

Nation's largest home builder buys 2,900 acres in central Pasco

By [C.T. Bowen](#)



Lennar has purchased more than 2,900 acres of land from the Bexley family's Angeline Corp in central Pasco County. Above, a sold sign sits outside a Lennar-built house at the Bexley by Newland Communities project in Land O' Lakes.

LAND O' LAKES — The nation's largest home builder now owns a large piece of central Pasco.

Lennar acquired more than 2,900 acres from the Bexley family's Angeline Corp. for \$23.65 million earlier this year, according to property records. The land, east of the Suncoast Parkway and south of State Road 52, is separate from the existing Bexley developments.

"We are in the early stages of imagining the possibilities for this property, but we know that we want it to be more than just another development," said Mark Metheny, president of Lennar's central Florida division, in a statement to the *Tampa Bay Times*. "Ever since this land was first offered for sale several years ago, its potential as an important part of the future of Pasco County has been clear."

Lennar already builds single-family homes in a dozen Pasco County communities including in Bexley by Newland Communities.

That project, known colloquially as Bexley South, sits on 1,733 acres that front the north side of State Road 54. Its entitlements include 520 apartments that are now under construction, 1,200 single-family homes, and nearly 660,000 square feet of commercial and office space. It is home to a new stand-alone emergency room from Florida Hospital and a 110-room Springhill Suites by Marriott that is under construction.

To the north is land for a separate county-approved master development known as Bexley North. Its 5,442 acres remain undeveloped, but could include more than 11,000 homes, 600 apartments and more than 800,000 square feet of stores and offices.

At one time, the Bexley Ranch covered 15,000 acres in Land O' Lakes. Family members listed the 6,400-acre Angeline land, bordered by the CSX rail line on the east and the parkway to the west, for sale in November 2015. Lennar formed a new company, Len-Angeline, in the summer of 2017 to acquire a portion of the land, and the transaction closed Jan. 31.

Angeline Corp. retains ownership of other parcels and is using Avison Young in Miami to market property at the southeast corner of SR 52 and the parkway. That site contains a shuttered building that formerly housed a Florida Highway Patrol barracks.

"The time was right for the family to sell off some of their land holdings, yet remain rooted in the community. They retain a significant amount of SR 52 frontage, including a cornerstone of the contemplated master planned project – a mixed-use node at the Suncoast Parkway interchange," said Michael Fay, Avison Young's principal and managing director in Miami, in an emailed statement. "Fantastic projects are taking shape in this area because of Lennar's presence."

Lennar's newly purchased property, north and west of the Bexley North site, includes no development entitlements. Metheny said the company looked "forward to engaging with a range of visionaries, civic leaders and the public, because we all have the opportunity to create a new community that (is) smartly planned, walkable, pays homage to the natural landscape and benefits everyone in Pasco County and the region overall."

Part of the property's attraction is the expanding road network. The state Department of Transportation will widen two-lane SR 52 to six lanes from the parkway east to U.S. 41 beginning next year at a cost of \$48 million. Separately, the widening of two-lane U.S. 41 from Connerton north to SR 52 is scheduled to begin the following year.

At more than 2,900 acres, Lennar's site is comparable to the 2,500-acre Starkey Ranch development on SR 54 in Odessa. Its neighbors further east would include the 8,000-acre Connerton development on U.S. 41.

"It's going to be a good one that's for sure," real estate agent Terri Dusek said about the Lennar project. Dusek is past president of the Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce, "We're excited about it."

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841 homes planned for former dairy farm, citrus grove in Land O'Lakes



C.T. Bowen, Pasco Times Columnist

Wednesday, March 1, 2017 8:00am

LAND O'LAKES — The cows are long gone and the pasture is soon to follow as a home builder advances plans to turn a former dairy farm and the onetime citrus grove next door into a residential development.

Last month, a newly formed company, Cypress Preserve 841, closed on the \$5.75 million purchase of the 293-acre Lester Dairy Farm that sits west of U.S. 41, about a mile south of State Road 52. The company also paid \$4.2 million for the adjoining 139 acres owned by Florida Citrus Investors. At one time, that land had been home to Smith Groves.

Both parcels already had received county approval to be turned into master planned housing developments. The project by NVR Inc., the parent company of Ryan Homes, is planned to hold 841 single-family homes and townhouses and will be marketed as Cypress Preserve. The company's attorney, Clarke Hobby, said Ryan expects to begin selling homes in the fourth quarter of 2017.

It's not the first time the dairy farm had been targeted for new homes. Greenwood Property Development canceled a multimillion-dollar contract for the farm in late 2006, just as a booming real estate market cooled. The Lester family continued to milk up to 250 dairy cows there until last year. The family trust didn't sell all of its holdings. It retained ownership of a little more than 6 acres, including commercial property fronting on U.S. 41 at Keene Road.

Though traffic improvements are coming outside the Cypress Preserve project, the developers will be required to build a so-called vision road to provide a north-south route parallel to U.S. 41.

