



MEMORANDUM

To: Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator
Claire Jubb, Assistant County Administrator

From: Ben Bailey, Community Development Director

Date: August 29, 2025

Subject: **Boca Grande Ordinance affects on Charlotte County residents**

This is an analysis of how Lee County Ordinance No. 25-16 may directly affect Charlotte County residents and visitors, especially those who reside off the island, as well as potential impacts to Charlotte County beaches.

Lee County Ordinance 25-16, adopted August 5, 2025, significantly amends parking regulations on Gasparilla Island, especially within the unincorporated area of Boca Grande. Key features of the ordinance include:

- Creation of a permit-based parking system with different permit categories for residents, hotel guests, employees, and house guests.
- Expansion of no-parking zones, especially along Gulf Boulevard, Gasparilla Road, and residential areas.
- Restriction of overnight parking, particularly for buses and RVs.
- Designation of public parking areas, but these remain limited and potentially insufficient for peak visitation.
- Emphasis on preserving the character and environment of the island and maintaining safety for pedestrians and vehicles.



Direct Impacts to Charlotte County Residents (Off-Island)

1. Reduced Beach Access and Usability

- Charlotte County residents who live off Gasparilla Island, particularly in mainland communities like Placida or Rotonda West, frequently visit Boca Grande beaches via public access points.
- With no eligibility for residential permits (A decals) under the ordinance, these residents are treated the same as general visitors. This restricts them from using residential zone parking, which now requires an A, B, C, or D permit.

2. Increased Parking Competition

- With fewer legal parking options, Charlotte County visitors may crowd into the few remaining general public parking areas, leading to:
 - Overcrowding and congestion.
 - Extended time spent searching for legal parking.
 - Potential spillover into private property or restricted areas, increasing the likelihood of enforcement actions or trespassing complaints.

Visitor Experience and Equity Concerns

1. Visitor Exclusion

- Unlike residents or guests of Boca Grande hotels, Charlotte County residents without an island address are excluded from the primary permitting framework and may be perceived as unwelcome due to enforcement-driven parking constraints.

2. Lack of Reciprocity

- Lee County's ordinance does not recognize or provide accommodation for Charlotte County taxpayers who help support the regional economy but are excluded from resident-level access.



Impact on Charlotte County Beaches

1. Displacement of Demand

- Visitors unable to park legally in Boca Grande may redirect to Charlotte County-managed beaches like Stump Pass, Englewood Beach, or Port Charlotte Beach Park.
- These facilities may see:
 - Overcapacity conditions on weekends and holidays.
 - Strain on local parking infrastructure.
 - Increased demand for law enforcement and code enforcement to manage overflow and illegal parking.

2. Trespass and Spillover

- As legal spaces become limited, some visitors may park in residential driveways, vacant lots, or right-of-way shoulders on the Charlotte County side of the island or mainland, creating enforcement burdens and resident frustration.

Policy Alignment with Lee Plan

This ordinance ties directly to Lee Plan Objective 19.1 and Policy 19.3.3, which prioritize:

- Preserving the residential character and environmental sensitivity of Boca Grande.
- Limiting traffic congestion and protecting emergency access routes.
- Supporting community-led efforts to evaluate parking appropriateness.

While consistent with local planning goals, the ordinance introduces regional equity concerns, especially given the shared barrier island geography and inter-county usage.



LEE PLAN POLICY 19.3.3: Parking along the beach access streets and other public rights-of-way will be regulated to allow convenient ingress and egress to residences and permit adequate emergency vehicle access at all times. Lee County will support efforts of the Boca Grande community to analyze the appropriateness of overnight and long term parking in the public rights-of-way, the Gilchrist median, and along beach access streets. (Ord. No. 05-19, 18-18)

Conclusion

Ordinance 25-16 sharply narrows access to Boca Grande parking for Charlotte County residents and visitors who do not reside or work on the island. The direct effects include reduced beach access, increased congestion at Charlotte County facilities, and a greater risk of unintended enforcement conflicts. These outcomes suggest a need for intergovernmental dialogue between Charlotte and Lee Counties to explore reciprocal parking agreements, regional access strategies, or enhanced public transportation options to mitigate potential inequities and visitor displacement.