEFB081	8LL01136	3320 Estero Boulevard	
LEFB082	8LL01110	3280 Estero Boulevard	
LEFB085	8LL01157	Seaview Street	<i>Laughing Gull Cottages</i>
LEFB086	8LL01158	Seaview Street	<i>Laughing Gull Cottages</i>
LEFB087	8LL01159	Seaview Street	<i>Laughing Gull Cottages</i>
LEFB088	8LL01160	Seaview Street	<i>Laughing Gull Cottages</i>
LEFB089	8LL01145	Pompano Street	
LEFB090	8LL01146	Pompano Street	
LEFB091	8LL01147	Pompano Street	
LEFB092	8LL01130	2450 Estero Boulevard	<i>Hussey Realty</i>
LEFB093	8LL01131	Estero Boulevard	<i>(near School Street)</i>
LEFB094	8LL01132	Gulf Beach Road	

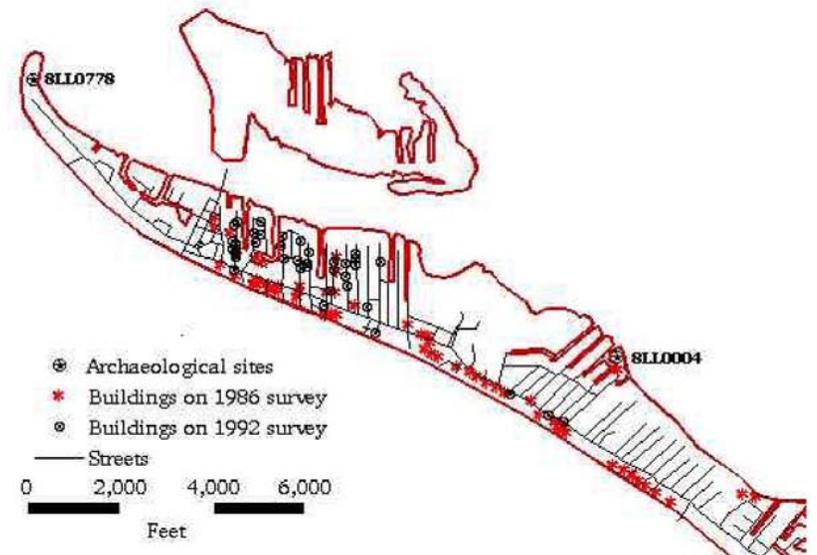


**Figure 15, 3580 Estero Boulevard**

**Table 13-2 — Historic Buildings Identified in 1992 Survey**

Site Number	Street Address	Year Built	Comments
8LL01535	67 Canal Street	1940	
8LL01536	259 Carolina Avenue	~1950	see Figure 13
8LL01537	265 Carolina Avenue	1950	see Figure 19
8LL01538	290 Carolina Avenue	1935	
8LL01539	166 Chapel Street	1930	Figure 3 (NR eligible)
8LL01540	2430 Cottage Avenue	1940	
8LL01541	136 Delmar Avenue	~1950	
8LL01542	200 Delmar Avenue	1947	
8LL01543	270 Delmar Avenue	1937	
8LL01544	1270 Estero Boulevard	~1923	Figure 10 (Gulf Shore)
8LL01545	2090 Estero Boulevard	1942	see Figure 6
8LL01546	3120 Estero Boulevard	1935	see Figure 22
8LL01547	3502 & ½ Estero Boulevard	1943	
8LL01548	3580 Estero Boulevard	1945	see Figure 15
8LL01549	4501 Estero Boulevard	1948	Seaview Motel
8LL01550	241 Fairweather Lane	1948	
8LL01551	261 Fairweather Lane	1950	
8LL01552	273 Fairweather Lane	1937	
8LL01554	1480 I Avenue	~1950	see Figure 17
8LL01556	110 Mango Street	1950	see Figure 7
8LL01557	160 Mango Street	1935	see Figure 25
8LL01558	116 Miramar Street	1935	
8LL01559	120 Miramar Street	1945	
8LL01560	163 Miramar Street	1947	
8LL01561	270 Miramar Street	~1955	
8LL01562	232 Ohio Avenue	1948	
8LL01563	251-253 Ohio Avenue	1948	
8LL01564	298 Ohio Avenue	1947	
8LL01565	201 Palermo Circle	1948	see Figure 21
8LL01566	261-263 Palermo Circle	1935	see Figure 5
8LL01567	271 Palermo Circle	1940	
8LL01568	405 Palermo Circle	1935	see Figure 23
8LL01569	460 Palermo Circle	1935	
8LL01570	501 Palermo Circle	1946	Figure 20 (NR eligible)