Nearby, the state Department of Transportation plans to expand SR 52 from two to six lanes, between the Suncoast Parkway and U.S. 41, and rebuild the SR 52/U.S. 41 intersection beginning in 2018. The DOT also plans to widen U.S. 41 to four lanes between Connerton Boulevard and SR 52 beginning in 2020. Currently, that two-lane road is susceptible to late-afternoon workday traffic backups.

841 homes planned for former dairy farm, citrus grove in Land O'Lakes 03/01/17
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Bexley family land in central Pasco County listed for sale



C.T. Bowen, Pasco Times Columnist

Monday, November 9, 2015 5:18pm

LAND O'LAKES — Most of the final portions of the Bexley family holdings have hit the market with a Canadian-based real estate firm tasked with selling 6,400 acres southeast of the Suncoast Parkway interchange at State Road 52 in central Pasco County.

The property, rebranded as Angeline after one of the family's corporations, carries no development entitlements and is separate from the Bexley Ranch South and North master-planned developments rezoned earlier this year by Pasco County.

Combined, those projects — stretching across 7,100 acres from State Road 54 north beyond Tower Road — could bring more than 13,000 homes, 1,100 apartments, 1 million square feet of offices and 390,000 square feet of commercial space. Bexley South already is being developed by Newland Communities on 1,700 acres north of SR 54.

Farther north, however, state road-building plans are making the area more attractive for development. The Florida Department of Transportation plans to widen SR 52 from two to six lanes between the Suncoast Parkway and U.S. 41, and rebuild the SR 52/U.S. 41 intersection starting in 2018. The 6,400-acre Angeline land sits south of that road network and is bordered by the CSX Corp. rail line on the east and the Suncoast Parkway on the west.

Avison Young, based in Toronto, is marketing the land, with no asking price, to developers and investors.

"With commercial and residential development picking up in the immediate vicinity, the land asset poses a unique prospect for an investor/developer to capitalize on the demand for lifestyle amenities," Michael T. Fay, managing director of Avison Young's Miami operation, said in a statement.

The property had been named after the late S.C. "Bud" Bexley Jr., a Pasco County ranching pioneer whose family once owned 15,000 of acres west of U.S. 41. He died in 2003. The northernmost portion is now being marketed as Angeline to avoid confusion with the developments carrying the family name.

Bexley family land in central Pasco County listed for sale 11/09/15
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Connerton Corner to get McDonald's

March 9, 2016 By [Kathy Steele](#) [1 Comment](#)

McDonald's restaurant is set to open at Connerton Corner in late summer.

It is yet another sign that developers are looking north along U.S. 41 to bring retail to Land O' Lakes, an area where more rooftops are popping up.

A groundbreaking for McDonald's is expected by mid-April, with an opening date slated for late July or early August.



A dump truck tips a load of dirt onto a vacant lot that in April will be the site for a groundbreaking of a new McDonald's restaurant, at U.S. 41 and Pleasant Plains Parkway.
(Kathy Steele/Staff Photo)

Construction crews currently are preparing the site at the entrance into the master-planned community of Connerton, at U.S. 41 and Pleasant Plains Parkway.

The site is owned by Orlando-based Connerton Corners LLC, according to Pasco County records.

For McDonald's franchise owner, Jose Hernandez, the restaurant will be his 11th restaurant in the Tampa Bay area. His 10th restaurant recently opened at

11367 Ridge Road in New Port Richey.

Hernandez also owns franchises in Trinity, New Port Richey and Land O' Lakes. He bought most of his locations in 2014 from Bob Brickman, a long-time franchise owner in the Tampa Bay area.

"(Pasco) is destined for very progressive growth," said Hernandez, who began his career with McDonald's more than 25 years ago. He has been an operator/owner since 2008 but also has served in corporate positions including more than four years as president of McDonald's Caribbean division.

McDonald's has restaurants in about 120 countries. Hernandez has visited more than 80 of those countries and helped open restaurants in Central and South America and the Philippines.

Hernandez now calls Pasco County home.

"It's amazing after a world tour to come home," Hernandez said. "We are very fortunate to be in our location in Pasco County, (an area) that is still under discovery."

He was 9 years old when his family immigrated from Cuba to south Florida. In 1989 Hernandez relocated to Tampa where he began his career with McDonald's.

The fast-food chain currently is sprucing up the design of its restaurants including Hernandez' location at Land O' Lakes Boulevard and State Road 54.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

05/11/2016 – Embroiders' Guild
The Gulfview Chapter of Embroiders' Guild of America will meet on May 11 at 10:30 a.m., at its new location, Veterans Memorial Park, 14333 Hicks Road in Hudson. After a short business meeting, there will be a potluck luncheon and stitching on the Hum Bug pattern. Stitchers of all levels can attend. For information, call (727) 389-3376. ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

05/13/2016 – Book bazaar
The Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., in Dade City, will have a book bazaar on May 13 and May 14 from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There will be a diverse selection of books, audio and video media, magazines, and related materials, most for less than \$3. For information, call Glen Thompson at (352) 567-7449. ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

05/13/2016 – Central Pasco Chamber golf tournament

The company also recently introduced the all-day breakfast to its menu. That is going over well, Hernandez said.

