

# Miami Herald

## **METRO APPROVES MIGRANT HOUSING IN LEISURE CITY**

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An effort by Naranja Lakes residents to block construction of farmworker housing near their hurricane-ravaged neighborhood failed Tuesday when Metro commissioners overwhelmingly approved the project. Rejecting worries about more crime and poverty encroaching on the area, the commissioners voted 11-1 to go ahead with a plan for temporary housing for 300 migrant families on 42 acres in Leisure City, at the former site of the Royal Colonial Mobile Home Park.

Commissioner Larry Hawkins failed in an effort to block the temporary housing, which will be in his district. He sided with neighbors who said the nearby migrant housing would make their difficult post-hurricane lives worse. "We have already gone through enough," said Gere Woodruff of Naranja Lakes. "You don't know what it's like to live where we live."

The decision was met with joy by hundreds of farmworkers who sat most of the day at County Hall awaiting the outcome. They hope to live on the site while awaiting construction of a \$40 million housing complex to replace the trailers they live in now in deep South Dade. Hugs, handshakes and broad smiles followed the vote. "Just because we work with our hands and look dirty when we come home doesn't mean we're bad people," said migrant worker Norma Alvarez.

Naranja neighbors said they're not fearful of migrant workers, but said they're already carrying their fair share of low-income residents, with FEMA trailer parks and a proposed homeless shelter at Homestead air base nearby. "Look at the whole picture. This is a question of how much can a community take," said Kevin Broils, head of the Princeton- Naranja Community Council.

County approval of the temporary housing site was crucial to the start of the \$40 million federally funded complex. Plans call for the complex to include a health center, child-care facility, community building and police substation.