8LL01571	180 Pearl Street	1946	
8LL01572	216 Pearl Street	1946	see Figure 23
8LL01573	140 Primo Drive	1935	
8LL01574	150 Primo Drive	1945	
8LL01575	162 Primo Drive	1937	
8LL01576	163 Primo Drive	1952	
8LL01577	180 Primo Drive	1945	
8LL01578	191 Primo Drive	1942	
8LL01579	241-243 Primo Drive	1950	
8LL01580	256 Primo Drive	1950	
8LL01586	209 Virginia Avenue	1948	
8LL01587	71 Pearl Street	1949	
8LL01588	259 Ohio Avenue	1950	see Figure 4



**Figure 16, Historic resources on Estero Island identified in previous surveys**

All of the sites from both surveys have been listed on the Florida Master Site File, a statewide inventory that is maintained by the Florida Department of State. This file is essentially a database; listing does not imply a particular level of significance, or eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (or local equivalents). Generally, properties over 50 years old are categorized as historic; however, there are also properties less than 50 years old which may be considered for preservation efforts based on other criteria.

The 1986 historic survey of Fort Myers Beach identified no structures that were eligible for designation on the National Register of Historic Places, but determined that the William Case home (also known as the Long Estate or Mound House) and others would be suitable for local designation. The *property* on which the William Case home sits was determined by the survey to be eligible for National Register designation on the basis of its archaeological remains.

The 1992 historic survey contained this conclusion about buildings it had surveyed:

*At this point in time [1992], the Fort Myers Beach/San Carlos Island area could be eligible as a local historic district, particularly the residential area north of Estero Boulevard between Primo and Chapel Streets. This area contains a number of older structures; many of them have been altered, but their scale, style and remaining historic fabric and features would contribute to the character of the district. The fact that many of the structures were moved and a number were placed on taller pilings after various hurricanes could be seen as an interesting adaptation phenomenon rather than as a historical detriment. In about six years [1998], the area could potentially be eligible as a National Register district, particularly if a number of the older altered structures were rehabilitated. Another possible area would be the older hotel/commercial/residential segment of Estero Boulevard; this area was covered extensively in the 1986 survey. Three structures in the area stand out as being potentially eligible for the National Register as individual nominations. They are listed below:*

Address

166 Chapel Street  
 Dixie Fish Company  
 [on San Carlos Island]  
 501 Palermo Circle  
 (a former beach club)

NR Area of Significance

Architecture  
 Architecture; Commerce  
 Entertainment/Recreation  
 Architecture

*It should be noted that there may be other potentially eligible National Register historic structures which were surveyed in 1986 in Fort Myers Beach/San Carlos Island; these buildings were not specifically assessed as a part of this project. (Janus Research 1992)*

Archaeological resources were surveyed in the *Lee County Archaeological Site Inventory and Zone Management Plan* prepared in 1987. (Piper Archaeological Research 1987) It identifies “zones of archaeological sensitivity” identified by a predictive model that is based on the characteristics of all known archaeological sites in Lee County. On Estero Island, the zones identified were Bowditch Point, the wetlands at the end of Chapel Street, the Matanzas Pass Preserve, the wetlands behind the Bay Village condos, the wetlands behind Captain’s/Admiral’s Bay



**Figure 17, 1480 “I” Avenue**

condos, and the undeveloped portions of Bay Beach. An archaeological survey conducted in 1980 had recorded over 100 specific sites in Lee County, and this 1987 update identified 53 more sites. Although many sites were identified in Estero Bay, the only sites on Estero Island are at Bowditch Point and the shell mound on Connecticut Street (see Figure 16). (Piper Archaeological Research 1987) These inventories should be kept current, adding newly identified sites and updating others as new information is revealed.

