



**From David Feikes, The Shepherd's Work**

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I would like to take the time to describe the location of The Shepherd's Work in Belize and why I could not be happier with it. The property for the Shepherd's Work sits upon a hill, perhaps the highest point in the area, next to the water tanks for the village of Bullet Tree Falls. It is about a mile off the paved road. The roads in Belize can be rough and difficult to transverse. You first travel down a pot-holed gravel road through a smaller area known as Comalote. There are many small

wooden houses with chickens and dogs. I was surprised that the dogs do not bother the chickens, but my Belizean friends pointed out that they grew up together. The dogs will sleep in the middle of the road, they eventually move but it is often more expedient just to go around them, the chickens are usually on the edge of the road.



The last 400-500 yards is a steep incline to the property. When I first looked at the property, I was not going to buy it because of the road. However, Alfonzo, a missionary from Belize, and a friend was not concerned about it. It sits on three lots and totals almost exactly one acre. I also wanted a bit more land. Sharing Meadows in Indiana, the inspiration for The Shepherd's Works, sits on 200 acres. The price was a little more than I wanted to pay for one acre. I decided to make a low offer, and I told my realtor that this was the best I could do and to tell the owner my reason for buying the land. He accepted the offer immediately! God works in mysterious ways; I met the owner after the purchase and he no longer wants to sell any of the other lots!



The water is brown because it rained!

The two other things that the land had was it had water available as I was next to the water tanks for the village, and it had electricity. These were my three criteria for buying a piece of property, the road, water, and electricity.

On my second trip it we had a couple of days of rain, and I could not make it up the hill. I had a newer rental car; I must have tried 8 times to make it up the hill. The truck delivering the 40-foot rebar also could not make it up the hill and we made a couple of trips on foot carrying the metal rods up the hill. In Belize, something always goes wrong but the key is to fix it and move on. After about half a day I decided to call my excavator. He spread a couple of loads of gravel on the road and brought a backhoe to smooth it out. I spent \$350 US to fix the public road. It was one of the best investments I made. Since then, it has rained even more. (See the video from the concrete pour of the floor.)

I was thinking this was a public road but fixed it anyway. One day, Abel and I were getting water and ice at the local store, and it was election day. Abel introduced me to the mayor, who happened to win reelection that day. I told him about the project and that I had put gravel on the road. He wondered who did that! With the road in good shape (in good shape by Belize standards) I am delighted with the road.



Let me describe the property and what borders it. The area can be described as jungle. The undergrowth has been cleared away so you are able to walk on the property easily. In our first trip we cleared the trees for five buildings. I am saddened by the number of trees we have cut down. The excavator and Abel are always telling me that I need to take down a few more, mainly because they are too close to the building. I reluctantly cut these trees because I know they are right.

Another nice thing about the property is that there are no houses around it. The closest house is about 100 yards away and I rarely see anyone there.



The black water tanks sit on the ground and borders one side of the property, a couple of vacant lots border the lower side and the undergrowth has not been cleared away on them. The other two sides are jungle, with one side leading down to the Mopan River. The other side is an archaeological sanctuary so there should be no buildings on it ever. There is a path between the property and the jungle which the villagers frequently walk past. This is how I hired three of the laborers for the project. They typically wave and keep on walking.



Abel grew up on a farm and convinced me to plant corn, cucumbers, peppers, okra, pumpkins and he even brought the roots for three Plantain plants. The corn and the plantains are doing well. The soil is rich, and we planted the crops on the cleared land where we will eventually build two more buildings.

One of the major attractions for me is the wildlife in the area. We can hear the holler monkeys almost every morning coming from the river side. We saw three of them one day as I described in a prior newsletter, but we could hear more deeper in the jungle.

The village workers check the water tanks daily and one of them said he saw a jaguar on the property. I set up a motion detector trail cam, but got 450 pictures of a palm tree swaying in the breeze. The owner of the property told me he saw a deer on the property. Abel said he has seen a gibnut, a.k.a. royal rat or paca, and he even caught an armadillo by the tail on the site. In addition, there is a toucan who comes by frequently, noisy parrots, black squirrels, and a variety of birds. From the second tree I cut down, an iguana ran off.



We also saw a brown snake in the wood pile. I do not think it was poisonous! One of my goals is to get pictures of the wildlife.

Another interesting thing about the property is there are Mayan burial sites on it. The piles of rocks indicate a burial site. The burial sites all over 1,000 years old. I am pretty sure the sites have already been raided for any jewelry they may have been buried with. We find pieces of pottery at the sites. I have been told that their bones disintegrate and the pottery will shatter when the tombs are opened and comes in contact with the air. There is a registry of Mayan burial sites of the area at the tourism bureau, and I hope to go there one day and see if these sites are on the map and how old they might be. I would also like to try to restore these burial sites one day, clear away the brush and wash away the loose dirt.



On my last trip to Belize I was showing two American teachers, Marty and Mary, around the property as we did a workshop for 26 primary teachers at Sacred Heart Junior College. Mary, one of the teachers, touched a plant; in amazement it retracted from her touch as if it was alive. We looked it up and they are called Shame Me Nots and are also known as the Sensitive Plant or Shame Plant (*Mimosa pudica*). They are everywhere on the cleared land for the next buildings. I had spent over 50 days there and never knew!

One of the buildings will eventually be my residence but will also have rooms for the intellectually disabled on the first floor. It will be the only two-story building on the property as all the other buildings will be handicapped accessible. The second floor will overlook the jungle and will have a view of the mountains, as well as the daily eastern breeze.



I am thrilled with the location of The Shepherd's Work! I am confident that it will one day provide a safe and secure home for the intellectually disabled. I hope they take great enjoyment in the location. I will need other's help to make this dream a reality! Please consider donating to this worthy cause, but most of all, please keep praying for the success of the project. I have said this many times. I can tell people are praying for the success of The Shepherd's Work. Something goes wrong every day in Belize, like not making it up the road in the rain, BUT it always works out!

**Todos son bienvenidos a La Obra del Pastor!**

**All are welcome at The Shepherd's Work!**

**Thank you for reading!**

**David Feikes**

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