

BUSINESS PROFILE

Seeing the future of Florida in sustainable developments

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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Dennis Gilkey was at the forefront of Southwest Florida development during his nine-year reign as president of the Bonita Bay Group (23 years with the company in all). He oversaw the building of 10 residential communities, more than 13,000 acres of master-planned development in Lee and Collier counties.

But in 2007, Mr. Gilkey, 57, gave up the position and created the Gilkey Organization, a sustainable land development consulting firm with real-estate services that specializes in planning mixed-use communities for landowners.

"It was always a dream of mine to be an independent small-businessman," he says. "I figured I should do that while I still had a few years left."

Mr. Gilkey is mild-mannered, courteous and soft-spoken if somewhat blunt. His company offices in Bonita Springs are small, and his wife and son make up a third of his staff.

It might appear Mr. Gilkey downshifted his ambitions. But in reality, the Gilkey Organization is taking on long-term, large-scale development projects that eclipse anything he did previously. Clients include landowners in 20 Florida counties, including Lee and Collier, who collectively own about 1,000,000 acres. Mr. Gilkey will help create their

business plans and then guide them through every step as they develop their properties.

Mr. Gilkey also plans to be a part of land developments in Georgia. Ultimately, he aims to orchestrate environmentally friendly, mixed-use developments: the kinds of residential communities that he says help reduce urban sprawl and add value to the property. The living space is compact, with homes designed above or near shopping centers and businesses; and instead of yards, there are plenty of walking trails and green space.

He believes such communities represent a part of Florida's future. But he also understands that they'll succeed only if they're appealing to the people who end up living in them. "That's what it boils down to," he says. "We still have to keep our finger on the pulse of the customer." He suspects baby boomers' children will enjoy the mixed-use developments more than their parents, because they'll be better adapted to a lifestyle based on conserving energy.

Mr. Gilkey sees his main advantage as his breadth of experience: 33 years of local expertise and connections made in land development, highway, building and utility projects. When he started with Bonita Bay Group in 1984 it had only six employees, the same number as his company now. By the time he



Dennis Gilkey

COURTESY PHOTO

left, it had grown to more than 1,500 employees. This time around, he'll stick to about eight employees or less.

"I plan to keep this a small company," he says. "The rest can be done with alliances, networking and partnering."

As one might expect, Mr. Gilkey has taken on a demanding schedule with his new business. He spends about 60 hours a week at the office and says, "I basically feel that I'm on 24/7." But it's

something he's comfortable with. "My work ethic has always been more blue collar," he says. "I've always worked long hours."

Maybe it came from his upbringing in Fort Pierce, where his father was a laborer on the Florida East Coast Railroad, and his mother a secretary. Neither of his parents went to college; Mr. Gilkey bucked tradition and graduated with a degree in civil engineering from the University of Florida in 1973.

After that, he spent a decade as a consultant to officials in Jacksonville on warehouses, highways and bridges. Then he moved to Clearwater and focused on land development, including the kinds of gated communities he would later build in Bonita Springs.

He's active in groups including the Bonita Springs YMCA and engineering societies and organizations that sponsor sustainable development. He's been a commissioner on the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida since 2005 and was co-chair of the Lee County Smart Growth Advisory Committee from 2002 to 2005.

When he's not working, Mr. Gilkey likes to go boating and fishing. Sometimes he takes a break at his second home north of Tampa in Crystal River. But for now, he's ready to get to work building Florida's future in sustainable developments. ■

Warehouse - Metro Plantation Commerce Center

- 5,000± SF
- Office w/2 Restrooms
- 2 OH Grade Level Doors
- One (1) Truckwell
- County Water and Sewer
- IL - Light Industrial
- Excellent location
- Between Metro Pkwy & Plantation Rd.