Lee County requires all development applications to identify the location and status of historic resources (including archaeological sites), using the surveys identified above. When a property is within a “zone of archaeological sensitivity,” the county can require an archaeological survey to determine the nature, location, and extent of an archaeological site. Because the town adopted the county’s land development regulations upon incorporation, these procedures also apply to applications for permits within the town.

Scenic resources are also assets to be preserved and rehabilitated. At Fort Myers Beach, all shorelines, dunes, hammocks, and wetlands are scenic resources. This plan’s Coastal Management Element and Conservation Element both contain policies for preserving these resources and for expanding opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy them. Preserving and expanding these views is also addressed in the Community Design Element as a way to beautify the community through view corridors and open vistas. While identifying scenic resources, opportunities to improve views at specific locations should be identified; incentives can be provided to create or preserve these vistas.

## **Evaluation**

Once potential historic resources have been identified, they can be evaluated according to their significance to the community (or more broadly to the state and nation). This evaluation can

measure architectural merit, or relation to the surrounding historic buildings, or the role of a specific building in historic occurrences of a community.



**Figure 18**, 3370 Estero Boulevard

The following criteria are used by the National Register of Historic Places criteria for evaluating a building within the local historical/prehistorical context:

### **Architectural Criteria**

A building, district, site, structure, or object is considered of significance in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture when it possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- It was associated with events that significantly contributed to the broad patterns of our history; or

- It was associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or possesses high artistic values or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- It has yielded (or may yield) information important to prehistory or history; or
- On an individual basis, it does not constitute a significant site, but does contribute to the overall significance of a district.

### **Archaeological Criteria**

Properties considered to have archaeological significance should either:

- Have been associated with an important event or person(s); or
- Contain recoverable data that is of sufficient significance that it would provide unique information on prehistoric or historic events; or
- Be a site or location of representative of discrete types of activities such as habitation, ceremonial, burial, or fortification necessary to the reconstruction of prehistoric and historic life-ways.
- Be the location of distinctive historic or prehistoric activities and characteristics over time; or
- Possess a sufficient degree of environmental integrity to reflect some aspect of the relationship of the site's original occupants to the environment; or
- Represent a good opportunity for interpretation and public display; or
- Be associated with other sites such that as a group or district they are representative of one or more of the above noted categories.

The significance of properties and structures may also be evaluated in terms of their historic context, that is, their relationship to exploration and early settlement periods or their contribution to particular cultural or economic systems such as fishing, tourism, government, religions, or transportation.

While the Lee County surveys have been thorough, some buildings may have been missed or improperly identified, while others have been destroyed or extensively modified. As time passes, other buildings become eligible for listing as they become fifty years old. The state provides grants to have these surveys updated, although such requests require 50% matching funds and must compete with other worthy requests from across the state. The town could also augment the survey methodology, adding locally selected criteria to capture a broader segment of housing stock, for example to make them eligible for extra revitalization incentives. (Another alternative is to make such incentives apply to all structures in identified historic districts, regardless of when each structure was built.)

The William Case home should be studied further to properly document the original construction versus later additions. Recent information indicates that the standing structure may be eligible for the National Register, as well as the site itself. Because of the site's archaeological significance, a preliminary



**Figure 19, 265 Carolina Avenue**

archaeological reconnaissance is needed, to include mapping, radiocarbon dating, and analysis and curation of artifacts that will be displayed on the site.

## Recognition and Designation

Once resources are identified and evaluated, their relative importance can be recognized by different means. They can be identified in some visible way (for instance, with a sign) as a significant part of the town's heritage. Formal "designation" is another approach, where a building is added to a local and/or national register of historic sites.

