



# GULFSHORE BUSINESS

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S BEST VIEW OF BUSINESS

(<https://www.gulfshorebusiness.com>)



Nominations are open for the inaugural



[LEARN MORE](#)

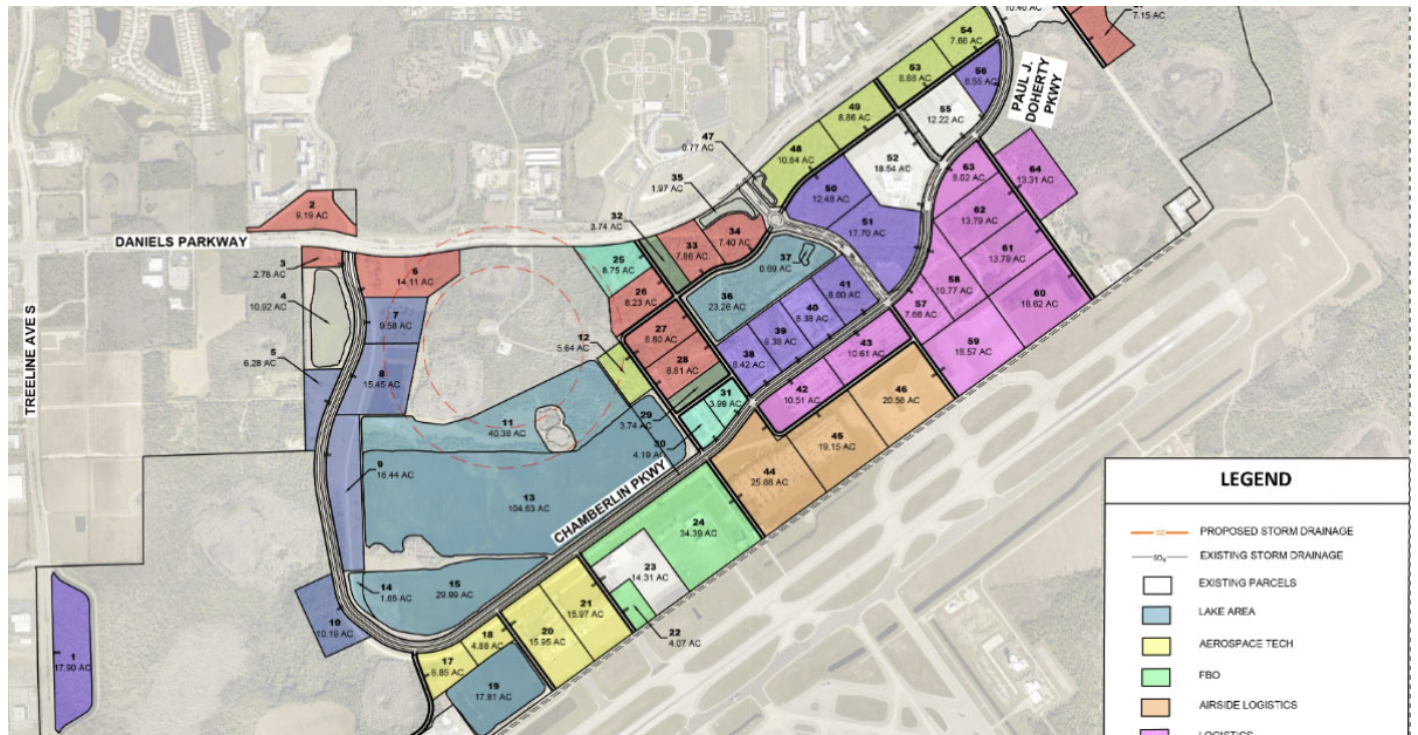
(<https://www.gulfshorebusiness.com/gb-50-southwest-floridas-most-influential-businesspeople/>)

## Skyplex airport project develops master plan concept (<https://www.gulfshorebusiness.com/skyplex-airport-project-develops-master-plan-concept/>)

BY DAVID DORSEY([HTTPS://WWW.GULFSHOREBUSINESS.COM/AUTHOR/DAVID-DORSEY/](https://www.gulfshorebusiness.com/author/david-dorsey/))

FEBRUARY 18, 2024

PHOTO CREDIT:LEE COUNTY GOVERNMENT



(<https://gulfshorebus.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Skyplex-2.png>)

## PLAY ARTICLE

5 min

For the past decade, the Skyplex development project on Lee County Port Authority land running parallel along the north side of Southwest Florida International Airport's runway has been stagnant.