Lease: \$3,500 / Mo. Price: \$549,000
Contact: Todd Holman WA1181

Office Unit for Sale or Lease

- 900± SF Unit
- Nice Interior Finish
- Great location
- Zoned CPD
- Ample Parking
- Just off Daniels Parkway

Lease: \$1,200.00 Per Month
Contact: Steve Wood WA1979L

.94± AC Commercial Site North Fort Myers

REDUCED TO SELL

- Between N Cleveland Ave & US 41
- C2 Zoning
- Fenced
- Lee/Charlotte Cty Access
- Allows Storage Facility
- Contractors/Builders
- Auto Repair & More
- Utilities Available
- Adjacent Property Available

Sale: \$119,000 or \$2.90 PSF
Contact: Tom Woodyard & Carrie Vincent WA2010

Office/Warehouse Space For Lease

- 2.07± Acre
- Excellent Location
- Allows Bank, Restaurant, Retail, Pharmacy, & More
- Zoned General Commercial
- Quick On/Off Access to US-41
- Great Visibility
- Motivated Seller

Price: \$626,675 or \$6.95 PSF
Contact: Honora' Jacobus WA0987

Medical/Professional Offices

Immediate Occupancy

- Starting at 1,173± SF
- Beautifully Done
- Maximum Impression
- Move in Ready
- Zoned: CPD
- All Impact Fees Paid
- Premier Location

Lease \$17.00 PSF + CAM
Contact: Alex Wright, CCIM WA1852

Office Space For Lease

Immediate Occupancy

- 1,717± SF
- Telephone & Wireless Internet
- Add'l Warehouse Storage
- Total of Eight (8) Offices
- Security System
- Just Off Hancock Bridge Pkwy

Lease: \$1,668.35 Per Month
Contact: Steve Wood WA1994

Income Property

Fully Leased

- 7,925± SF
- 34,649± SF Land
- 2 Units
- 1 OH Doors per Unit
- Fully Leased Income Property
- IL - Light Industrial
- Billy Creek Area

Price: \$83.00 PSF or \$657,775
Contact: Todd Holman WA2039

13,574± SF Warehouse For Sale Downtown Fort Myers

PRICED TO SELL

- 13,574± SF Warehouse
- 1,000± SF Apt/Office
- .73± Acres
- Between Fowler/Evans
- (10) OH Doors
- Zoned CG - Commercial
- Located in Enterprise Zone
- Fronts Lafayette/Evans/Edison

Price: \$750,000 or \$55 PSF
Contact: Tom Woodyard or Carrie Vincent WA2032

Warehouse For Lease or Sale in Benchmark Corporate Park

- 25,000± SF incl. 450± SF Office w/2 Restrooms
- 4 OH Grade Level Doors
- Two (2) Truckwell Doors
- City Water and Sewer
- IL - Light Industrial
- All Block & Sprinkled
- Benchmark Corporate Park
- Off I-75, Exit 138

Lease \$3.99 PSF + \$2.00 PSF CAM
Price: \$1,625,000
Contact: Todd Holman WA987

Professional Office/Medical Condos

Motivated Seller

- 1,500± - 4,500± SF Spaces
- Close to I-75
- on Six Mile Cypress
- Cypress Preserve Prof. Cntr
- Medical Impact Fees Paid
- Builder Flexible
- Near Gulf Coast Hospital
- Excellent Exposure

Lease \$18.00-\$21.00 PSF + \$5.00 CAM
Fully Built Out Offices FOR SALE
Contact: Alex Wright, CCIM WA1777/1778

Income Opportunity - 8.2% Cap Rate World Plaza II Medical/Office Condo FOR SALE

8.2% CAP RATE

- 3,000± SF
- Long Term Lease in place
- Medical Impact Fees PAID
- CAP RATE 8.2%
- Full Medical Built-Out
- 20 Parking Spaces
- World Plaza - Bldg 70

Price: \$625,000
Contact: Tom Woodyard or Carrie Vincent WA1953

Office/Retail Space For Lease

- 1,297± SF & Up
- On Lee Blvd
- Just East of State Rd 82
- Great Visibility
- Zoned PUD
- Early Fall 2008 Occupancy
- Vanilla Shell Build-Out with Restrooms

Lease \$22.00 PSF + CAM
Contact: Honora' Jacobus or Todd Holman WA1157

Income Property

Fully Leased

- 7,200± SF
- Westgate Industrial Park
- Easy Access to I-75 and SR 82
- Zoned IL - Light Industrial
- Corner of Waldo Ave. North and 2nd Street West
- Water and Septic

Price: \$540,000
Contact: Todd Holman WA1869

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