

NEWS

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Kitson Shares Detailed Plan for Babcock Ranch *Half of the community to remain open and green*

Punta Gorda, Florida – Syd Kitson, chairman and CEO of Kitson & Partners, today unveiled the visioning master plan for an innovative, sustainable, environmentally friendly new community in Southwest Florida. The master plan for the new Babcock Ranch community devotes more than fifty percent of its footprint to greenways, wilderness and wildlife preservation areas, passive open spaces, community farming, lakes, flow-ways and blue ways.

Kitson & Partners first announced its contract to purchase the Babcock Florida Company, which includes the approximate 91,000 acre Babcock Ranch, in July of last year. Since that time, Kitson has entered into an agreement for the State of Florida to purchase approximately 73,000 acres of the property and worked with community leaders, environmentalists and planners to create a shared vision for a vibrant new community on the 17,608 acres his company will retain on the southwest corner of the ranch.

“The question has always been, how much can we preserve within the new community itself? In initial discussion, we had always hoped that we could conserve as much as one-third of the community,” Kitson explained. “We’ve exceeded that goal by an impressive amount. Nature does not just surround this community – it is the very essence of the community.”

The master plan is the result of an unprecedented collaborative process. More than 200 individuals have participated in planning workshops over the past several months. The ideas and dreams shared in those workshops provided the foundation for the plan.

“The longing for a genuine sense of community was a constant theme. Our plan puts a strong focus on creating a true sense of place – a real home town with diverse neighborhoods and housing opportunities in all price ranges.”

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Kitson’s plan calls for a series of villages and hamlets, all connecting to a Town Center. The villages and hamlets are designed to bring back the character and community sentiment of small hometowns. They feature town halls, religious institutions, schools and day care facilities all sited around central greens and parks.

The Town Center will be the heart of the new Babcock Ranch community, as well as the main connection between the new town and other Lee and Charlotte communities. Located at the southwest corner of the property, it will be the downtown core of Babcock Ranch with office and business parks, medical facilities, shopping, restaurants, entertainment and lodges. It is, however, much more than a commercial hub. The master plan calls for a wide range of residential opportunities, including extensive workforce housing, for those who want a “downtown” home with all of the accompanying conveniences. Three of the five schools planned for Babcock Ranch will be located in the Town Center, within walking distance of the main commercial district.

“We want families to be able to allow their children to walk or ride their bikes to school in a safe, convenient manner,” Kitson explained. “Middle and High School students living outside the Town Center can easily get to school on their own if they wish by using the community’s extensive network of walking and biking paths.”

Accommodations for alternative, environmentally friendly modes of transportation are another innovative aspect of the master plan. The extensive network of bikeways, hiking trails and horse trails, in addition to dedicated lanes on all major roads to accommodate alternative vehicles, will make leaving the car at home a viable, safe and environmentally friendly option. By the very design and layout of the villages, planners are looking ahead to accommodate internal transportation systems such as electric trolleys or new developing technologies.

“Our workshop with the Charlotte County Commissioners begins the next phase of the continuing process to refine our shared plan for the new Babcock Ranch community,” Kitson said. “I am very thankful to all of the people who have helped our team envision what I believe is a truly remarkable plan to create an innovative, self-sustaining, environmentally friendly community that meets the needs of both current and future generations.”

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