Other than a Publix-anchored shopping center and office buildings leased by Alta Resources and Gartner, not much has happened.

An alliance between the Port Authority and Commercial Property of Southwest Florida/Cushman & Wakefield looks to change that.

Gary Tasman, CEO of Cushman & Wakefield's team in Southwest Florida, presided over a master-planned concept for Skyplex, a vision the project did not previously have.



“The vision and the No. 1 goal they set out for us is to diversify the income stream for the Port Authority away from aviation,” Tasman said. “So the revenues don’t fluctuate based on air travel and air traffic and aviation and concessions, things like that.”

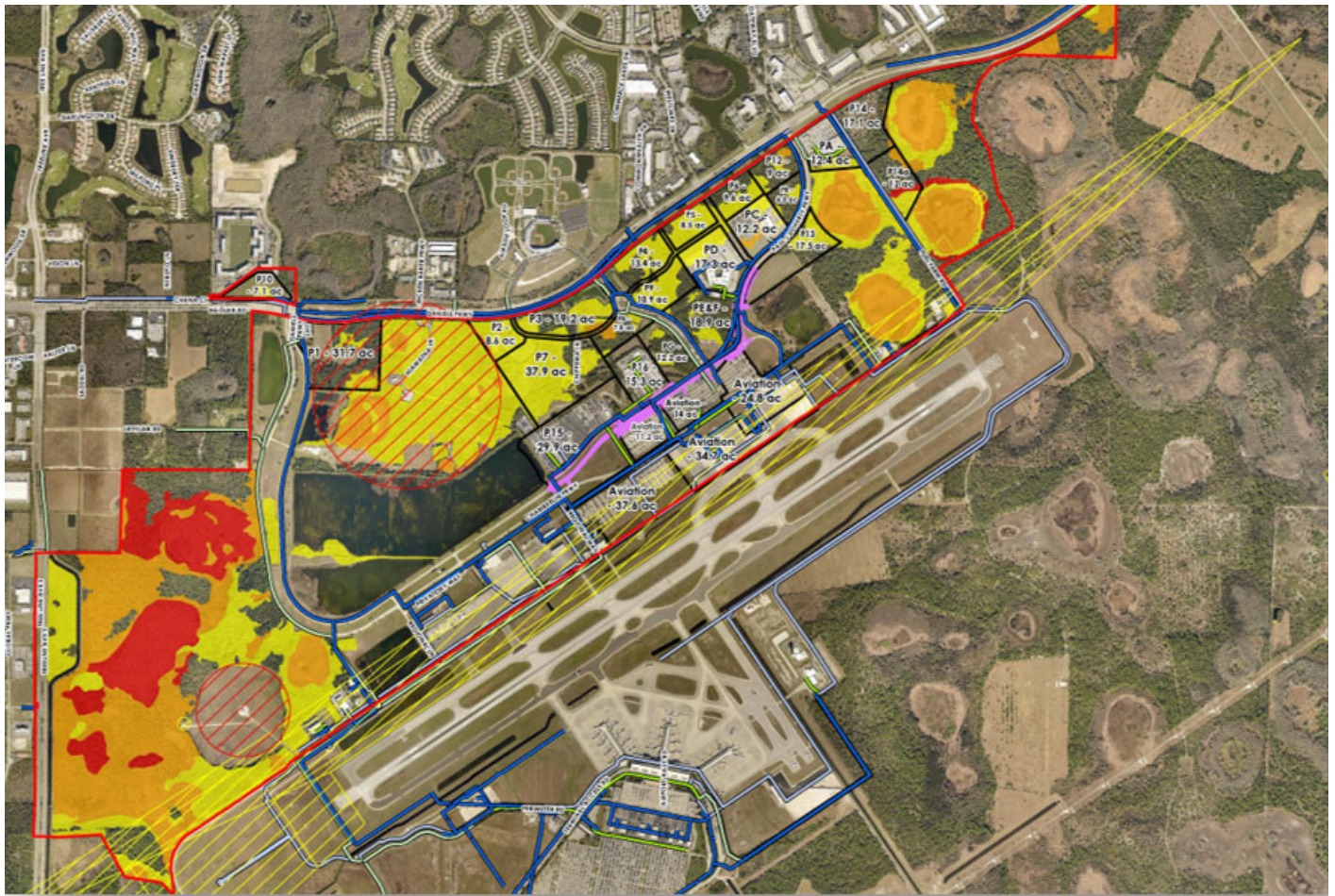
“Because Skyplex, which is very unique to airports around the world—almost unheard of—is the connectivity between the air side and the roadside. Because you remember the old terminal was there. We have all that infrastructure in place. We have the connectivity to bring the air side and the roadside together. Which is very, very unique and very valuable.”