The Connerton Corner restaurant will be testing another new concept – self-ordering by kiosk. The Ridge Road location also has kiosks.

Hernandez said customers can walk in, place an order at a kiosk, then sit down and wait for an employee to deliver the meal tableside.

"I believe it's a whole different experience," he said.

It's a sign of how much social media and new technology is influencing customer service, he added.

Initial testing has been positive but the system will be tweaked to work through any kinks in its operation. Employees will help guide customers through the process. "We've done a lot of prep work to bring it forward," Hernandez said.

The new restaurant initially will fill about 60 to 65 positions. Current employees from other locations will help get the restaurant started but local residents also will have opportunities to apply for jobs, Hernandez said.

"I think it grows from there," he said.

Published March 9, 2016

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Comments

Vikki says:

May 9, 2016 at 12:33 pm

Yes the growth is coming full force north on 41 in Pasco county !

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Name *

The Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce will have its 30th annual Golf Tournament on May 13 at the Heritage Harbor Golf & Country Club, 19502 Heritage Harbor Parkway in Lutz. There is a noon check-in and 1 p.m. shotgun start. The fee is \$70 per golfer or \$260 for foursome. For more details call (813) 909-2722 or email *protected email*. ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

05/13/2016 – Murder mystery dinner

The GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club will present a Murder Mystery Dinner Theater production of "Sinister Sleepover" on May 13 at 7 p.m., at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 20735 Leonard Road in Lutz. The audience is invited to wear pajamas, robes, slippers, hair curlers, or whatever necessary to add to the fun. Tickets are \$20 and include the play and a "breakfast for dinner" buffet. For information and tickets, call (813) 786-8461. ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

05/14/2016 – Arts & crafts fair

New Beginnings Family Church, off U.S. 41 just north of State Road 52, will host a "Community in Unity" arts and crafts fair on May 14 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be food, vendors, a car wash and more. For information, contact Judi Fisher at (813) 943-5301 or *protected email*. ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

05/14/2016 – Lutz Guv'na debate

The Lutz Guv'na debate will be on May 14 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., at the Old Lutz School, 18819 U.S. 41 in Lutz. Candidates will debate trying to win the Guv'na sash by July 4. If you are interested in running, call (813) 727-7549. ... [\[Read More...\]](#)

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Historic Gowers Corner crossroads eyed for development

By D'ANN LAWRENCE WHITE

Tribune staff

Published: April 30, 2016



GOOGLE EARTH

The intersection of U.S. 41 and State Road 52 is known as Gowers Corner.

LAND O' LAKES — A historic crossroads has been targeted for a large-scale development that will include retail stores and restaurants.

Pasco County commissioners unanimously have approved an amendment to the county's land-use plan, paving the way for development of 44 acres at the southwest corner of U.S. 41 and State Road 52. The intersection is known as Gowers Corner.

Purchased decades ago by Land O' Lakes pioneer Linton Tibbetts, founder of Tibbetts Lumber Co., the undeveloped property now is owned by a corporation of the Tibbetts family that wants to build 215,000 square feet of commercial and office projects, plus 40 residential units, on the property.

With the commission's approval of the land-use plan amendment, the developer plans to file a proposal for a development that will include stores, offices, restaurants, work-live units with residences above small shops, and main-street type amenities built around a water feature of some sort.

Gowers Corner was named for lumberman William Arthur Gower, who bought a property at the intersection in 1926 and built the area's first gasoline station. He added a grocery store to the property in 1945, according to historic records.

The two-story gas station and grocery store were demolished in 1984.

Today a Hess station stands where Gowers' gas station and grocery store once served as the only place to buy gasoline and groceries within 20 miles of the crossroads.

Except for the addition of a Citgo gas station, a Speedway gas station and a Dunkin' Donuts, the intersection has remained undeveloped.

And that's just how Land O' Lakes resident Theodore Delong prefers it.

Delong lives across the street from the Tibbetts property on U.S. 41. He told commissioners that his home and other properties he owns are on Green Lake, which has been plagued by flooding.

"We have been having horrendous flooding problems," he said. "People can't use their septic tanks or toilets. They have porta-potties in their front yards."

Although he said he has no problem with the Tibbetts land being developed, he does oppose any drainage plans for the development that would direct runoff into the lake.

And he said he doesn't believe building a retention pond in the new development will remedy the problem.

"Just drive down 41 and look at the retention ponds," he told commissioners last week. "Every single one of them is overflowing their banks. Retention ponds do nothing. All this water is going to end up in our lake."

Commissioner Mike Moore told Delong those issues will be examined during the approval process, adding that the county is working with the Southwest Florida Water Management District on resolving drainage issues at the intersection.

He said he believes the proposed development will enhance ongoing redevelopment efforts along U.S. 41.

