



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Economic Development

WEEKEND WAVE

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Friday Economic Roundup

First residences at Babcock Ranch to be completed in February

Submitted by Caffrey & Associates Naples Daily news

BABCOCK RANCH - Master developer Kitson & Partners announced that furnished model homes by Stock Development, Fox Premier Builders, and Homes by Towne are on schedule for completion in mid- to late February at Babcock Ranch, a new 18,000-acre eco-centric, solar powered town being developed by Kitson east of Fort Myers off State Road 31 in Charlotte County.

New models by Florida Lifestyle Homes are slated for completion in March and Castle Harbour Homes is poised to begin construction of two models in late January and February. The furnished models are being built in Lake Timber, the first neighborhood to be built at Babcock Ranch. Each of the Craftsman, Farmhouse, and Coastal Gulf Vernacular style homes at Babcock Ranch is being built to Florida Green Building Coalition Certification standards and will include deep front porches positioned close to the sidewalks to encourage conversations with passersby and to allow the homes to live from front to back.

The Lake Timber neighborhood epitomizes the Town and Country lifestyle Kitson has fashioned at Babcock Ranch. Lake Timber's choice of custom lakefront, porch home, cottage, town home, and condominium residences will line streetscapes dotted with parks. Lakefront green spaces and pathways, trail head facilities, a lakeside fishing dock, an observation deck,

and Babcock Ranch's first town garden will provide opportunities to connect with nature. Lake Timber's Lake House neighborhood center is under construction and will include a lakefront pool, barbecue area, and playground.

At the same time, Lake Timber will be a short walk or bike ride from Babcock's Downtown District. Phase I of the Downtown District is under construction and expected to be completed by the end of February. Phase I will include completion of Founder's Square, a lakefront green that will include a waterfront boardwalk promenade, a band shell, bike, kayak, paddleboard, and row boat rentals, and a splash pad while serving as a gathering place and the focal point for town events and celebrations.

Downtown's Table and Tap Restaurant, an outfitters store, and Woodlea Hall, Babcock Ranch's first civic building and home to the town's information center, will all be at Founder's Square and are expected to be completed in February. A 10,567-square-foot market that will offer a coffee shop, grab and go items, and an ice cream shop is slated for completion in July.

The Babcock Neighborhood School will open in fall of 2017 and is now accepting K-8 applications for the 2017-2018 school year. A comprehensive Wellness Center is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2018.

Base priced at \$459,000 and situated on 70- and 80-foot lakefront homesites, Stock Development's open concept floor plans are featured in Babcock Ranch's Longleaf Collection and are designed by Looney Ricks Kiss Architects. Outdoor living areas will overlook Lake Timber and Lake Bullhorn, the two lakes that envelope the Lake Timber neighborhood. Four furnished models by Stock will open in February, including the 3,076-square-foot three-bedroom plus study, three-and-a-half bath Crystal model; the 2,676-square-foot three-bedroom, three-and-a-half bath Sebring; the 3,191-square-foot, four-bedroom plus study, four-and-a-half bath Destin; and the 3,264-square-foot, two-story Delray that offers three bedrooms plus a study, three-and-a-half baths, and an upstairs bonus room. A fifth model, the 2,822-square-foot, three-bedroom plus study, three-and-a-half bath Bartow, is scheduled for completion this summer.

Situated on 50- or 60-by-130-foot homesites, Fox Premier Builders' Cottage Collection open concept floor plans were designed by Cooter Ramsey of Allison, Ramsey & Associates and by Timberbuilt. The plans have been converted to accommodate a SIP Panel Construction process developed by New Panel Homes. Structural insulated panels (SIPs) consist of an insulating foam core sandwiched between two structural facings, typically oriented strand board (OSB). The building system is extremely durable, highly resistant to Southwest Florida's extreme weather conditions, and energy efficient.

Fox expects to have four models completed by the end of February, including the two-story, 2,029-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath Camden model base priced at \$469,900; the two-story, 2,483-square-foot Eden base priced at \$497,900 that includes four bedrooms or three bedrooms plus a study and four baths; the single-story, two bedroom, two-and-a-half bath, 1,555-square-foot Whisper Creek base priced at \$379,900; and the two-story, 2,001-square-foot Cabin model designed by Timberbuilt that includes full master suites on the first floor and upstairs. The Cabin combines the SIPs construction process with hybrid timber framing, timber exterior finishes, and interior beamed ceiling details. The timber framed homes can be customized to provide looks ranging from rustic to elegant. Optional one- and two-car garages and a variety of porch designs are also available with each plan.

