

Assistant Community Development Director

Village of Estero, Florida



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Estero, Florida, is a charming and vibrant community in Southwest Florida, nestled between Fort Myers and Naples. Known for its scenic beauty and relaxed lifestyle, Estero offers a perfect blend of suburban tranquility and convenient access to urban amenities. Home to more than 36,000 residents, the Village currently has approximately 17,751 households, 1,467 businesses, and covers about 30 square miles. Estero is located in fast-growing Lee County, which has over 822,000 residents and is expected to exceed 1 million residents by the end of the decade.

The name Estero is from the Spanish word for estuary – where the river meets the sea. One of the standout features of Estero is its natural beauty, with numerous parks, nature preserves, and waterways that provide ample opportunities for outdoor activities. The community is home to the stunning Estero Bay Preserve State Park, a haven for birdwatchers, nature enthusiasts, and those looking to enjoy serene walks through lush landscapes. Estero’s real estate landscape is diverse, featuring everything from about 35 gated communities and upscale developments to more modest housing options.

The Village will be celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, having incorporated on December 31, 2014, with the first meeting of the newly elected Council occurring on March 17, 2015. Cultural events and local festivals contribute to the vibrant community spirit, and nearby cities like Fort Myers and Naples provide additional entertainment and cultural experiences. Whether you’re interested in exploring nature, enjoying recreational activities, or simply relaxing in a friendly, welcoming environment, Estero offers a little something for everyone. Shopping enthusiasts enjoy visiting Miromar Outlets and Coconut Point Outdoor Mall, both located in Estero, as the region’s retail destinations, complete with national brand name shops and restaurants.

One of the most significant community assets is the Hertz Arena, where big-name acts come to perform and which hosts the Florida Everblades, an “AA” team part of the East Coast Hockey League. The community is recognized for its active lifestyle, with golf courses, fitness centers, and tennis courts being popular among residents. Additionally, Estero is home to several excellent schools, making it a desirable location for families. Lee County, Public School District, provides for the public education needs of Estero with 120 schools in the County. In addition to K - 12 schools, there are 15 special centers and community schools, 24 charter schools, and 3 vocational schools. There is one K-5 (Pine-woods Elementary) and one high school (Estero High). Nearby is a 6-8 middle school (Three Oaks Middle). Florida Gulf Coast University is near the Village, and surrounding Lee County is home to eight other colleges and universities.

Two major healthcare systems serve the Estero area. Lee Memorial Health System has locations in Estero and throughout Lee County. The other, NCH Healthcare System, is in nearby Bonita Springs. Major area employers include Lee Health, Lee County and Collier County School Districts, Publix Supermarkets, Walmart Supercenter, NCH Healthcare System, Collier County, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Bayfront Health. Additionally, Hertz Car Rental’s corporate headquarters is in Estero.

The Village’s major demographic groups include 87% White, followed by 8% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 1% Black, and 1% Two or More Races. The community has a median household income of \$100,543 and a median value of owner-occupied housing of \$392,300.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Village of Estero, in partnership with the community, provides a cost-effective system of Village services, encourages economic growth, facilitates a safe environment for a diverse community, enhances quality of life within a positive and sustaining physical environment, while emphasizing the Village’s unique character and leading by example through the implementation of best practices.



GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

The Village is governed by a seven-member Village Council in a council-manager form of government. Elected at-large, the Councilmembers represent seven districts within the boundaries of Estero. Councilmembers serve a term of four years each, staggered so that elections are held every two years. The Council elects a Mayor and Vice Mayor from among the sitting Councilmembers until the next election.

The Council appoints a Village Attorney and a Village Manager, who serves as the organization’s Chief Executive Officer and oversees the Village Clerk, Finance Department, Community Development, Public Works, and Communications Departments. Steven R. Sarkozy was appointed Estero Village Manager in 2015, following previous local government experience as City Manager of the City of Carlsbad, California, the City of Bellevue, Washington, the City of Roseville, Minnesota, and the City of Geneva, New York. Other foundational local government service included work with the cities of Wyoming, Michigan, Beverly Hills, Michigan, and Syracuse, New York.

Estero operates under a “government-light” organizational structure with an extremely low tax rate of 0.74, which is even lower than the Lee County municipal services taxing units’ rate of 0.839. The Village employs 15 staff members and accomplishes the balance of its programs and projects through vendor contracts. Although capital and interfund transfers vary from year to year based on projects, Estero’s typical annual operating budget is approximately \$25 million, inclusive of a General Fund budget of roughly \$20 million.