“I think this is a great project,” he said. “These much-needed amenities will be great for the area’s redevelopment.”

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 URL: <http://www.tbo.com/pasco-county/pasco-seeks-to-woo-more-industry-20160430/>

Pasco seeks to woo more industry

By D'ANN LAWRENCE WHITE

Tribune staff

Published: April 30, 2016

NEW PORT RICHEY — Pasco County has an opportunity to outdistance other Florida counties when it comes to attracting new industries. But that advantage has a high price.

Bill Cronin, president and CEO of the Pasco County Economic Development Council, last week told county commissioners he wants to spend \$500,000 to hire a world-renowned expert to certify large tracts of land throughout the county for possible industrial development.

The certification process would allow industries interested in moving to Pasco to determine a site's suitability without waiting for reviews, approvals and permitting processes.

Having a site certification program is critical to the county's ability to attract new industry, Cronin told commissioners.

In determining the best places to relocate, industries routinely contract with site selection consultants who review possible locations and make recommendations. More often than not, Cronin said, the consultants recommend sites that already are certified for development because it eliminates uncertainty about the sites' suitability.

"We have to have sites ready," Cronin said. "We've lost opportunities because site selection consultants have cut us out. Whatever we can do to better prepare our product will keep us in the game longer."

Currently, Cronin said, most sites certified for industrial development are in South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi and southern Alabama. Florida has only a couple of certified sites, he said.

Cronin has proposed hiring McCallum Sweeney Consulting of Greenville, South Carolina, for \$500,000 to certify sites.

“We want to assess sites with at least 2,500 acres of land for prospective industrial (development) – nothing smaller than 50 acres,” he said. He said the funds could be generated through the Penny for Pasco gas tax and paid out over three years.

In addition to certifying industrial sites, McCallum Sweeney Consulting also is a site location consultant with clients including Boeing, Michelin, Hertz and Lockheed Martin, Cronin said. In addition to assessing sites in Pasco County, the firm can recommend Pasco sites to its clients.

Prior to calling in the consultant, Cronin said the county will need to identify and assess possible sites to determine if they are suitable and have any problems that could be corrected in advance. Among considerations are the suitability of a site; access to major roads, interstates and rail corridors; availability of utilities; the size of the area’s labor force and the area’s quality of life. The consultant then can assess the site’s best uses and make recommendations on marketing the tract.

“It doesn’t mean all the infrastructure has to be in place, but it means we have to tell them we’re working on it,” said Cronin.

Among the sites the county is hoping to certify for aerospace manufacturing, light industrial and assembly companies is a 440-acre parcel near the Zephyrhills Airport.

The property is under evaluation by the Duke Energy site-readiness program, and Cronin said he expected to receive site certification in about one year.

The only stumbling block, he said, is the presence of some contamination on the property that must be cleaned up. The county hopes to obtain federal grants to help pay for such a clean-up project.

"I know some properties will have issues but others will be ready to go," Cronin said.

To identify other sites for review, Cronin said he hopes to entice engineering firms in the county to conduct assessments before bringing in a consultant.

Although they took no action on Cronin's proposal, county commissioners were enthusiastic.

"This is a chance to separate ourselves from the competition, including other Florida counties," Commissioner Mike Moore said. "This is a great plan, and I'm excited about the opportunity for us to stand out."

Commissioner Jack Mariano agreed.

"I've heard talk for years that we need to get in the site selection game," he said. "It's time for us to step up. With all the assets we have out there, this can really put us in a standout position."


Although it's unusual, Commissioner Ted Schrader said, hiring a site selection consultant would be a good use of Penny for Pasco funds.

"All Penny for Pasco funds are being spent in the county, and if we hire a consultant we'll spend outside the county," Schrader said. "But hopefully it will result in dividends for our county."

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 URL: <http://tampatribune.com/pasco-county/planned-highway-work-to-transform-southeast-pasco-20131129/>

Planned highway work to transform southeast Pasco

By [Laura Kinsler](#)



Tribune file photo

Millions of dollars have been earmarked for highways in Pasco County, and a lot of credit is given to the county's legislative delegation.

WESLEY CHAPEL — Being home to the current and future speakers of the Florida House is proving beneficial for Pasco County, which is slated to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in new highway funding during the next five years.

House Speaker Will Weatherford last week announced he had secured funding in the Florida Department of Transportation five-year budget to [extend State Road 56](#) all the way to U.S. 301.

Weatherford, entering his final year as speaker, said the 6.7-mile road has “been on my list for a while.”

The tentative DOT work program includes \$39 million in construction money in 2017. Department spokeswoman Kris Carson said the project is a public-private partnership — property owners will donate the right of way and pay for the design of the four-lane road.

“I’m very grateful to the state DOT and Secretary (Ananth) Presad for his help to get this project expedited,” Weatherford said. “It opens up a whole new corridor for Pasco County, and it helps link Wesley Chapel and Zephyrhills.”

