

10 EAST BAY BREEZE Wednesday, March 29, 1989

First steps taken to workers' housing

By Scott Andreae

Potential sites for farmworker housing in south Hillsborough County have been identified by researchers from the University of South Florida.

A task force is working to come up with a plan to create the housing. The group held its fourth meeting last week at East Bay High School.

More than a dozen possible locations for several types of housing were pinpointed by personnel from the Florida Center for Urban Design and Research, part of USF. The sites mostly are in the area of Wimauma,

although three are west of Interstate 75, above and below Ruskin.

Three types of farmworker housing were shown on a diagram presented by David Crane, director of the center. The housing types are "freestanding clusters" which would be improved dwellings located on farms; "permanent infill housing," built in the community itself with other related facilities; and "integrated clusters" which could be built along north-south extensions of the planned water and sewer lines along State Road 674.

The task force has not made any

decisions on where the housing might be located or what form it would take. Present at Thursday's meeting were farmers, representatives of private agencies that aid farmworkers, county officials and others.

"What we see here is a new town in the making," Crane told the group. The Wimauma vicinity contains 653 acres of undeveloped land, he said. Crane also spoke of a "public/private district service center" at S.R. 674 and U.S. 301 to serve the development.

Criticism of the proposed location came from George Todd Sr., who has

been involved in agriculture for 40 years. "I think it would be unfair to the migrants . . . to be pigeonholed in any one spot," he said. Todd said he was speaking on behalf of migrant farmworkers. "Who would they have to associate with besides other migrants?"

Workers will live where the work is, even west of U.S. 301 where land values are higher, said Don Sleight, manager of Deseret Farms in Ruskin. "We may have to move our farm labor housing three or four times in 20 years," he said. "I think these

people need to be absorbed into our community as much as possible. I hope their children won't have to work in the fields."

Preliminary results from a survey of south county farmworkers were reported by Joe Pando of the Center for Urban Design and Research. One hundred surveys have been analyzed of the 230 questionnaires filled out,

according to Pando.

The first responses showed 50 percent of the workers rent housing and 50 percent live in housing provided by employers, Pando said. Cost for rent and utilities ranges between \$0 (free) and \$100 a week, with the highest total \$125, he added.

The task force will meet April 27 from 4 to 7 p.m. in Room 201 of East Bay High School.