Village of
ESTERO

STRATEGIC GOALS

Update Financial and Management Policies

Maintain a “government-lite” approach

Increase revenue while maintaining the lowest tax rate in Florida

Cultivate a strong sense of community by educating residents and business owners and increasing engagement

Prepare the Village for future natural disaster

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

Practice **OUTSTANDING ETHICS**, by guarding against Council, Staff, and Board member conflict of interest issues.

Provide **EXCEPTIONAL TRANSPARENCY**, by actively soliciting resident input and proactively distributing meaningful, comprehensible information to the public.

Cultivate a **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**, by helping residents engage with one another and create a distinct Estero community.

Preserve **OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY**, by maintaining zero ongoing pension liabilities and a commitment to limited staffing.

Protect **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS**, by engaging in water quality management and open space preservation.

KEY VALUES

Stewardship

Accountability

Cost Effective Operations

No Short-Term Borrowing

Limited Debt

Healthy Reserves

Transparency

Public Engagement



ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Community Development Department provides a comprehensive range of services to the public and the development community including, but not limited to the review of development proposals; building permits; inspections; plan review; comprehensive planning; general zoning information; rezoning; and compliance with Village codes and ordinances, in addition to coordinating the work of the Village's nine-member Planning, Zoning, and Design Review Board. The Department is staffed with 4.5 FTEs, including the Director of Community Development, the new Assistant Community Development Director position, 1.5 FTEs conducting development review, and a Planner, who is a Certified Floodplain Manager. The Director currently oversees an outsourced services contract for Building Official/Permitting, Building Inspections, and Zoning/Code Compliance/GIS with Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc. (CGA), which is a member of the SAFEbuilt family of companies. Headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, the contractor currently has 20 staff members onsite providing related services. The Department issues about 5,800 building permits per year and is supported with an annual budget of approximately \$1.6 million.

Video recordings of Design Review Board meetings from June 8, 2016, forward, as well as agendas, staff reports, resolutions, ordinances, and other documents related to the meetings can be viewed [here](#) at the corresponding meeting date.



ABOUT THE POSITION

The Assistant Community Development Director is a new position, designed to be responsible for assisting the Director in oversight of the Department, providing staff support to the Planning, Zoning and Design Board, and overseeing special projects in the community. The new Assistant Director will also be assigned oversight responsibilities of the CGA Services Contract, including the development of performance metrics.

A summary of the Assistant Director’s responsibilities includes the following:

- Assist in the management, preparation and update of the Village’s Comprehensive Plan and related Evaluation and Appraisal Reports (EAR) and Land Development Code.
- Assist with various special planning studies in targeted areas of the village.
- Coordinate tasks, measure and track Departmental performance regarding planning, zoning, building, environmental protection, and code enforcement.
- Assist in the preparation and monitoring of the Community Development Department budget.
- Provide technical assistance to the staff and members of the Village’s Planning, Zoning, and Design Review Board
- Represent the Village at meetings, conferences, and other forums to promote program objectives.
- Help coordinate planning activities with state, federal, and regional agencies, local partners, surrounding local governments and private sector stakeholders (e.g., homebuilders, Chamber of Commerce, Homeowners Associations, etc.)
- Prepare, review, evaluate and approve materials for publication and distribution.
- Assists in the oversight of Departmental personnel and CGA Services Contract.
- Coordinate the implementation of new CityView Planning, Inspection, and Permitting software platform in Village operations.
- Assist with GIS mapping projects and updates to website.
- Coaches, mentors, and supervises staff.
- Assist with Economic Development projects.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Managing Rapid Growth:** The Village continues to develop at a rapid pace and the potential for future annexations creates additional jurisdictional square milage and population growth. Both the Village and its residents prioritize the community's high quality of life and steadfastly protects the look and feel of Estero, which requires careful and steady oversight of established planning principles and community design standards vis-à-vis growth management.
- **Hurricane Impacts:** The community continues to experience a backlog of private structure repair work related to damage from Hurricane Ian which places added workload impacts in addition to the day-to-day activities of the Department. Building fee increases were capped by the State of Florida in response to the storm, creating additional financial and operational pressures.
- **Driving Modernization of Processes:** The current methods used to process plans and permits are outdated and the Village is looking to provide more efficient and effective delivery of services. A critical review of the Village's workflows, policies, practices, and technology is desired to help identify proactive positive changes that can improve customer service and decrease turnaround time for tasks. Improved documentation of procedures and processes, and in the implementation of the Department's new CityView Planning, Inspection, and Permitting software platform will be a focus of the new position.
- **Exceptional Customer Service:** It's important to the Village Council and Manager that the Village's reputation for excellent service be championed by Community Development Department personnel in their interactions with residents and businesses seeking permits and related services.
- **Strengthening Contractual Relationships:** As the community continues to grow, the Village's open-ended contract with CGA should be evaluated to ensure that the services offered meet the demand and that appropriate performance metrics are established and monitored to ensure quality.
- **Targeted Planning Studies & Development/Redevelopment Opportunities:** The Village is undertaking a variety of targeted planning studies including an Eco-Historic District to help stabilize properties and infrastructure and encourage redevelopment opportunities in one of the older sections of the community. Furthermore, several transformational large-scale projects including numerous recreation facilities, community parks, and several proposed public-private economic developments, some of which include Village-owned property, present meaningful opportunities to creatively work with developers to create public spaces and developments that further Estero's desirable sense of place.
- **Succession Planning:** The small staff at the Village makes planning for future vacancies in key positions a critical strategic issue. This position will work directly with the Department Director and may act in an interim role on occasion. As a key department in the Village, the position will have the opportunity to work directly with the Village Manager on planning and economic development projects and provide staff reports to the Village Council.