Homes by Towne's Harvest Collection at Lake Timber includes eight flexible open concept floor plans ranging from 1,956 to 2,660 square feet on sites measuring 50 or 60 feet by 130 feet. The plans are base priced in the \$300s. The Harvest Collection homes, designed by KM Development Corp., will showcase Babcock's architectural styles.

The West Indies style 2,545-square-foot Sungold model and the Farmhouse style, 2,660-square-foot Sterling model are expected to open by the end of February. The Sungold offers a three-bedroom plus den, two-bath floor plan while the Sterling offers a great room, three bedrooms, a den and two baths. The 1,956-square-foot, two-bedroom plus den or third bedroom, two-bath Coastal style Brandywine and the 2,441-square-foot two-story Craftsman style Jade, that includes two bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths, a den and an upstairs bonus room, are slated for completion in March. Rooms at the front of each of the Harvest Collection floor plans, whether a den or a bedroom, will have doors opening to the front porch.

Florida Lifestyle Homes' first Longleaf Collection models will be built on the banks of Lake Bullhorn. The furnished Taylor and Lauren residences are expected to be completed by late February or early March. The 2,784-square-foot Taylor plan includes an additional 1,029 square feet of covered front and rear porches. The plan features a formal dining room, three bedrooms, a study or fourth bedroom, three baths, and a swimming pool. The two-story Lauren offers 4,081 square feet plus 835 square feet of covered front and rear porch

space. The open concept plan features a great room, island kitchen, a formal dining room, master suite and two guest bedrooms on the first floor. Upstairs, a loft and a bonus room offer additional places for entertaining or creating a home office. The upstairs features a full bath and a fourth bedroom.

Castle Harbour will be offering a minimum of four Longleaf Collection plans ranging from 2,300 to nearly 3,000 square feet. The Old Florida and Farmhouse style homes will be on 70-by-130-foot or 80-by-130-foot lakeside homesites base priced in the \$500s and \$700s.

Castle Harbour is starting its single-story Huckleberry model this month. The light-filled plan offers 2,955 square feet and includes a formal dining room, a study overlooking the front porch, a master bedroom with a lake view, and two guest bedrooms with full baths. The outdoor living area overlooks Lake Timber. Construction of the Belvidere model on Lake Bullhorn is expected to begin in February. The Farmhouse style residence is expected to include four bedrooms and three-and-a-half baths.

Economic Development Director named to top 50 list

Sherri Dennis

Lucienne Pears was named one of the Top 50 economic developers in North America by Consultant Connect, a consultancy that matches communities with business site selectors. Pears was one of three Florida economic development officials on the list.

"This annual list recognizing North America's Top 50 Economic Developers is designed to acknowledge the hard work of the top leaders in this field and elevate the conversation around economic development and job creation," said Ron Kitchens, managing partner of Consultant Connect. "Each of the leaders represented on this year's list are beyond deserving of this recognition for their efforts in building our communities."

Pears was hired as Charlotte County's economic development director in January 2016. She worked as the agency's business development specialist between July 2010 and her appointment as interim economic development director in October 2015. During her tenure, Pears developed a partnership with Western Michigan University to operate an aviation training center in Charlotte County, with academic and internship programs in nearly two dozen other disciplines planned, as well. She orchestrated the sale of 452 acres of the county-owned Murdock Village Community Redevelopment Area to Private Equity Group, which plans to develop 2,400 single-family and multifamily units, 200,000 square feet of commercial and retail space and a 150-room hotel on the site.

Punta Gorda Airport Year End Passenger Traffic Up 33.69%

Punta Gorda, FL (January 23, 2017) - The Charlotte County Airport Authority announces the Punta Gorda Airport passenger count for 2016 was 1,118,303. This is a 33.69% increase in passenger traffic for 2016 compared with 2015 (836,472 passengers). As of October 31, 2016, the Punta Gorda Airport added service from Frontier Airlines and now has two commercial airlines - Allegiant and Frontier.