For the past several years, Pasco officials have been lobbying the DOT on the need to improve the county's east-west corridors. In addition to the State Road 56 extension, the department's budget includes nearly \$100 million for improvements to State Road 54 and **\$125 million for improvements to State Road 52.**

More than \$100 million would be allocated to widen State Road 52 between the Suncoast Parkway and U.S. 41 from two lanes to six lanes and to rebuild the intersection at U.S. 41. Construction would begin in 2018.

The same segment on State Road 54 (between the Suncoast and U.S. 41) will be expanded from four lanes to six lanes next year. The next phase of the [State Road 54 widening project](#) between Wesley Chapel and Zephyrhills would be funded for construction in 2015. It includes adding two lanes plus two auxiliary lanes and rebuilding the intersection at Morris Bridge Road.

Pasco Commissioner Ted Schrader pressed fellow commissioners and legislators to move up the State Road 52 project on their list of priorities. He said he is encouraged by the decision to include funding in the next work program, though he is disappointed the project won't continue from U.S. 41 to Old Pasco Road. "I'm encouraged by their focus on State Road 52, but we've still got a lot of work to do," he said. **"Going from two lanes to six lanes with sidewalks and bike lanes will be a huge improvement.** Our delegation is effectively working on our behalf, and we're starting to reap the rewards."

But it's the State Road 56 extension that could transform southeast Pasco County. "It's going to make it much easier to get to Zephyrhills, and it's a great economic development opportunity," Weatherford said.

It also makes good business sense to build the road now, he said. "It's significantly cheaper to build a new four-lane road than it is just for the right of way to expand State Road 54," he said. "If you can find a new corridor, it's always a better solution."

More than half of the new road will bisect the 3,500-acre Two Rivers Ranch between Morris Bridge Road and U.S. 301. Five years ago ranch owner Robert Thomas teamed with Tampa-based Sierra Properties [to develop the ranch](#). The county amended its comprehensive plan to allow up to 6,400 homes, 2.7 million square feet of office and light industrial uses, and 630,000 square feet of commercial space.

But Thomas said they never followed through with a rezoning application, and Sierra dropped out of the project years ago. “When the market crashed in ’08-’09, everybody sort of rolled up their plans and filed them away,” he said. “But now things are moving again in Pasco County. The road is a game-changer.”

Richard Gehring, the county’s growth management administrator, said he expects the new road to lure the same type of [high-quality development](#) seen in Wesley Chapel. “Look at what’s happened to Wesley Chapel since we built opened the State Road 56 interchange,” he said. “In 10 years, we have a new college, a hospital, two malls and a future Raymond James site that closes in April.”

The new road probably will accelerate construction in New Tampa’s K-Bar Ranch as well. “There is no east-west connectivity in existence for 12 miles to the south, so it will become a major regional asset,” Gehring said.

But first, Thomas will have to find a developer willing to design the road. He suspects that won’t be a problem. “Everybody wants to buy our land all the time; not a week goes by that I don’t get a call from someone. It’s just a question of what they’re willing to pay for it,” he said.

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Bowen: Gowers Corner on its way to becoming a corner of commerce



C.T. Bowen, Pasco Times Columnist

Thursday, January 21, 2016 10:57am

William A. Gower once had a decades-long monopoly on commerce at the central Pasco intersection bearing his name.

But Gowers Corner, where U.S. 41 and State Road 52 intersect in the northern Land O'Lakes area, is poised to lose its identity as the middle of the county's traffic-choked, but still half-empty crossroads.

The Florida Department of Transportation plans to build new highway lanes, and a private property owner is anticipating developers will follow.

So, think of it this way: Most everyone in central Pasco could be looking in the wrong direction.

The recent focus of near universal attention from business groups, property owners, motorists and government agencies has been the U.S. 41/State Road 54 intersection. That's what happens when the DOT moves forward with long-discussed plans to possibly build a flyover to relieve traffic congestion.

As many as 23 businesses may have to relocate, and many people advocate the alternative of doing nothing.

One thing to consider, however, is that the state has budgeted no money over the next five years to actually start buying land or to rebuild the intersection. There has been no final decision on how to proceed. So any changes are still a long way off.

Gaze northward, however, and that's not the case.

Traffic congestion is even more problematic 10 miles north at SR 52 and U.S. 41. At that point, both roads have a single lane in each direction, with turn lanes. The result? The backup of cars and trucks waiting to pass through the red light can be interminable. The end-of-the-day commute has northbound travelers in gridlock all the way to Connerton Boulevard, where U.S. 41 shrinks to a two-lane road.

The state already is buying land and actual construction on SR 52, widening it to six lanes, is scheduled to begin in 2018. Adding two lanes to U.S. 41 starts the following year.

It's a short-term inconvenience that will bring long-term relief.

"Life in that corner will be miserable for a while," said County Administrator Michele Baker, "and then it will be wonderful."

Gower died in 1978. He had been a superintendent at the former sawmill in Fivay and had acquired 80 acres of land that took in all four corners of the intersection. There is some disagreement among the research published by local historians Jeff Cannon and Susan MacManus and her late mother, Elizabeth, but Gower and his wife ended up operating a filling station and grocery in the 1930s, '40s and '50s at the southeast corner, on the spot now occupied by a Speedway convenience store.

