

Understanding Easements: Protecting Our Land, Preserving Our Future

Dear Residents,

In light of recent announcements regarding our intent to negotiate a lease with Benderson Corporation for the golf courses — and their potential acquisition of conservation easements on select Meadows Community Association (MCA) properties — I recognize there has been some confusion and misinformation circulating. This has led to unnecessary anxiety within our community, and I want to help everyone understand Conservation Easements.

I'd like to take a moment to set the record straight — accurately and transparently.

MCA Is Not Selling Any Land

What is being discussed is a lease agreement for the golf courses, meaning MCA retains full ownership. Additionally, Benderson is proposing to purchase conservation easements — not the land itself. These easements provide certain usage restrictions, but the land remains MCA-owned and under MCA stewardship.

What Exactly *Is* an Easement?

An easement is a legal agreement that gives a third-party certain right to use or restrict the use of property owned by someone else. You're already familiar with easements — even if you don't realize it. For example, Florida Power & Light, Sarasota County, and various cable or utility providers all hold easements on MCA property.

Importantly, while easements grant specific rights to the easement holder, they do not transfer ownership. MCA continues to manage and control the property — with the exception that we cannot interfere with the specific terms of the easement.

What Is a Conservation Easement?

A conservation easement is a specific type of easement with a noble purpose: to protect the natural, scenic, and open space values of a property for generations to come.

These easements are permanent and legally binding — designed to ensure that land remains undeveloped and environmentally preserved.

Under Florida Statute 704.06, conservation easements can be established to:

- Safeguard natural resources

- Maintain open space and wildlife habitats
- Preserve air and water quality
- Support recreation and scenic beauty
- Promote agricultural or forest use

To be classified as conservation land by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), the land must retain the essential qualities of its natural condition — largely undeveloped and ecologically intact.

What Do Conservation Easements Prohibit?

The primary purpose of a conservation easement is to prohibit development on the protected land. That means:

- **No buildings**
- **No commercial construction**
- **No significant alteration to the land's natural state**

This aligns perfectly with MCA's mission and founding documents, which emphasize environmental stewardship, community wellbeing, and preservation of our green spaces.

Why This Matters for Our Community

Conservation easements serve as a powerful tool for preserving the character and quality of life within our community. They ensure that today's green space remains tomorrow's — safeguarding it from future development pressures.

Even in the unlikely event that a conservation easement is removed in the future, MCA retains full ownership of the land and would once again have complete control over how it is used.

In Closing: Stewardship Over Speculation

Let's not allow fear or misinformation to cloud a thoughtful, forward-looking initiative. Easements — particularly conservation easements — are not about relinquishing land. They are about honoring it, protecting it, and ensuring it remains a treasured part of our community's identity.

This approach reflects a deep respect for our environment, our values, and our shared future. MCA remains firmly committed to transparency, sustainability, and responsible

land stewardship — now and always.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Perone
MCA Board President