Instead of luring companies to the land, Tasman's team is laying out the plan, then attempting to fill the project with tenants. This allows for better organization and flow of the project on the land, Tasman said, and it also helps the developers to build around the environmentally sensitive wetlands.

You wouldn't want a hotel next to an industrial-looking warehouse, Tasman said, which was one of the purposes of the plan.

"We did the existing conditions analysis," Tasman said. "We identified where the gaps in the market are and where we anticipate them to be over the next 20- to 40-year period.



"The next step was the market analysis and the feasibility analysis and the planning. We think about how to create a sense of place by properly identifying uses and densities that are compatible with each other. And then enhance the experience for anybody that's going to be there."

Of the 1,800 acres at Skyplex, only about 680 acres will be developable because of environmental concerns and proximity to the airport, Tasman said. Although construction projects could begin within the next couple of years, the buildout of

Skyplex could take at least two decades.

Potential future use categories range from health care and human services to hospitality and meeting facilities and retail and entertainment, to tech space and flex space and logistics space, Tasman said.

“And even the connectivity between the air side for logistics—last-mile deliveries. We’ve looked at the future of air traffic and air travel, in a lot of cases, vertical takeoff and landing vehicles. A lot of what we’ve been studying is all the different possibilities,” he said.

Ben Siegel, outgoing executive director of the Lee County Port Authority, will be resigning April 1. Instead of conducting a national search for Siegel’s replacement, the Board of Lee County Commissioners voted to appoint Steve Hennigan as interim executive director upon Siegel’s departure.

Siegel, 58, said he planned on becoming an independent consultant to the airline industry. While he will be focusing on aviation trends, he said he agreed with diversifying income for Lee County’s Port Authority.

“I think the momentum for Skyplex, what’s changed, is we’ve completed the second phase of our planning for Skyplex,” Siegel said. “The momentum we have now is approaching that third phase, which is really the final phase before you can see actual development take place.

“The first phase was to identify what the opportunities were. How Skyplex would fit into the overall ecosystem of Southwest Florida. So, we did that. Phase 2 allowed us to look at it further and figure out what target sectors made sense. And then start looking at the investments. What does and doesn’t work, financially.”

One of the biggest needs for Southwest Florida, Tasman said, was a largescale convention center, one with the capacity to surpass Caloosa Sound Convention Center in downtown Fort Myers.

“The vision that we’ve laid out for the Port Authority for Skyplex is a world-class, next-generation, destination location for the nonaviation uses that we identified in our gap analysis,” Tasman said. “One of the most sought-after gaps that we identified was the need for a large-scale, mixed-use meeting facility. We just don’t have anything. We’ve grown to the point as a community where believe it or not there’s not even a place in Southwest Florida where you could put 800 or 900 people.”

Siegel said going the master plan route for Skyplex should make a big difference as the project moves forward in landing a developer for such a convention center.

“It’s not like we can start putting shovels in the ground in six months,” Siegel said. “That’s not the case. The entitlement permitting process, the engineering that needs to take place, that could be an 18-month process, at least. But we can continue to maintain a high level of interest with developers.

“Developers, when they’re making decisions to do developments of this type, they don’t want uncertainty. We’re getting all of that out of the way and making those investments up front. And by the way, we’re getting a return on that. It adds value to the property. It allows a developer to come in and move a lot quicker.”

---

*Copyright 2024 Gulfshore Life Media, LLC All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without prior written consent.*

[Submit a correction](#)

Nominations are open for the inaugural



[LEARN MORE](#)

(<https://www.gulfshorebusiness.com/gb-50-southwest-floridas-most-influential-businesspeople/>)

## Don't Miss

**GB EDITOR'S CHOICE** ([HTTPS://WWW.GULFSHOREBUSINESS.COM/CATEGORY/EDITORSCHOICE/](https://www.gulfshorebusiness.com/category/editorschoice/))