For the month of December, 2016 the passenger count was 107,617. This is a 32.39% increase in passenger traffic for December 2016 compared with December 2015 (81,289 passengers). In December, there were 51,324 boarding passengers and 56,293 arriving passengers. This is the 39th month in a row that the Airport has seen an increase in passenger traffic in year over year monthly traffic.

Paul Andrews, Chairman of the Charlotte County Airport Authority Board, stated "We had another great year of passenger traffic at the Punta Gorda Airport. The airport's economic impact on the community continues to increase and flourish."

Tourism is a numbers game that Charlotte's winning

By JENNIFER A. HUBER Special to Florida Weekly

Thrillist.com recently ranked the 50 U.S. states based on the worst winters and the Sunshine State was ranked the fifth best, topped only by Hawaii, Arizona, California and Colorado. The Centennial State bested Florida in this list because its "snowfall is a cause for celebration."

While sitting at a stoplight this month, take a look at the cars around you. Most likely, you will see license plates from Ontario, Michigan and Ohio who do not agree with Thrillist.com and escaped the snow and cold of the Midwest and Northeast for warmer climes of the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast.

As the Southwest Florida tourism industry says this time of year, "Welcome to season." This is when the industry welcomes tens of thousands of warm weather-seekers who have waited all year to gather fossilized shark teeth, fish in worldclass waters and watch the sun slip into the Gulf of Mexico.

These visitors may spend a weekend or six months staying in hotels, condominiums and RV parks; dining in locally owned restaurants; and enjoying activities such as boating excursions, guided kayaking tours and fishing charters. They also make purchases in boutique shops, galleries and supermarkets and utilize services ranging from hairstylists to dry cleaners and health care clinics to car repair. Because of this influx of visitors into the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast, roadways are a bit busier, supermarket checkout lines are a little longer and the wait time into favorite restaurants is a tad extended.

"Season" is vital for Southwest Florida's economy and worth what some year-round residents consider an inconvenience. In 2015, the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast, which includes Englewood Beach, Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda, welcomed an estimated 351,600 visitors - resulting in approximately \$345 million in direct expenditures within Charlotte County.

The research, conducted by Research Data Inc. on behalf of the Punta Gorda/ Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau, states that approximately \$17.2 million in state sales tax and approximately \$3.4 million in local option tax were generated. Because tourism produces a significant amount of sales tax statewide, Florida does not have a state income tax.

Importantly, tourism into the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast generates local jobs. Based on research from the Department of Demographics and Research, for each 85 visitors into the state of Florida, a job directly in tourism is supported. For this community, that means 4,136 jobs are directly supported by tourism. This figure does not include indirect tourism jobs such as those in health care, retail and utilities.

Research also indicates most visitors into this community are pleased with their visits. The visitor satisfaction rate (satisfied or very satisfied) is 97.4 percent, and 92 percent of visitors surveyed plan to return. These figures can indicate visitors feel comfortable and welcomed in our slice of paradise.

Although it may be inappropriate to reach out and hug the next visitor you see, simply smile and welcome them into our community. Because of these visitors, residents of the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast are able to enjoy a quality of life that many people save up for a lifetime in order to spend a week enjoying.

- Jennifer Huber is public relations manager of the Punta Gorda/ Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau.

PUNTA GORDA AIRPORT WELCOMES THE COLLINGS FOUNDATION'S WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

PUNTA GORDA, FL (January 30, 2017) - The Punta Gorda Airport welcomes the Collings Foundation's Wings of Freedom February 6th through February 9th. Punta Gorda is one of 110 cities on a national tour that brings extremely rare bomber and fighter aircraft for a living history display. Two local WWII veterans will participate in the tour from the Naples Airport to the Punta Gorda Airport.

The WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR travels the nation as a flying tribute to the flight crews who flew them, the ground crews who maintained them, the workers who built them, the soldiers, sailors and airmen they helped protect; and the citizens and families that share the freedom that they helped preserve. Participating aircraft includes: B-17, Flying Fortress "Nine O Nine", one of only 8 in flying condition in the United States. B-24J Liberator "Witchcraft," the sole remaining example of its type flying in the World. B-25 Mitchell "Tondelayo" bombers best known for being used in the daring Doolittle raid. P-51 Mustang "Toulouse Nuts" fighter that recently received the 2016 Oshkosh Grand Champion Award for restoration.