Recognition can be provided in the form of plaques, honoring and marking significant properties; historical markers identifying the location of vanished resources or boundaries of a significant area; certificates provided to property owners verifying the authenticity or significance of a property; and awards of merit as a means to express community appreciation for revitalization or restoration efforts.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official register of historically significant buildings, sites, or districts. Such listing is an honor and, while it has no regulatory impact, can qualify property owners for some tax credits or grants. Lee County government recently sponsored the formulation of thorough historic and archaeological summaries for all of Lee County; these "cover documents" provide a foundation of data and professional research that will streamline the preparation of National Register nominations. (Historic Property Associates 1994, Walker 1995)

Preliminary work has been done to submit the William Case home (Long Estate) for National Register listing on the basis of both its archaeological and historic significance. (Formal application would be made after the town has title to the property.)

The Fort Myers Beach elementary school, built in 1947, has been nominated by Lee County for the National Register of Historic Places. Most of the interior spaces are still intact (although the auditorium has been partitioned off since 1970 and the ceilings have been lowered). The exterior retains its architectural integrity except for the replacement doors and windows (see a recent photograph in Figure 1).

Local historic designations are made in unincorporated Lee County by a Historic Preservation Board that was established by the county's historic preservation ordinance. Local designations identify resources of particular significance on a local (but not necessarily national) level; they qualify property owners for special incentives for upgrading their property, and require a review before improvements are made to assess their impacts on the historic value of buildings.

The town should continue Lee County's program by sponsoring the addition of many more historic sites to the local register, perhaps including one or two historic districts rather than designating



**Figure 20**, 501 Palermo Circle

nating every eligible building individually. One district could cover the residential area north of Estero Boulevard between Primo and Chapel Streets, as suggested in the 1992 historic survey. (Janus Research 1992). Another would include the highest concentrations of older houses remaining between Estero Boulevard and the beach.

None of the 47 Fort Myers Beach properties that were added to the Florida Master Site File in 1992 have yet been formally designated as historic resources. Prior to incorporation, the San Castle Cottage was designated by Lee County; since incorporation, the Town Council designated the Long Estate.

## **Preservation**

Through an historic preservation program, Fort Myers Beach can recognize and protect its heritage, and integrate historic resources into its revitalization efforts and cultural life. There are many ways for the town to further its objectives:

### **Activities**

- **Historic District:** Usually a geographically definable area, but sometimes a compilation of individual resources which are separated geographically but linked by a common theme.
  - **Scientific Analysis:** Investigations designed to understand a property so as to avoid impacts; documentation could include archival studies, interviews, drawings, photography, and in the case of archaeological sites, field survey, excavation, and artifact analysis.
  - **Protection:** Regulations or incentives, or ownership, to protect historic resources.
  - **Rehabilitation:** The process of returning a property to contemporary use through repair or alternations while preserving those portions significant to historical values.
- **Restoration:** Creation of an authentic reproduction beginning with existing parts of an original object or building.
  - **Adaptive use:** Conversion of a building to a use other than that for which it was originally designed.

### **Legal Devices**

In addition to regulations, historic resources can be protected through legal techniques such as easements, covenants, and purchase options:

- **Easements** are legal restrictions that run with the land, placed by the property owner on the future development of the property, and held by a non-profit organization or government agency. Easement restrictions are tailored to each property to achieve the desired result in future development, and can create tax advantages to the owner (granting an easement may be considered a charitable gift). Easements can be used to protect open space, scenic views, archaeological sites, the grounds of significant buildings, and ecologically significant areas (conservation easement); they can protect the outside appearance of a building by controlling alterations and requiring maintenance (facade easement); or they can protect all or part of a building's interior (interior easement). Easements can be donated or sold; if bought, this is sometimes referred to as "purchasing development rights."
- **Protective covenants** can be attached to the sale of properties which reserve the right to prohibit demolition or subdivision. These rights are not protected by a third party as is the case for most easements. Mutual covenants can be used to record the agreement of several property owners to prohibit certain actions without their mutual consent, such as in an historic district.

