

# GULF GATE



September 15, 2022

Dear Commissioners,

We are the representative of the Gulf Gate Estates, a community of 1500 homes in Sarasota County. Our residents wish to voice their concerns regarding the proposed Lennar Homes development of 106 single family units on the former Gulf Gate 49-acre golf course. We also would like to suggest a better proposal for the property that would offer protection for homeowners and the Bay.

The development of the golf course lands has always been a challenge. Five other developers have passed on the opportunity over the years. The 3 parcel property winds throughout the neighborhood, with 140 existing homes on the perimeters. Sampling data as required by the FDEP, indicates high levels of arsenic and other contaminants in the soil and groundwater - a result of decades of fertilizer and pesticide application. Asbestos from numerous irrigation lines is also embedded in the soil. The FDEP has mandated remediation prior to site approval. Our concern is the technique cited by the developer, which is to excavate thousands of cubic yards of contaminated soil and mix it with clean on site. Piles of this soil will be moved onto the 3 parcels for an extended period. Employees will be provided with hazmat suits for protection from the highest toxic soils. This activity will be conducted within 10 feet of our homes. The term "fugitive dust" has been in the news recently. (Feb. 14, 2022, Herald Tribune). Airborne contaminated soil from land cleared at another former golf course was blown onto the property of residents at Winds of St. Armands, who described it as a "dust bomb" blanketing the entire neighborhood with greasy layers of grit. This occurred for months with the failure of the County and the FDEP to exercise oversight until the damage had been done, with no penalty to the developer. Arsenic dust is a carcinogen according to the EPA and does not dissipate ever, so it is a long-term hazard to citizens' health and property values. We ask for your intervention as representatives of the people to disallow this technique as a remediation method. We need stricter statues with serious penalties for violations. Many states and counties offer more stringent regulations to protect their citizens.

Another concern is a groundwater arsenic plume located on the property. The developer has failed to map and delineate the plume in the surficial (shallow) aquifer and the discharge point where it flows into open water as required by the FDEP. This is a critical issue because all groundwater eventually flows into the Bay. FDEP documents indicate that soil excavation and disturbance can spread the contamination into other areas. The developer proffers that natural attenuation and monitoring will suffice. What happens once the site is built out? Hazardous materials will have to be mitigated at taxpayers' expense. Again, we seek your assistance with this serious issue to protect our waterways.

A better proposal which we fully support is offered by Sarasota County Stormwater Utilities. The County has added the property to the acquisition list and sent Lennar Homes a willing seller letter stating its interest in the purchase. The tentative plans are to create much needed stormwater storage with retention and filtering ponds, restored wetlands and passive recreation walking trails. For Gulf Gate Estates and the surrounding neighborhoods, it would offer flood proofing as existing stormwater conveyances are overtaxed because of extensive development over the years. Floods are devastating to homeowners, businesses, schools, roads and sewer systems. This plan would limit soil disturbance and the hazards that entails. With climate change affecting sea rise (6 inches since the 90's), and tremendous flooding in states across the nation, it is crucial that we prepare for a new reality. Funding now can save millions and an economic calamity later.

Commissioners, your leadership is a crucial component to protect our health and property. Thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns. Please consider further support in acquiring the former golf course property and the benefits that would provide our citizens.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Van Vleet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

John Van Vleet, President  
The Board of Directors  
Gulf Gate Community Association website: [www.ggca.us](http://www.ggca.us)

Attachment included:  
FDEP Site Assessment Report:  
[https://prodenv.dep.state.fl.us/DepNexus/public/electronic-documents/ERIC\\_17845/facility!search](https://prodenv.dep.state.fl.us/DepNexus/public/electronic-documents/ERIC_17845/facility!search)

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