Two WWII veterans will ride in the B-24J Liberator from the Naples Airport to the Punta Gorda Airport: Jim Ross and Jim Bowden. In 1943, Jim Ross, a US Navy flight engineer mechanic, served with VB-105 Squadron Fleet Air Wing 7. The unit's duties included patrolling in B-24 Liberators while looking for German submarines. At the age of 90, Ross received the prestigious Federal Aviation Administration's Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award. Jim Bowden, intel officer that flew NEACAP after the war including the first time a president flew on it.

The tour offers a rare opportunity to visit, explore, and learn more about these unique and rare treasures of aviation history. Visitors are invited to explore the aircraft inside and out - \$15 for adults and \$5 for children under 12 is requested for access to up-close viewing and tours through the inside of the aircraft. Discounted rates for school groups. Visitors may also experience the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to actually take a 30-minute flight aboard these rare aircraft. Flights on either the B-17 or B-24 are \$450 per person. P-51 flight training is

\$2,200 for a half hour and \$3,200 for a full hour. B-25 flights are \$400 per person. For reservations and information on flight experiences call 800-568-8924.

There are also a few seats left on the B-24J Liberator for media rides from the Naples Airport to the Punta Gorda Airport, please contact Jennifer Smith jdsmith@flypgd.com or 941.639-1101 ext 131 for details.

Gettel buys Palm dealerships in Punta Gorda

By Staff report Sarasota Herald-Tribune

The Gettel Automotive Group started 2017 with the purchase of 11 new vehicle franchises in Punta Gorda, the company announced this week.

Gettel said it acquired the Palm stores, including Toyota, Hyundai, Lincoln, Chevrolet, Buick-GMC, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram, Mazda and Mitsubishi brands.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

All of the dealerships are now open under the Gettel franchise agreement. Every eligible Palm employee was offered a job after the transition, the Gettel Group said. The Punta Gorda dealerships will employ 250.

"We are excited to be a part of the Punta Gorda community and working with all of the former Palm associates," said Bill Finocchiaro, general manager of Gettel Toyota of Lakewood, who will oversee the transition in Punta Gorda.

The Gettel dealerships have been serving the Bradenton-Sarasota market for 26 years, starting with Jim Gettel's first Toyota dealership in 1991. Three years later, he bought another Toyota dealership in Gainesville, now known as Gatorland Toyota.

In 1996, he moved Gettel Toyota to U.S. 41, near Sarasota-Bradenton Airport. He continued to expand the Gettel brand with the purchases of more dealerships in Southwest Florida. In addition to Gettel Toyota in Bradenton and Gatorland Toyota, the Gettel Automotive Group opened Gettel Toyota of Lakewood in 2011. Gettel now runs six stores in the Bradenton-Sarasota area, including Hyundai, Nissan and Acura; three stores in Ocala, including BMW, Porsche and Volkswagen; and a BMW store in Gainesville, in addition to Gatorland Toyota.

Before opening in Florida, Jim Gettel ran dealerships in his home state of Michigan, including Chevrolet, Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Cadillac, Ford, Mercury, Chrysler, Plymouth, Dodge and Jeep.

FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

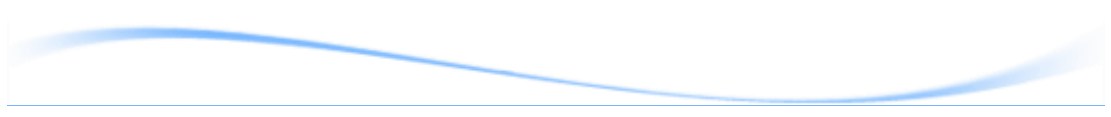
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- Florida company gets OK to ship electric cars to Cuba ([The Hill](#))
- Gov. Scott announces Cott Corporation headquarters expansion in Tampa ([Florida Trend](#))
- Gov. Scott: More than 237,000 new jobs created in 2016 ([Florida Trend](#))
- Port Everglades receives approval for a new logistics center ([News Release](#))
- Florida consumer confidence at 15-year high ([Tampa Bay Times](#))

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