- **Options to purchase**, or right of first refusal, are sometimes given by a property owner to help efforts to preserve a noteworthy building or site.
- **Eminent domain** (condemnation) is the exercise of power where a government can directly acquire a building or site for a public purpose. The previous owner is entitled to full compensation.

### **Financial Tools**

- **Revolving funds** can be used by preservation groups or public agencies to directly acquire or improve buildings, or to provide low-interest loans. Seed money for a revolving fund can come from grants, donations, the town's general revenue, or from tax increment funds within community redevelopment areas. Properties using these funds would be protected through easements or deed restrictions. Repayment to revolving funds perpetuate them.
- **Partnerships** with local banks can help banks meet their Community Reinvestment Act obligations by making loan funds available for historic preservation projects within the town. The town could also provide loan guarantees where needed.
- **State Grants.** Local governments or non-profit organizations may request grants from the Florida Department of State for surveys, planning, acquisition, or rehabilitation of historic resources. Housing Policy 12-B-2(iii) recommends a partnership with the Estero Island Historic Society to seek grants to reduce the costs of move-on and rehabilitation of historic cottages for the implementation of the School Street concept.
- **Federal Grants.** Community Development Block Grants may be used for rehabilitation of historic structures for low- and moderate-income housing or for commercial revitalization. Housing Policy 12-A-3(i) recommends an agreement with Lee County to retain the town's standing as an eligible area for expenditures un-

der the county's federal and state entitlement programs. (Without such an agreement, the town would need apply competitively to the state for CDBG or other funding for eligible projects.)

- **Tax Benefits.** Property tax abatements can be offered for properties listed on the National Register of Historic places, pursuant to Section 193.505 *F.S.* Federal tax credits are available for the rehabilitation of income-producing buildings in the amount of 10% for buildings over 40 years old and 20% for National Register structures. Community Contribution Tax Credits are available to Florida corporations for donations to non-profit groups or community redevelopment agencies for 55% of the value of the donations.

### **Regulatory Techniques**

Land-use regulations can be used to protect historic resources. County and city historic preservation ordinances are often used for this purpose, since the National Register of Historic Places protects historic resources only from destruction by actions of the federal government. Regulatory techniques can also provide incentives to revitalize older buildings, since building and zoning codes can block upgrading of old buildings that do not or cannot



**Figure 21,** 201 Palermo Circle

meet current codes (for instance, the lot size is too small, or internal stairways are too narrow or steep). These codes are imposed at the local level and can only be eased at that level.

Community Design Policy 3-B-1 calls for the town to adopt land development regulations applicable to older near-town neighborhoods that will encourage renovations and compatible infill development by such measures as:

- modifying lot size, setback, and parking requirements where the current regulations hinder redevelopment;
- adding design guidelines to encourage front porches, decks, and other elements from the cottage design tradition; and
- modifying permitted uses to accommodate quiet home offices and possibly other mixed uses.

Community Design Policy 1-A-4 calls for the town to identify specific portions of Estero Boulevard where changes in land development regulations could work towards a more coherent “framing” of the Boulevard, then adopting design guidelines that encourage redevelopment along the Boulevard that contributes to the human scale and “beach cottage character.” Housing Policies 12-B-1, 12-B-2, and 12-B-4 reinforce the Community Design policies.

These provisions of the land development code could be implemented as a special zoning district, or only for historic structures or districts, or as an overlay on top of other regulations in specified areas. Overlay districts are easily used for small areas with specific characteristics; one is currently in use at Fort Myers Beach in the Times Square area. However, more overlay districts may not be needed at Fort Myers Beach since entirely new land development regulations are being contemplated; the same types of regulations can be imposed without the complication of an overlay district.

With or without overlay districts, the town may wish to provide additional regulatory relief for buildings or districts that are

designated on a local register. This relief would go beyond the normal revitalization incentives, thus encouraging owners to voluntarily seek designation and providing the public with a level of aesthetic and historic protection not normally through conventional zoning techniques.

Designated historic buildings may also be exempt from certain provision of the building codes. *All* older buildings would also be eligible for some relaxed code requirements if the town adopts the Standard Existing Buildings Code, which was written to supplement the regular building code which can unnecessarily hinder the renovation of existing buildings.

