

ESP Housing Coalition

Some people believe that the housing crisis in our region never existed or that it has ended due to the soft housing market. It is far from over. Over 17% of our workforce live outside of Collier County, and many would like to live in the county in which they earn a living.

Through the efforts of the Naples Area Chamber of Commerce, a group of interested employers has grown into a partnership focused on increasing the supply of workforce housing, and providing our employees with access to the education and information necessary to become responsible homeowners. The Essential Services Personnel (ESP) Housing Coalition is currently comprised of the Naples Area Chamber of Commerce, NCH Healthcare System, Physician's Regional Health Care System, Anchor Health Care, Collier County Public Schools, City of Naples, and the Collier County Sheriff's Office.

Together we have pooled about \$50,000 in seed money for Fountain Lakes, our current workforce housing project. Our ESP partner in Fountain Lakes, MDG Capital, has just completed about 500 reasonably priced homes in the area. Bill Klohn and his team are committed to building our ESP project with a completion date of Spring 2009.

In addition to this project, other developers and financial organizations have brought to our employees various housing and finance opportunities. Working closely with the Economic Development Council's Housing Stimulus Program, state, and local officials, we are truly making a difference in the lives of our employees.

We are now expanding our membership and invite other interested employers to consider joining our efforts. There is no fee to join the ESP Coalition, simply a genuine interest in addressing workforce housing needs in Collier County and an understanding that active participation by members is necessary. As we embark on specific housing projects that will result in dedicated housing for ESP workforce, employers will be given the opportunity to 'reserve' units for employees, or may opt to pass on that particular project.

All parties interested in joining the ESP Housing initiative should contact Brian Settle at 239-423-5373, 239-513-7599, or email brian.settle@nchmd.org.