The gas station at the northwest corner didn't appear until 1970. It is expected to be demolished as part of the road construction. The other two corners are still vacant. Don't expect that to last.

While businesses might be moving out at the SR 54/U.S. 41 intersection, they'll be moving in at SR 52/U.S. 41.

The very first could be on land owned by the lumberyard barons, the Tibbets family. Its corporate entities own the 43 acres at the southwest corner, and they are seeking county permission so a future developer can build 215,000 square feet of stores, some of which will sit beneath 40 second-story residential units.

It means significant commerce is coming to an area that's been little more than a place to get gas, coffee or a headache from sitting in traffic.

One of the advocates for the proposed development is former Commissioner Pat Mulieri, who lives not so far to the west. She notes that the only grocery stores are south at Connerton and west at Hays Road. There is nothing to the north until near Brooksville, 20 miles away.

"My basic concern is that there is no public transportation," Mulieri said in an email. "Consequently, it is difficult for many to get to shopping area. Convenience stores are the alternative. Not a wise choice."

Her zeal is understandable. This isn't another gas station popping up. A retail center with second-story apartments is the kind of pedestrian-friendly growth with eye-pleasing amenities and a mass transit stop that Pasco County is encouraging.

"It's a logical corner to put what you're proposing," Baker told landowner Arlen Tillis last week at a meeting of the county's Development Review Committee. "So, thank you for that."

Actual development isn't expected for five years or so, and it won't include all of the property. Somebody else has designs on part of the site, too.

The DOT wants about 5 acres for the new intersection.

Bowen: Gowers Corner on its way to becoming a corner of commerce 01/21/16
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Tampa Bay Times



Suburbia beginning to spread north of SR 52 in central Pasco



C.T. Bowen, Pasco Times Columnist

Wednesday, February 18, 2015 6:03pm

GOWERS CORNER — The suburbanization of central Pasco is heading north.

Residential growth patterns for the past two decades primarily followed the east-west route along the State Road 54/56 corridor from Trinity to Wiregrass. That trend certainly isn't slowing, with Starkey Ranch under construction in Odessa, the Asturia development slated to add 900 homes and apartments on the former Behnke Ranch, Newland Communities planning to offer homes for sale at the massive Bexley Ranch development by year's end, and Standard Pacific homes debuting its Estacia at Wiregrass just last week.

But turn north onto Land O'Lakes Boulevard (U.S. 41), and the growth pattern is rekindled beyond Connerton and now leapfrogs State Road 52. There, about a mile and half north of the SR 52/U.S. 41 intersection — on the west side of the highway — M/I Homes is building Talavera, the first dense suburban housing tract along U.S. 41 north of the area known as Gowers Corner.

It's not the only activity in that area. Ryan Homes has a contract to purchase the 300-acre Lester's Dairy on the west side of U.S. 41, just south of SR 52. And Colliers International is marketing a 34.5-acre commercial site fronting on SR 52, just west of the intersection, that could contain a grocery or big-box anchor. The asking price: \$3.59 million.

Even Wawa wants in on the action. The convenience store/gasoline station chain, known for fresh, made-to-order food, plans to build a store at SR 52 and Kent Grove Road. It would be Wawa's first Pasco store east of Little Road.

While all of those plans remain drawings on paper, MI Homes is moving dirt at Talavera and has constructed the exterior wall to its 543-acre community. The development is approved for 758 homes, the first of which should be available in three to four months, the company said.

"So much of the growth has been along the (SR) 54 corridor, basically the balance of that is being spoken for or being built out. That's the next corridor — to the north," said Dewey Mitchell of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Group. The SR 52/U.S. 41 area is "really not that far out anymore. It's a major intersection. It only makes sense that there would be development around that node."

The Talavera land illustrates classic real estate booms and busts. Dr. James Gill, the well-known ophthalmologist, developer and real estate investor, acquired the 541 acres in the early 1980s from a Polk County citrus grower. The rezoning process didn't begin until 2003, and two years later the Gills family sold the tract for \$14 million to a Jacksonville developer. By 2010, the developer was gone, and a Georgia-based holding company sold the parcel to investors for less than \$2.3 million. That group flipped the land to M/I Homes of Tampa in 2013 for \$6.1 million — close to triple the prior purchase price, but less than half of what Gills grossed.

Of course, growth isn't imminent everywhere north of SR 52, where rural land remains plentiful. Mitchell's family owns the former Saginaw Ranch, farther north on U.S. 41. The 1,500-acre site, formerly owned by the late rancher Milo Thomas, is included in Pasco County's suburban market area. It could be a prime location for a walkable community with an employment

center, housing, a college site and a western connection to the county's wildlife corridor linking Crews Lake to Starkey Wilderness Park. Development of the property, however, is years if not decades away, Mitchell said.