Housing Policy 12-C-7 proposes methods to reduce the cost of housing rehabilitation that would also be useful for historic housing. These include adjusting impact fee schedules so that small units, or housing designed for island employees, would pay less than larger housing units; supporting DCA’s new “residential



**Figure 22**, 3120 Estero Boulevard

construction mitigation program” to help residents retrofit their homes to increase their safety and protect their investments before a disaster occurs; and if possible relaxing rules that require many sound buildings to be elevated above expected flood levels before they can be structurally improved.

### **Historic Preservation Program**

Lee County’s historic preservation ordinance is now found in Chapter 22 of the Land Development Code. Since the town adopted this entire code upon incorporation, the same historic preservation provisions are in force unless repealed by the town. Adoption of these provisions enabled the county to become a “Certified Local Government.” Being “certified” created a partnership between Lee County, the state, and the federal government that also provides access to certain federal historic preservation funds. (This certification probably does not extend to the Town of Fort Myers Beach.)

Under this code, the county’s Historic Preservation Board has the authority to “designate” historic structures, neighborhoods, districts, or archaeological sites. It can also grant or revoke “certificates of appropriateness” that allow construction that would affect designated properties. (County staff has been delegated the power to approve certain minor certificates of appropriateness.)

New designations may be initiated by the Historic Preservation Board, the Board of County Commissioners, or the property owner. Since historic designation is an avenue toward regulatory relief for buildings that do not conform to modern building or zoning codes, most designations in Lee County have been requested by individual property owners. (A major exception has been the successful historic district in Boca Grande’s downtown district, which was initiated by Lee County.)

Notice of a proposed designation is sent to affected owners (in the case of a district, to all owners within the district). A desig-

nation report prepared by the county’s Planning Division explains the basis for the proposed designation. Adopted criteria are used as the basis for making decisions. After designation, the building official is directed to refer all completed applications for building, moving, or demolition to the Historic Preservation Board who must then grant a “certificate of appropriateness” before issuance of a permit.

The town needs to consider whether to develop and administer its own ordinance and process for designation and regulation, or use the county’s system, possibly using the county’s Historic Preservation Board (which would require an interlocal agreement with the county). Under present regulations, the Town Council makes historic designations. A better course of action would be to use the current system but assign the responsibility for formal designations to the Local Planning Agency, integrating historic designation fully into the planning process. The town would need to provide staff support for this process; the best method would be to contract with Lee County for the use of its existing historic preservation specialists.



**Figure 23**, 216 Pearl Street

## Sharing the Resources

At the heart of the town's vision has been the sharing of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources in a way that broadens knowledge and enriches experience of visitors. Lee County's and the state's eco-heritage tourism marketing provides an international outreach to support this effort. The town and the Estero Island Historic Society can work together to create informational panels, brochures, and walking tours. The proposed cultural and environmental learning center is envisioned to be a centralizing cultural facility for both the immediate community and the region. The town can support the efforts of the learning center's foundation to raise funds for much-needed archaeological investigations at the Long Estate and Mound Key.

Outreach is also important to help the community and specifically owners of historic properties to understand the cultural value of each piece of the picture and understand how to preserve the "best of the old" as revitalization and change occurs over time. A good start would be for the town to formally notify all of the landowners whose buildings are listed on the Florida Master Site File (once the precise locations and status of the remaining buildings have been verified).

## COORDINATION OF PRESERVATION EFFORTS

The National Historic Preservation Act (originally passed in 1966) establishes national policy for historic preservation. The Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS) has primary responsibility for carrying out federal historic preservation policy. The NPS manages nationally significant sites and maintains several registers:

- the National Historic Landmarks program;
- the National Register of Historic Places;
- the Historic American Buildings Survey; and

- the Historic American Engineer Record.

