

A Guide to the Lakewood Ranch Stewardship District

What is the Lakewood Ranch Stewardship District?

The Lakewood Ranch Stewardship District (Stewardship District) is a special-purpose district with the authority to plan, fund, build, and maintain the infrastructure, amenities, and natural features that support the community's long-term vision and high standards. Established by a special act of the Florida Legislature in 2005, the Stewardship District operates under Chapter 189 of the Florida Statutes, which governs independent special districts.

Why does the Stewardship District Exist?

Lakewood Ranch needed a tool that could match its scale and vision for responsible community building. The Stewardship District provides that framework — enabling community-wide planning, consistent standards, and investment in large-scale systems like roads, parks, trails, drainage, landscaping and conservation areas. Just as importantly, it ensures those community assets are preserved and enhanced over time. Unlike Community Development Districts (CDDs), which are limited in scope to smaller areas and functions, the Stewardship District provides coordination and continuity across the community—one of the reasons people often say, *"you know when you are in Lakewood Ranch."*

How Does the Stewardship District Work?

The Stewardship District ensures that new development in Lakewood Ranch pays its own way, without shifting costs to existing taxpayers. It allows for efficient, cost-effective financing and coordination of infrastructure — often built ahead of population demand and to full build-out conditions.

Assessments vary by neighborhood, based on the size of the area and number of residents benefiting from the infrastructure, and the specific costs for that infrastructure. There are no hidden taxes — only a transparent, predictable approach where those who benefit help fund the community features that support their development area. Importantly, the Stewardship District does not manage the day-to-day maintenance of individual villages and neighborhoods; those responsibilities remain with their homeowners' associations (HOAs).

1. The Stewardship District Financial Model: The District issues two types of assessments:

Capital Bonds fund the upfront construction of infrastructure such as roads, parks, stormwater systems, and utilities needed for the development. These are repaid over about 30 years by the homeowners who benefit from them. While assessments may be paid in full at home closing, most homeowners choose the annual payment. This assessment is fixed and determined and cannot increase.

Operations & Maintenance Assessments provide for ongoing annual funding to care for the infrastructure and maintain the natural character of Lakewood Ranch, even after the developer's



role ends. This assessment may vary annually based upon community needs, inflation, and direct community costs.

2. How Residents Pay

Repayments for both types of special assessments are collected annually as a clearly labeled assessment on property tax bills in Manatee and Sarasota counties. These costs are disclosed to homebuyers up front by builders, ensuring transparency, predictability, and fairness.

Who oversees the Stewardship District?

The Stewardship District is professionally managed to ensure transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability. With support from engineers, legal counsel, financial advisors, and independent auditors, it oversees infrastructure, manages funds responsibly, and maintains smooth operations under one coordinated framework.

The five-member Board includes SMR representatives (the master developer) and residents, with governance gradually transitioning to a fully resident-elected board as population milestones are met. By then, systems are established, standards are clear, and the community benefits from both professional expertise and informed local leadership — ensuring Lakewood Ranch continues to protect home values and uphold its quality.

What are some examples of areas the Stewardship District is responsible for?

- **Community Parks** — Waterside Place Park, Bob Gardner Park, James Patton Park, Roger Hill Park, and Silver Falls Nature Park.
- **Trails and Bike Lanes** — more than 150 miles of multi-surface trails connecting villages, amenities and natural areas.
- **Lakes and Stormwater Ponds** — dozens of systems that provide flood control, water quality, and attractive community features.
- **Arterial Road Enhancements** — multi-surface trails, landscaped medians, traffic sign enhancements, and adjacent ponds and lakes.
- **Conservation Areas (~3,000 acres)** — wetlands and natural preserves, including current and future management of Mill Creek, Longswamp, and the Braden River Mitigation Bank.
- **Iconic Features** — monument signage at key intersections, three-board fencing throughout, and branded park and trail signage.

Where can I receive more information on the Stewardship District?

Website: <https://lakewoodranchstewardship.com/>

Email: info@lwrstewardship.org

Town Hall North (Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Closed for lunch 12:30 p.m.-1:00 p.m.)

Address: 6310 Lakewood Ranch Boulevard, Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202

Phone: (941) 727-1505

What are the Key Benefits of the Lakewood Ranch Stewardship District?

1. Cost Savings Now and Future with Stable Long-Term Funding

- The Stewardship District can use a predictable assessment structure to fund community improvements and maintenance, reducing the need for surprise fees or special assessments.
- The Stewardship District can spread the infrastructure cost over a period up to 30 years.
- Most homeowners reside in their homes for only 7-15 years – therefore reducing their total costs.

2. Enhanced Community Amenities, Stronger Community Ties

- The Stewardship District maintains high quality community amenities like dog parks, splash pad, bike and multi-purpose trail networks that serve as the canvas for Lakewood Ranch's unique lifestyle.
- Well-planned amenities and public spaces within communities through the Stewardship District can encourage social interaction and create a vibrant, connected neighborhood.

3. Planned Infrastructure

- Streets, sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, stormwater management systems are thoughtfully designed and maintained by the Stewardship District, ensuring a cohesive and well-functioning community.

4. Well-Maintained Common Areas

- The Stewardship District is responsible for the upkeep of the beautiful common spaces, medians, lakes, and wetlands that form the connective tissue of Lakewood Ranch and give it its identity—you know you are in the Ranch.

5. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Funding

- Stewardship District's may qualify for FEMA funding or assistance in specific circumstances related to disaster recovery, mitigation, or preparedness projects.

6. Efficient Management

- The Stewardship District is guided by experienced professionals who work with leading consultants to ensure effective operations — from maintaining parks and community spaces to managing budgets and long-term planning.

7. Equitable Cost Sharing

- Costs for amenities and infrastructure can be shared among all residents, making it fair and affordable for everyone.