IDEAL CANDIDATE

The Village of Estero seeks an enthusiastic, visionary, hands-on, pragmatic, servant leader with a high degree of emotional intelligence and passion for exceptional public to serve as its new Assistant Community Development Director. The ideal candidate should have a strong technical planning background, experience as a working supervisor, and have a thorough understanding of planning principles, theories, and current trends in the industry. Experience working in Florida local government and implementing design standards, executing small area plans, and collaborating with design professionals is a plus.

The ideal candidate will be someone who seeks to understand what is happening in the Village, learn the history of projects, and finds creative ways to help quality projects move forward through the development process. The Assistant Director should have a transparent and collaborative management style and be a team builder who is approachable and responsive in their interactions with staff.

The Village seeks candidates that understand how progressive planning and entrepreneurial economic development philosophies can help drive both new development and redevelopment initiatives. An appreciation for the potential and value of public-private partnerships is key since many of the Village's future projects will likely be developed through these structures.

Superior communication skills are vital, both verbally and in writing. This position will draft staff reports, contribute to code amendments, assist in developing the comprehensive plan, and make presentations to the Village Council and the Planning, Zoning and Design Board. Ideal candidates will also have comfort in the implementation of new technology, establishing benchmarks and performance measurements to track service efficiencies, coupled with both supervisory and contract management experience.

A candidate with strong comprehension of the fiscal implications of land-use decisions, development patterns and major infrastructure projects, as well as the ability to see the big picture and anticipate outcomes is strongly desired. Lastly, strong administrative skills are also important, particularly in managing work processes, budgeting, and strategic planning. The best candidates will be passionate about their work and help customers get to "Yes" when faced with challenging permit issues.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in planning, geography, political science, economics, landscape architecture, or other related field is required, coupled with ten (10) or more years of progressively applied experience in planning fields (i.e., community, environmental, plan review, transportation, etc.) including three (3) years of supervisory experience. Candidates possessing an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities may be considered. Membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), Registered Landscape Architect (RLA) and/or other certifications are strongly preferred.



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The Village of Estero offers a competitive salary based upon qualifications and experience with a desired starting salary range of \$98,000 - \$149,000. The Village provides a generous benefits program including health, dental, vision, life, employee assistance program, leave/PTO retirement (Florida Municipal Pension Trust Defined Contribution Plan) with Employee 2.5% -Employer 10.5% contribution rates, and Village-issued cell phone.



APPLICATION PROCESS

[Please apply online](#)

For more information on this position contact:

Doug Thomas, Executive Vice President
DouglasThomas@GovernmentResource.com
863-860-9314

or

Kevin Knutson, Senior Vice President
KevinKnutson@governmentresource.com
727-754-0407



The Village of Estero is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity in its workforce. Applicants selected as finalists for this position will be subject to a comprehensive background check.

Pursuant to the Florida Public Records Act, all applications are subject to public disclosure upon receipt of a public records request; however, public record requests regarding candidates are not expected for this position during the recruitment process.

RESOURCES

Village website
estero-fl.gov

Community Development Website
estero-fl.gov/departments-services/building-zoning

[FY 2025 Proposed Annual Budget Presentation](#)

[FY 2025 Proposed Budget Documents](#)

[Future Land Use Map](#)

[Comprehensive Plan \(2018\)](#)

[Zoning Map](#)

[Land Development Code](#)

CGA Solutions
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