The NPS also publishes "Standards for Rehabilitation" and administers grants to states and to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. An Advisory Council on Historic Preservation provides comment on potential impacts of federal projects that may affect an eligible or listed property according to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Other federal law contributing to historic preservation includes:

- the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, which requires a special effort to be made to preserve historic sites of national, state, or local significance;
- the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which provides for preservation of important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage (implemented through environmental impact statements); and



**Figure 24**, 405 Palermo Circle

- the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 which provides for consideration of ecological, cultural, historic, and aesthetic values.

The Historic Resources Act (Chapter 267 F.S.) provides state policy regarding historic preservation. The Division of Historical Resources of the Florida Department of State implements state historic preservation policy and is the conduit for federal programs to local jurisdictions. This agency also assists local communities with their historic preservation efforts by helping them identify, evaluate, and maintain significant historic resources.

This agency is responsible for compliance of all state agencies whose activities may affect historic resources (defined as being listed on the Florida Master Site File). A Historic Preservation Advisory Council assists them in selecting recipients of grants to protect historic resources. Projects funded by Community Development Block Grants, proposed by state or federal transportation agencies, or being authorized by DRI or environmental permits are subject to a historic review process at the state level.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND REGIONAL PLANS**

The State Comprehensive plan (Chapter 187 F.S.) provides goals and policies related to historic preservation such as:

- encouraging increased access to historical and cultural resources,
- developing cultural programs of national excellence,
- increasing the supply of housing by recycling older houses and redeveloping residential neighborhoods, and
- promoting awareness of historic places and cultural and historic activities.

The 1995 Southwest Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan addresses historic preservation throughout its five subject areas: Affordable Housing, Emergency Preparedness, Economic Devel-

opment, Natural Resources, and Transportation. Goals address the following subjects:

- preserving and maintaining historic homes, especially those that offer affordable housing,
- providing better access to cultural and historical resources,
- avoiding further loss of significant historical and archaeological resources,
- expanding and diversifying tourist-related activities while maintaining a high quality of life, and
- modernizing the region's environmental awareness educational programs.

The Historic Preservation policies set forth below specifically further these state and regional goals. These policies would guide future activities of the Town of Fort Myers Beach toward preserving its historic and archaeological heritage.



**Figure 25**, 160 Mango Street



## **GOALS - OBJECTIVES - POLICIES**

Based on the analysis of historic preservation issues in this element, the following goals, objectives, and policies are adopted into the Fort Myers Beach Comprehensive Plan:

**GOAL 13: To maintain “the best of the old” when redeveloping our community by appreciating, protecting, and promoting the historic resources of Fort Myers Beach. To provide stewardship of the legacy of our predecessors, cultivating our understanding of the past as a means of sustaining our future.**

**OBJECTIVE 13-F GENERAL STRATEGIES — Begin in 1999 to develop programs to aggressively identify, document, and evaluate historic and archaeological resources in and around the Town of Fort Myers Beach in order to encourage their long-term protection.**

POLICY 13-F-1 In 1999 the town shall convene an *ad hoc* historic working group to develop programs, organize volunteers, and make recommendations to the LPA and Town Council relating to Policies 13-A-2, 13-A-3, 13-A-5, 13-B-1, 13-B-3, 13-B-6, and 13-C-3. This group shall include representatives of the Estero Island Historic Society, the LPA, the Lee County Planning Division, and others with expertise in archaeology, history, and/or construction.

POLICY 13-F-2 Acquire high-quality reproductions of all files and photographs from the Florida Master Site File and the Florida Archives for buildings on Estero Island, and make copies available to the public at Town Hall and the public library. This files should be supplemented by an accurate listing of street addresses and parcel numbers, plus a listing of buildings that have been demolished or renovated beyond recognition. After this updating, the town shall notify all property owners of sites listed on the Florida Master Site File.

POLICY 13-F-3 Periodically review and update Lee County’s 1986 and 1992 surveys of historic buildings on Estero Island. Additional buildings shall be documented for submission to the Florida Master Site File, and buildings that have been demolished or altered shall be so noted. New information shall be transmitted to the Florida Department of State via the Lee County Planning Division.

