9. **Sanibel Island**, “…the piece of coast that trends E and W, is the beach of an island called Sanybel, this place is further remarkable for a great number of pine-trees without tops standing at the bottom of the bay (San Carlos Bay), there is no place like to it, in the whole extent of this coast” (from the sailing directions for the Dry Tortugas to Pensacola, Bernard Romans, 1775). An attempt at establishing an agricultural colony failed in the early 19th century. The first wave of settlement occurred in the late 1880s, when the federal government opened the island to homesteading. Sanibel’s lighthouse at Point Ybel began operations in 1884. Much of Sanibel’s early development era is linked to farming and fishing. Blind Pass was bridged in 1918.

The island’s fame developed as a world-class paradise for shelling and wildlife observation during the early 20th century. Writers and artists came for the isolation and quiet beauty. In 1939, Sanibel’s population was 100, and Wulfert had 10 residents. A concrete structure replaced the Blind Pass Bridge in 1954. (The pass closed in the early 1990s). But it was the Sanibel Causeway, built in 1963, that provided direct road access to the mainland and opened the island to a development boom. A substantial, 4,975-acre, undeveloped area, mainly along the northern Pine Island Sound side, has been retained as the J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

Today, Sanibel has an annual population of more than 5,800 people which swells to more than 20,000 during the peak tourism season.
Sanibel Island in foreground, looking north across San Carlos Bay towards St. James City (south Pine Island) and Cape Coral.
10. El Jobean was named after Joel Bean, a Boston lawyer, who in 1924 filed a town plan consisting of six wards, each with its own civic center bordering a circular plaza. Construction stopped with the stock market crash of 1929, and only a remnant of El Jobean remains today. Much of the subdivision is now within the Riverwood Development of Regional Impact.

11. Charlotte Harbor (Town), settled in 1862, first called Live Oak Point and later Hickory Bluff, was the site of a cattle dock built to ship beef, first to the Confederacy, and later to Cuba. The bluff was leveled for building lots during the land boom period of the 1920s.

12. Peace River, or Peas Creek on pre-development maps, is named for black-eyed peas, which grew in the region.

13. Punta Gorda became an important shipping hub in 1886 with the arrival of the Florida Southern Railroad and the telegraph. An ice factory built in 1893 transformed the fishing industry in the harbor by making the shipment of fresh fish possible. Small stilt fish houses and houseboats, called lighters, were set up throughout Charlotte Harbor, managed by fish companies which operated “run boats” that delivered ice and supplies to the outlying fishermen and picked up the catch for transport back to Punta Gorda. The salt fisheries that operated in the harbor throughout the early pre-development period were absorbed by this new enterprise.

14. Punta Gorda Isles, today an upscale residential waterfront community, was shrub, brushland, and range-land in the pre-development period, where cattle roamed freely.

15. Burnt Store on the east shore of Charlotte Harbor, was a trading post that the Seminoles burned in 1845. Today, Burnt Store Marina and Country Club is a destination resort complex, featuring a 400-plus-slip (and dry-storage) marina, a golf course, and tennis courts, with condominium and upscale single-family homes.
17. Punta Rassa owed its development, in the days before the railroads, to its deep Gulf access that enabled it to function as the major harbor and transshipping point for the Southwest Florida region. Fort Dulany was garrisoned here in 1838 during the Seminole Wars, but was destroyed by a hurricane in October 1841. The International Ocean Telegraph Company (Western Union) established a cable relay station here in 1866, connecting Havana, Cuba, to the United States. Steamer and sailing schooners stopped at Punta Rassa to load cattle, brought from throughout the Florida peninsula for the Cuban beef market. During the 1870-80 period, an estimated 165,660 head were shipped out of Punta Rassa, and as many as 600 animals, the size of a drive, were herded aboard large steamers, the trip to Havana taking less than a day for such boats and up to 10 days on sailing vessels. The Cuban cattle market disappeared in 1878 when the Cuban insurrection ended and Spain's army no longer needed imported beef to feed its garrison.

16. Fisherman Key, at the head of San Carlos Bay and mouth of the Caloosahatchee, was settled during the early and mid-19th century by fishermen who dried and salted fish there for shipment to Cuba. During a naval sortie in the region by Commodore David Porter's U.S. Schooner Terrier in 1824, Fisherman Key was a settlement with nine thatched “ranchos,” fields cultivated in corn, pumpkins and melons, and sheds for drying fish and storing salt and provisions.

Map 1-C. Pre–development Peace River/Matlacha conditions.