Much of the current activity can be tied to the real estate market's recovery after the Great Recession, county improvements to the wastewater system in the vicinity and state Department of Transportation plans to start widening both SR 52 and U.S. 41 over the next five years.

"It's already got more traffic than it can handle, both of those roads," said Tom Chamblee, the listing agent for Colliers International. "Most of the traffic is westbound on 52 and northbound on 41 in the evening, and they almost all go past our site."

Expanding SR 52 from two to six lanes, between the Suncoast Parkway and U.S. 41, and rebuilding the SR 52/U.S. 41 intersection is scheduled to begin in 2018. When completed, it will be a second, multilane route between U.S. 41 and the parkway — SR 54 is the other — and enhance the marketability of the Gowers Corner area to developers. The DOT's tentative five-year work plan calls for widening U.S. 41 to four lanes between Connerton Boulevard and SR 52 beginning in 2020 on. The two-lane road is susceptible to frequent late-afternoon traffic backups in the northbound lane as commuters end their workday.

Commercial development traditionally follows rooftops, but one existing business could be sitting in the catbird's seat. Villa Verde Cafe, an Italian restaurant that opened in 2010, is directly across the street from the entrance to Talavera and could be one of the earliest beneficiaries of an expanding community.

"I hope so," said owner Rosario Fierro. "If you put people in there, I hope they like to go out to eat."

Suburbia beginning to spread north of SR 52 in central Pasco 02/18/15

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Tampa Bay Times

WINNER OF 10 PULITZER PRIZES

Homes planned for central Pasco dairy farm

Times staff

Wednesday, July 1, 2015 6:32pm

LAND O'LAKES — One of the last dairy farms in Pasco County is poised to become a residential development.

Pasco County government's top administrators, sitting as the Development Review Committee, last week **approved the rezoning to turn the 295-acre Lester's Dairy into a new 487-home neighborhood**. The farm is on the west side of U.S. 41, south of State Road 52. Redus Florida Land, a subsidiary of Wells Fargo Bank, filed the zoning application that is scheduled to be heard by Pasco commissioners July 21.

The Lester family, which milks up to 250 dairy cows on the farm, declined comment because the property is under contract. It's not the first time the land has been targeted for a new homes. Greenwood Property Development canceled a multimillion-dollar contract for the dairy farm in late 2006 just as a booming real estate market cooled.

The farm now is under contract to Ryan Homes and is part of a burgeoning development market in the Gowers Corner area, much of it attributed to pending road improvements. The state Department of Transportation plans to **expand State Road 52 from two to six lanes, between the Suncoast Parkway and U.S. 41, and to rebuild the SR 52 and U.S. 41 intersection beginning in 2018**. The agency's five-year work plan also calls for **widening U.S. 41 to four lanes between Connerton Boulevard and SR 52 beginning in 2020**.

The farm, operated by D.W. Lester & Sons Inc., dates to the early 1960s. Its departure leaves the Spoto Palm River Dairy in Crystal Springs as the last working dairy farm in Pasco County, according to the U.S. Consolidated Farm Services Agency.

Homes planned for central Pasco dairy farm 07/01/15

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Consultant: Pasco should build \$25 million government center in mid-county

By [Laura Kinsler](#)

DADE CITY — Pasco County should build a \$25 million government center in Land O' Lakes or Wesley Chapel and relocate many of the county's administrative offices to the central campus, consultants recommended Tuesday.

The county currently maintains government centers in New Port Richey and in Dade City, the county seat. Neither site will be convenient for the hundreds of thousands of new residents expected to move to the State Road 54 corridor over the next two decades. The recommendation from Miami-based [CGL](#) was part of a comprehensive, [facilities master plan](#) to accommodate expected growth for the next 20 years.

"I think anyone with common sense knew this was coming," Commissioner Kathryn Starkey said. "It's long overdue. I wish they had done it a generation ago."

Consultant Chloe Jaco said the county would need at least 30 acres to develop a south central campus with enough room to accommodate the county offices, plus those needed by the Clerk, Tax Collector, Supervisor of Elections and Property Appraiser.

The \$25 million price tag would not include the cost of land and would only cover the first phase. The first phase should be built within the next five years, but the campus would need to be expanded after a decade, doubling the cost.

"The county has title to 20 acres in the future Connerton town center — that's a possibility depending on timing," Jaco said. "We think south central is the place that makes the most sense in terms of ease of access for most citizens."

Commission Chairman Jack Mariano disagreed with her assessment, saying he prefers the Connerton site, on U.S. 41 about seven miles north of S.R. 54.

"I think driving more traffic onto S.R. 54 would be a mistake," he said. "I think if we can get the Ridge Road Extension built, the Connerton location would be better."

Starkey said that regardless of the location, she hopes the county puts more thought into designing its next government campus.

"I hope we'll make a walkable campus with a mix of uses - like restaurants and retail - so you don't have to get in your car and drive every time you want to go to lunch," she said.

GCL also has endorsed a plan, on hold since last year, to build a [criminal courthouse](#) next to the county jail in Land O' Lakes. The third courthouse, though, could cost \$95 million — more than twice the \$39 million the county has budgeted for the project.

