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Paving the Way for our Future

The St. John's Heritage Parkway

The County Commission room in Viera was packed on April 20th. Some were holding S.O.S. signs for Save Our Subdivision, and various city and county officials were nervously pacing in the back of the room.

Speaker after speaker approached the podium to voice their opinions about the proposed 32-mile St. John's Heritage Parkway that will skirt around Melbourne and Palm Bay. As explained by supporters, it was designed to ease congestion, offer an alternate route to I-95 during evacuations and above all, bring in construction jobs for years. Detractors were skeptical, however, and spoke of their concerns to the attentive commissioners stating they feared worse flooding in their swales and additional noise in their quiet subdivision of Brandywine.

Vested Interests on Both Sides

I could certainly understand their apprehension; however, at the last minute I put my name in to speak. My short speech went unrehearsed and I spoke from the heart. In the two decades that I have lived in Brevard County, I am both impressed and amazed at the progress that has been made at a speed unseen in many other states. Boston, Massachusetts came to mind as I recalled thousands of us trying to maneuver around that city every day during the "Big Dig." It was a nightmare of catastrophic proportions.

I told the commissioners that day that I had faith that the planners and developers would not suddenly forget how to build a parkway and with the complex set of checks and balances put in place, felt assured this parkway would be built correctly and with as little impact to the residents and environment as possible. In fact, preliminary tests and research actually show that the new parkway would in fact *help* the drainage issues west of I-95.

Windfall or What's Due?

Discussion had come up earlier about the Platt family and how much money they stood to make from selling their land. I didn't address this that day but later gave it some thought. I

I can assure you **WE AREN'T SO LITTLE** and we certainly aren't **ASLEEP**.

say, good for the Platts, who were smart enough to purchase the land years ago in the first place. I also say, thanks to the Platts, for selling part of their land to the county because they could have said no and dragged this out for another decade. The Platt family at least went about it the right way by hiring engineers and surveyors to determine what the impact cost would be to them as they relocate their cattle, fencing and irrigation systems. This will not come cheaply I can assure you. It was agreed that the Platts can continue to use their land for agriculture until the county is ready to build so it seems that everyone worked together on this massive project and that's refreshing.

It has since occurred to me that it is *always* a good idea to buy land from a local family because they will usually pour that money right back into the local economy. And that's a better idea than sending the money out of state or overseas. The Platts made \$1.8 million for their land which equates to roughly \$2.7 million for Brevard through ripple effects. Everyone wins.

Future Focus

With a new high speed rail project underway and a new parkway on the horizon, Brevard County is looking quite impressive, I must say. Here in Palm Bay we look forward to the new thoroughfare with eagerness as we map out our own plans for growth in our city of 107,000 people. So while many may call us that "sleepy little town to the south," I can assure you we aren't so little and we certainly aren't asleep. Stay tuned Brevard, you're about to watch a transformation not typically seen during these economic times as we continue to grow to the south and west. We thank the Platts and we applaud the County Commissioners who have the foresight to continue with the growth plans by approving the new parkway. It will be a welcome addition to our city and our county. ♦