

The Wekiva Parkway and How It Impacts Seminole County

by Shivon Patel



Eminent domain issues will affect Sanford residents

Almost every day, the government acquires property for public projects across the state of Florida. Roads, bridges, and many components of our infrastructure need improvement. Many of us see the need for improvement and have lived in Central Florida long enough to experience the daily I-4 traffic nightmare. In an attempt to keep up with the demands of the growing population and to connect the sprawling cities of Central Florida, the Wekiva Parkway was born.

The Wekiva Parkway is a cooperative effort between the Central Florida Expressway Authority, Florida Department

of Transportation (FDOT), and Florida's Turnpike Enterprise. It will eventually connect SR 429 to SR 417, completing the beltway around Central Florida. In Seminole County, residents will benefit from lane widening of SR 46, connection to SR 429, and protection of natural resources.

The benefits of the new Parkway, however, come with some drawbacks. Many residents in the Sanford area are now dealing with eminent domain issues with FDOT. Eminent domain is the government's right to take private property for a public purpose with just compensation to the property owner. Many property owners

have owned, lived, and worked on the property that the government is taking. It's a difficult situation for the owners impacted by public projects. Many of these owners have never had to deal with eminent domain and many feel helpless, even though the government generally does what it can to ensure that the property owner has as seamless a transition as possible.

Generally, a condemnation notice is sent to the property, notifying its owners of the government's intent to take the property or a portion of it. Then, an appraiser and surveyor are sent out to the property in order to assess the value and the actual

boundary lines. This is done to facilitate the government's offer of just compensation to the owner. However, many times and for a variety of reasons, the government's offer to purchase the property is low. For example, a city may be taking property for a widening project and needs to acquire 50 feet of frontage, which will damage the remaining property value significantly more than the offer suggests. If only a part of the property is taken, the owner is supposed to be compensated for the diminution in value to the remainder of the property as well as the value of the part taken.

Notices from FDOT are beginning to go out to property owners in Sanford. The uncertainty surrounding the placement of toll gantries and overpasses, and the path of the Parkway from SR 46 through Orange Boulevard to International Parkway, has left many owners anxious and worried about their properties.

Eminent domain is a complicated process and mistakes can be made, so it is essential to consult a knowledgeable real estate attorney whenever contacted by the government about condemnation or presented an offer. The attorney will be able to review the offer and appraisal to determine just compensation and, depending on the situation, may be able to discuss the options available to the owner.



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