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## **School Board: Land offered by developer for school not appropriate**

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The developers of the Coconut Point Town Center in Estero say they're ready to hand over the five acres they pledged to provide for a school site, but the Lee County School Board doesn't want it.

That's because the site, located on Block Drive near Estero High School, is almost all wetlands. School planners say the site, along with an adjacent five acres developers were required to make available for purchase, is in no way appropriate for a school.

"I don't know what we could do with it," said Kathy Babcock, long range planner for the school district.

The property is at the west end of Block Lane, northwest of Estero High School. Babcock said the mall's attorney, Tone Pires, says the land was bought at the request of a planner no longer with the school board. Pires could not be reached for comment.

The district has refused to accept the property. The mall's 2002 Development of Regional Impact approval from Lee County requires the donation, and credit for

impact fees is contingent on the district accepting the land.

"It says it's upon transfer of the property to the school board," said Chip Block, principal planner with Lee County, who reviewed the mall zoning application and helped fashion the DRI agreement. "So the school board has to accept it first."

Only then could the developer ask for impact fee credit against the value of the land. The Development of Regional Impact agreement set that credit at as much as \$140,000, which is what the land cost in 2002. Bill Moore, director of school support services for the district, wrote in a memo for the board that he has instructed Babcock to reject the land.

Babcock said that in all likelihood the district would look to build an elementary school if an appropriate site was made available nearby.

"At that size that's the only thing we could use it for," she said. "We have identified the need for an elementary in that area. It's not on the schedule now, but if we had it and it was buildable, we'd be working on it right now."

On top of losing the Tower Road school site in Bonita Springs, which the city refused to allow a school on last month, Babcock said it looks more and more like the former Kmart in San Carlos Park, which was to be the temporary home of Rayma Page Elementary, will be a permanent school.

"It's pressing, because we didn't want kids in the Kmart permanently," she said.

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