

Marina Village BREEZE

December 30, 2022



Seeds of Change and Renewal

Out with the Old (devastation) and **In with the New** (Fort Myers Beach)!

Margaritaville construction is moving full-speed ahead, with its grand opening next Christmas (hopefully). It's setting the tone for where our beach is going.

Much of the "old Florida beach charm" has been washed away, but plenty remains. My sense is there will be an effort with new construction to recreate a lot of what makes FMB special.

With the majority of the old ground-level homes and many beachfront resorts and restaurants destroyed beyond repair, they will be replaced with new structures... resulting in our island going "upscale".

Properties are changing hands and values will continue to increase, **including ours** once we're up and running. The following link is to an [NPR Online article](#) about Fort Myers Beach, "*On Florida's Gulf Coast, Developers Eye Properties Ravaged by Hurricane Ian*".

An old adage in business is that "nothing much happens during the December holiday season" and with respect to insurance, that's holding true.

That being said, we're expecting some payment(s) from our insurer during January and we're ordering items with long lead times and preparing building permits so construction can begin in time for our targeted September reopening date.

Annual Meeting being held via Zoom

So far, around 30 people will be joining this year's Zoom. To ensure an orderly meeting that addresses your interests, please email questions and comments in advance to info@marinavillage.cc. The sooner, the better!

And if you haven't yet requested your personal link to attend, please email "info" as soon as possible. The links will be sent out by email on Jan 4th.



Yesterday, those of you who hadn't yet voted received an email reminder to please do so. We've achieved quorum for annual meeting purposes, but the Board of Directors would like hear from everyone. **If you haven't voted yet, now's the time**. Thanks.

Finally, **if you need assistance either voting or paying your maintenance fees on-line**, Laurie is on standby in January during the following times, starting on the 2nd:

- 9AM to Noon -- Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday
- 3PM to 6PM -- Tuesday and Thursday

You can reach her at 239-336-9702. Leave a message if you reach voice mail; it means she's on with another owner and will return your call shortly.

On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff -- Cathi, Marty, Nick, Dick, Laurie, Lauren and Taki -- best wishes for a joyful, healthy and prosperous 2023!

Happy New Year,
Paul

MARINA VILLAGE AT SNUG HARBOR www.marinavillage.cc

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On Florida's Gulf Coast, developers eye properties ravaged by Hurricane Ian

December 21, 2022 9:28 AM ET

[Danielle Kaye](#)



Susan Elliott power washes her outdoor furniture at her home in Fort Myers Beach, Fla., where a powerful storm surge from Hurricane Ian ravaged the community. *Octavio Jones for NPR*

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Hurricane Ian destroyed more than 5,000 homes in Lee County, Fla., and damaged nearly 30,000 more in late September, raising concerns among local residents about housing affordability – and changes to their communities – as developers move in.

The expansive sandy beaches in Fort Myers for years have attracted people from colder states, like Beth and Ralph Sampson. They call Michigan home, but spend much of the year in Florida.

"It's just charming here," Beth Sampson said. "It's not like, oh, the nightlife. I think the carpet gets rolled up here at 9 o'clock at night."

Lee County isn't as upscale as many of Florida's coastal areas. It's a county in which 28% of renters are low-income or paying at least 40% of their income to rent, according to a [2022 report](#) from the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies.

The Sampsons own a home in Fort Myers Beach – it's still standing. But in October, one month after Ian hit, their neighborhood was a mess, with hollowed-out remnants of homes up and down their block.



A view of Fort Myers Beach, Fla., where a powerful storm surge from Hurricane Ian ravaged the community. *Octavio Jones for NPR*

Beth Sampson said many of her neighbors don't have the means to rebuild.

"One double lot has already sold – and we don't know to who, or for how much – on the street behind us. It's like, oh boy, that's fast," Sampson said. "I'm afraid ... we're going to lose all that beauty that we all shared."

In 2021, Florida's real estate industry accounted for \$294 billion, or 24% of the gross state product, according to a [report from the National Association of Realtors](#). More than 300,000 people move to the Sunshine State each year.