POLICY 13-F-4 Require all applications for development review to identify the location and status of historic resources and archaeological sites, utilizing as data bases the 1986 *Lee County Historic Sites Survey*, the 1987 *Archaeological Site Inventory and Zone Management Plan for Lee County*, the 1992 *Historical Report and Survey Supplement for Lee County*, and updated information from implementation of Policies 13-A-3 and 13-A-6. This identification of historic and archaeological resources will assist in administering protective regulations.

POLICY 13-F-5 Continue the program begun by Lee County for formally designating historic and arch-

aeological resources, with the following changes:

- i. Designate the town's Local Planning Agency to serve as the historic preservation board required by the Land Development Code.
- ii. Contract with Lee County for consultation, technical assistance, and on-going staff support for the town's historic preservation program.

POLICY 13-F-6 By 1999, the town shall begin the process of designating one or more historic districts which would include most of the buildings listed on the Florida Master Site File.

POLICY 13-F-7 Request the Estero Island Historic Society to identify appropriate buildings or sites for nomination by the town to the National Register of Historic Places.

POLICY 13-F-8 Encourage a private program that would visibly recognize historic building through plaques, certificates, historic markers, awards programs, or certificates of historical and/or archaeological significance.

POLICY 13-F-9 Develop a process and criteria for identifying specific scenic resources, view corridors, and vistas that should be preserved or enhanced as new development and redevelopment occurs. Particular attention should be given to recommendations in the Community Design Element.

**OBJECTIVE 13-G REGULATIONS AND INCENTIVES —**  
**By the end of 1998, establish and maintain a regulatory and incentive system that promotes restoration, reconstruction, and re-use of the town's historic buildings.**

POLICY 13-G-1 Evaluate the provisions of the Certified Local Government program to determine if the town should become certified.

POLICY 13-G-2 Implement Community Design and Housing Policies that call for preparing and adopting land development regulations that will encourage the revitalization of older and historic housing using elements from the cottage design tradition.

POLICY 13-G-3 Using specific existing historic properties in Fort Myers Beach, determine additional regulatory relief that could be provided to designated historic properties to promote their preservation and rehabilitation.

POLICY 13-G-4 Study the feasibility of a variety of incentives including transfer of development rights and property tax relief to encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties.

POLICY 13-G-5 Consider financial incentives for historic preservation that might include a revolving loan fund, grants, federal and state funds for income-eligible recipients, tax increment funds (if a CRA is established), or technical support for the use of investment tax credits.

POLICY 13-G-6 The town shall adopt the Standard Existing Buildings Code into its land development code to encourage the rehabilitation of older buildings throughout the town.

**OBJECTIVE 13-H CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE —**  
**Continually heighten the appreciation of the town's recent and ancient history and cultural life, and improve opportunities for appropri-**

**ate public access to publicly supported resources.**

- POLICY 13-H-1 Continue to pursue the acquisition of the William Case home (Long Estate). Assist the foundation that will provide long-term management with funding for start-up costs (with the amount needed to be evaluated annually). Link this facility to other cultural, scientific, educational, and recreational activities.
- POLICY 13-H-2 Support the nomination of the Fort Myers Beach Elementary School and the William Case home (and its site) for the National Register of Historic Places.
- POLICY 13-H-3 Examine methods that the town could use to aid in the protection of Mound Key.
- POLICY 13-H-4 Work with Lee County in establishing a network of canoe and kayak trails linking the sites of historic and archaeological significance from Pine Island to Estero Bay.
- POLICY 13-H-5 Establish a task force to develop and implement the town's eco/heritage program. The task force would work with the Marine Resources Task Force to advise the town about implementing the recently adopted recommendations of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Eco-heritage Tourism.
- POLICY 13-H-6 In cooperation with the Estero Island Historic Society, develop self-guided walking/biking tours of the island's historic points of interest; interpretive panels; and other ways to share the history of the island with visitors.
- POLICY 13-H-7 Continue to improve availability and appropriate public access to historic and cultural resources by implementing Community De-

sign Policies 2-A-1/4, 3-D-4, and 3-D-6 and Recreation Policy 10-A-4.

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# ***HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT***

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