The consultants said the county also needs a \$100 million expansion at the jail in the next five years. The jail is over capacity now, and by 2019 it will be short more than 800 beds based on current incarceration rates. Expanding some of the county's jail diversion programs would offset the need for more jail beds but also places increased demands on the Pasco Sheriff's Office.

“If you don’t control or reduce the jail population, you might have to plan for two additional 500-bed facilities,” Jaco said.

CGL also recommends the county demolish the current sheriff’s administration building in New Port Richey and build a centralized headquarters building on the Land O’ Lakes campus in eight years, at a cost of \$15 million to \$20 million.

Maj. Mel Eakley said Sheriff Chris Nocco agrees with most of the recommendations, with one exception. “I think five to seven more years in that current administration building is going to be a struggle,” he said.

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 URL: <http://tbo.com/pasco-county/pasco-ponders-how-to-spend-250m-20150515/>

Pasco ponders how to spend \$250M

By [Laura Kinsler](#)

DADE CITY — Pasco County commissioners have a lot of expensive decisions to make over the next year as the county attempts to implement the first phase of the \$250 million facilities master plan.

One of the first items on the list is whether to spend \$2.2 million to renovate the existing utilities building on the campus of the West Pasco Government Center in New Port Richey. **Pasco County Utilities is moving into a new \$9 million administration center in Connerton this summer.**

Facilities Director Eric Breitenbach said the plan is to relocate the county's internal services departments, namely information technology, human resources and management and budget, into the old utilities building, which needs the renovations to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. But moving Internal Services would free up about 6,556 square feet of space for other departments.

Eventually, the county will need to build a [central Pasco government center](#) to keep up with growth in the State Road 54 corridor. The first phase of that campus is projected to cost around \$25 million.

"The bottom line message is we'll get by for a few years in the West Pasco Government Center, but if we grow like we're projected to, we're going to run out of space," he said. "We need to get serious about the South-Central Government Center."

The other two major expenses in the next five years are the [jail expansion](#) (\$100 million) and **criminal courthouse** (\$95 million). Breitenbach is drafting a request for proposals for private developers who would finance the building projects and lease them back to the county. He said he expects to complete them in about a month.

The Pasco Sheriff's Office also needs a new District 3 headquarters in Trinity, since the department has been operating in a building that was intended to be a substation. It has about half the square footage needed for the current staff, and investigators have to share desks.

Assistant County Administrator Heather Grimes said the sheriff's office is going to buy a modular office unit this year to provide temporary relief until a new building is either constructed or leased.

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 URL: <http://tbo.com/pasco-county/courthouse-plan-still-in-works-20150222/>

Courthouse plan still in works

By [Laura Kinsler](#)

LAND O' LAKES — Pasco commissioners say they plan to move forward with the planned criminal courthouse in Land O' Lakes, but they still need to figure out a way to pay for it.

"We promised the judges we would restart this," Chairman Ted Schrader said. "We can't just continue to ignore it."

It's been almost two years since the county [opened bids](#) for design/construction teams to build the facility, which would shift all criminal proceedings from Dade City and New Port Richey to a new building connected to the jail. At the time, Atlanta-based Heery International, which did the preliminary courthouse design, said the project could be built for \$28 million.

But experts from planning firm CGL, who did a countywide facility master plan last year, said the county should expect to pay [at least \\$100 million](#), based on comparable designs. CGL's cost estimate was for a facility with 12 courtrooms — that's the minimum the county will need by the year 2034. The building could be constructed with eight courtrooms in phase one to meet immediate needs.

The county has just \$9.6 million in its court facility fund and brings in about \$1 million in court fees each year.

"In a perfect world, I would say build all 12 courtrooms," Chief Judge Thomas McGrady said. "But in the real world, knowing they have financial constraints, I'd say build eight with the ability to expand because we need it now. And when I say now, I realize that actually means four years from now."

The court system is already out of space, and demand is only going to get worse, he said. "Pasco is in a growth spurt, and with more people comes more litigation and more crime."

But even building a smaller courthouse might be more than the county can afford, based on construction costs of similar projects in Florida. For example, Marion County spent nearly \$37 million a few years ago to add five courtrooms.

"We can't keep doing what we're doing because we're out of capacity," County Administrator Michele Baker said.

During a board workshop last week, Assistant County Administrator Heather Grimes outlined some possible funding options for commissioners to consider. Commissioners could raise the property tax rate to 10 mills, but Grimes warned against that course, saying it wouldn't be enough to pay for new facilities and their added operating expenses.

Other options include general obligation bonds, which must pass a voter referendum but could be paid back over 30 years; creating a new impact fee for justice and public safety; or entering into a lease-purchase contract with a private developer.

Since Pasco already has the highest impact fees in the region for single family homes, Grimes said the lease-purchase might be the best solution. "As long as it gets built in a way that it meets our needs, I don't have a problem with that," McGrady said.

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