

# EXTRA!

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 9

“BREAKING NEWS FROM BEHIND THE HEDGES”

SEPTEMBER 2025



“You can now leave our back gate and drive to Boston for lobster without stopping for a traffic light.”

This is a pivotal moment for Green Cove Springs, and Magnolia Point: the arrival of an interstate connection is like giving a small town a backstage pass to the regional and national economy. Based on experiences of similar cities, we can expect a mix of immediate and gradual effects, both positive *and* challenging.

With 12,000+ homes already planned for Green Cove, developers will move quickly to market “easy interstate access” to commuters from Jacksonville, Orange Park, and further afield. Gas stations, quick-service restaurants, distribution hubs, and convenience retail will cluster near the new interchanges, and east and north along the SR 16 and 17 corridors to town. Expect some rezoning requests for mixed-use or higher density. Land along the corridor and near interchanges will see sharp increases in value; older in-town properties may rise more gradually.

Unfortunately, more through-traffic, though moderated by FCE’s ‘tolling’ means more opportunity for vehicle break-ins, shoplifting, property crime and occasional organized theft, especially near highway-adjacent businesses. Law enforcement will need to adjust for higher vehicle volumes, speeding on feeder roads, and an increase in DUI and accident calls. CCSO will need more patrols dedicated to the interchange zones, and GCSPD will need more ‘feet on the street’ in town.

Noise, dust, and traffic detours will become more common while related road projects and commercial pads are built out. For some residents, travel times to Jacksonville, I-10, and beyond, will drop significantly. “Small town” feel and ambiance, sadly, will begin to

blend with suburban growth, especially if national chain retail follows in quickly.

Again, the Expressway’s tolls could keep the lid on the less desirable aspects of development we might expect, *short term*. Though it’s safe to assume the pace of the build-out of 4,489 new homes right off the end of Medinah Lane, well underway now, will only soar.

In our neighborhood, ‘Access Control’ will continue to be top-of-mind for all, as pressure on both gates will elevate with increased traffic to and *through* our ‘hood. ‘*Neighborhood Watch*’, an initiative familiar to other communities, will enter our vocabulary and foster new deliberations around it. Riviera Estates here, and Rolling Hills in Lake Asbury are already member communities; Nextdoor partners with them, and the GCS Police Department endorses the program. *And*, our Flock camera system integrates with them as well.

Longer term, a population surge, economic growth, and downtown renewal, *or strain*, will prevail, depending on planning. Still, Green Cove Springs will enjoy more amenities, and cultural diversity and more opportunities for all segments of our community.

Our demographics will change, but also shifts in voting patterns, school needs, and local priorities. Housing offerings will diversify vastly. With careful planning by the City of Green Cove Springs, and citizen involvement, the curses of road congestion, overcrowded schools, and stressed utilities that can erode quality of life can be minimized. And this is our wake-up call.

- EDITOR