'Blank canvas' for developers

Two affordability concerns are emerging among residents as developers turn to Southwest Florida: flipping damaged single-family homes, rendering them unaffordable for long-term residents, and the construction of larger luxury complexes.

Brad Cozza, who owns real estate brokerage in southwest Florida, said new out-of-state investors – from Wall Street hedge funds to major hotel chains – are already looking at new investments in the region.

Cozza said that, since the hurricane, developers have discovered a "completely blank canvas" in hard-hit coastal areas.



Debris from the damage left by Hurricane Ian is seen in a mobile home park in Fort Myers, Fla. on Oct. 27, 2022. *Octavio Jones for NPR*

Cozza added that his firm has already been involved in acquiring 39 properties since Hurricane Ian. One of his clients bought a damaged waterfront home in Cape Coral, across the bridge from Fort Myers, for \$670,000. After renovations, Cozza expects it to sell for almost \$1 million.

"You're going to see values jump, and you're seeing a lot of new players that are now in the area that would not have been in this area pre-storm," Cozza said.

This, Cozza said, is just plain market dynamics. Many homeowners did not have flood insurance, so they can't afford to rebuild – and that's an opportunity investors are seizing.

Michelle Meyer, director of the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center at Texas A&M University, said it's expensive to build new structures up to code – most of which has been rewritten to make houses better able to withstand disasters.

"Older houses, in general, are more affordable," Meyer said. "And so when you wipe out an older housing stock, even just building new, period, is going to be more expensive."

Federal disaster recovery money to help homeowners rebuild does exist. In the wake of previous hurricanes, states have received hundreds of millions of dollars from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, to provide loans to lower-income homeowners for reconstruction and repair costs.



Debris from damage left by Hurricane Ian is seen in a mobile home park on Pine Island, Fla. on Oct. 28, 2022. *Octavio Jones for NPR*

But Meyer expects it will take one or two years before that money is available in Florida, since the state first needs to submit a funding plan to HUD for approval. Until then, she said, local officials can encourage homeowners not to sell out of desperation, and instead, "find a way to have them hold onto their property and rebuild their property and remain in the home."

Zoning for single family homes can also help maintain the housing stock for lower-income residents, Meyer said, by preventing larger high-end complexes.

Jason Green, an independent zoning consultant for the town of Fort Myers Beach, spoke at the Local Planning Agency's meeting on Dec. 6. He said he doesn't expect local zoning regulations in the town to change significantly in the coming months.

"There are some duplexes, there's a few triplexes and quads worked in there over the years," Green said in reference to zoning in Fort Myers Beach. "But for the most part, you'll see that there are single-family homes."

But as developers buy and renovate single family homes, they, too, are becoming less affordable.

Residents fight to protect their working waterfront

Some investors will push for bigger developments. They were doing so even before Hurricane Ian hit.

Joanne Semmer, who has lived near Fort Myers Beach for more than 50 years, has been trying to stop one such project. She lives steps away from the town's commercial fishing docks and

working waterfront, and she's the president of the Ostego Bay Marine Science Center, a local environmental nonprofit organization.

In 2020, Semmer and her brother sued Lee County after the county rezoned to allow a high-rise apartment complex across the street from her home. An administrative judge ruled in Semmer's favor, on the grounds that the development would increase hurricane evacuation times.



Joanne Semmer, a longtime resident of San Carlos Island, Fla., poses for a portrait at her home, which was flooded by Hurricane Ian. *Octavio Jones for NPR*

But one month before Hurricane Ian, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and his Cabinet overturned that decision, green-lighting the project and paving the way for more density across Lee County's hurricane-prone areas. When an administrative judge in Florida strikes down a change to the state's Comprehensive Plan, the governor and Cabinet vote on whether to approve that decision, said attorney Ralf Brookes, who represents Semmer.

"Southwest Florida has a different flavor," Semmer said. "We really don't want to become another Miami. But money talks."

And now, in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, those concerns are only mounting.

Semmer said she's frustrated by efforts to develop the waterfront, but she'll keep fighting to preserve the character of the town.

"The developers want to come in and take over our working waterfront and build condominiums," Semmer said. "So many of our areas are being sold out."