



# FEMA



Lee County,  
Florida

## *Elevated Lighthouse Resort Shines A Beacon of Success in Fort Meyers, FL*

**Fort Meyers, FL** -- When Hurricane Charley hit Fort Myers Beach in Aug. 2004, four buildings at Tom Kolar's Lighthouse Resort Inn and Suites, which sits 200 feet from the beach at San Carlos Bay, remained dry, undamaged, and full of customers. Other hotels and motels on the island were damaged or flooded, and closed. In the past, the Lighthouse Resort would have been closed too. In two decades there have been seven hurricane events causing flood and wind-related damage to the Resort, leaving the third-generation owner to deal with nearly \$100,000 in repair costs per event. When "Charley" hit, the four undamaged buildings remained high and dry, having been elevated as part of a joint State, Federal, and local mitigation project. In one year they have saved nearly \$200,000 in repair costs alone, almost 50 percent of their investment.

"Everybody else was out of business but Kolar was renting rooms," said Bob Rockwell, a local contractor who worked on the recent project. He had worked on many of the previous repairs, and spurred the project after he spotted a television program in 2001, about the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program.

Working with Fort Myers Beach Deputy Town Manager, John Gucciardo, Kolar and Rockwell worked to gain the necessary approvals for the jointly funded mitigation project to elevate six of the Resort's buildings. Hoping to prevent future repetitive losses and the subsequent effects not only for the owner but also on the community, work began March 2003, and two more buildings are scheduled to be elevated by year's end. The project's aim is to elevate the six repetitive loss structures two ft. above the 100-year floodplain ("A" zone 12ft. National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) to 14 ft. NGVD. The owner far exceeded the requirement and elevated the building to elevation 18.7 and 19.1 ft NGVD.

If there was a "silver lining" in the clouds of hurricanes Charley and Frances, it is that they have now demonstrated the value of the Lighthouse Resort Inn and Suites mitigation project. For the owner, the repetitive losses, ever-higher repair costs, and lost income will be avoided. Employees will avoid the anxiety of losing their income due to time lost for lengthy repairs. The town and state will recognize tax benefits from the increased value and extended life of the mitigated property. For the National Flood Insurance Program, it means reduced or eliminated repetitive payments for damage claims.

"Adjacent property owners benefit," said Gucciardo, "because the project is located in a Community Redevelopment Area and the additional tax revenue must be invested back into the local area." According to Gucciardo, the town is even seeing benefits such as no expenditure for debris removal, a staggering post-hurricane task for the area. "Other properties did not fare as well (as the Resort)," he stated, "and we expect to be dealing with debris removal for weeks to come."

As a result of undertaking the joint investment in the mitigation, the Lighthouse Resort is "open for business," a welcome oasis in the midst of so much destruction.



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Private**

Cost:

**\$1,651,603.00 (Actual)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Elevation, Structural**

Primary Funding:

**Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)**