

WEEKEND WAVE

12-11-15



Friday Economic Roundup

Redevelopment projects underway in CRAs

By Debrah Forester

Many of us enjoy watching home improvement shows - "Property Brothers," "Love It or List It" are two of my favorites.

Halfway through the show they typically discover rotten wood or unsafe wiring that brings the project to a halt. The contractor, the designer and the homeowner need to regroup, look at options, consider the budget and agree on a solution. At the end of 60 minutes, they solve the problem and everyone is happy with the reveal.

Consider remodeling a community.

We are not just talking about one home, on one lot.

We are talking about several individually owned parcels, each having their own history, plus underground public and private utility lines, which can be many, all located in a confined space. Redeveloping a community is challenging and requires patience, commitment and flexibility. Getting a project from idea, to design, to completion, can take years. But once completed, such a project can inspire new opportunities and new investment.

Redevelopment projects are underway in all three Charlotte County Community Redevelopment Areas.

Dirt is moving, plans are being finalized and agreements are being negotiated. We are

beginning to witness community visions becoming a reality.

What an exciting time in Charlotte County.

* First conceptualized in 2003, the Charlotte Harbor Gateway Harbor Walk project was identified in the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Plan to connect the east and west sides of U.S. 41, while enhancing access to the waterfront.

Phase 1A is currently underway at the foot of the Barron Collier Bridge, with construction scheduled to be completed in March 2016. This phase includes a new seawall, bathrooms, a smallboat launch for kayaks, windsurfers and small sailboats, parking, landscaping, lighting and a sidewalk. This phase will provide a great walking trail from Chester Roberts Park on Melbourne Street to the lookout point of Harbor Walk.

Or, you can continue your walk over the bridge to downtown Punta Gorda.

Phase 1B is the key to making the vision become a reality because it will provide an elevated boardwalk that will connect Phase 1A to the west side of U.S. 41 and allow users to continue to Bayshore Live Oak Park. The construction plans are complete and permit applications are under review by state and federal agencies. This phase also includes a new fishing pier, which is expected to be a welcome addition for both local and visiting anglers.

To help facilitate private investment along the waterfront, the county recently approved a change to the comprehensive plan in order to create the Riverwalk District in Charlotte Harbor CRA. This change allows for increased density and a mix of commercial uses. Land development code standards to facilitate the vision are currently being drafted.

* Parkside CRA just completed the first leg of the multiuse trail plan with a 10 foot wide multiuse path along Elkcarn Boulevard, from U.S. 41 to Midway. In addition to the trail, landscaping was installed. The shade trees planted along the multiuse path begin to illustrate the vision of the community - a walkable neighborhood connected to employment centers and commercial uses.

Parkside, which is in the heart of Port Charlotte, contains all the elements that "new town" developments are striving to create on vacant parcels of land: mixed housing types, commercial uses, cultural amenities and an employment center.

Four other projects (Harbor Boulevard, Gertrude/Aaron, West Tarpon/Ambrose and Olean) are currently under design and, when constructed, will complete approximately three miles of trails that will have an enormous impact on implementing the vision of Parkside. Plans for the revitalization of McGuire Park are also underway to make that a vibrant active space for the community to enjoy.

* With the improved economy and housing demand growing in Southwest Florida, developers are looking to secure large tracks of land to meet their development needs.

Murdock Village CRA is rising to the top of developers' lists once again. The widening of U.S. 41 and the installation of utility lines adjacent to Murdock Village will provide the necessary infrastructure needed for the area to develop. Florida Department of Transportation is constructing three stormwater retention ponds required to expand the roadway.

The county negotiated an agreement with FDOT to allow those ponds to be reconfigured if needed to meet the plans of future development.

Redevelopment is a team effort. It requires working across departments to plan and execute the community's vision, while recognizing restrictions and challenges that may exist. For Charlotte County, the future for redevelopment opportunities is bright and 2016 should be another busy year.

Debrah Forester is the Charlotte County redevelopment manager. Readers may reach her at debrah.forester@charlottecountyfl.gov.

Bayfront Health names new local CEO

Provided by Bayfront Health

PORT CHARLOTTE - Bayfront Health Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda named the new market CEO for Charlotte County and surrounding communities on Tuesday. Donnie L. Romine will take the position effective Jan. 18, following Ricky Satcher's retirement later this year.

For the last five years, Romine has served as System Chief Operating Officer of St. Vincent's Health System and President of St. Vincent's Medical Center-Riverside in Jacksonville, Fla., where he grew the organization into a leader in adult general medicine, orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, cardiology and invasive cardiology, cardiac surgery and gastroenterology.

"I'm honored to join the physicians, employees and volunteers at Bayfront Health Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda who are dedicated to providing patients with quality health care," said Romine. "I look forward to supporting the work they've done to make this hospital an important resource for Charlotte County and the surrounding communities."

Romine also championed a strong focus on quality and safety, which led to improved outcomes and experiences for patients at St. Vincent's and at his previous posts.

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are confident that Donnie will be a great addition to the team and we look forward to working with him," said Maryann Mize, chairwoman of the hospitals' Board of Trustees. "His deep hospital management experience with growing services and enhancing quality make him the best fit for the role."

In his previous role as Chief Executive Officer of Weatherford Regional Medical Center in Weatherford, Texas, Romine oversaw the development and completion of a multi-specialty physician practice and a \$27 million hospital renovation project. Romine previously held hospital leadership roles in other Texas hospitals and in South Carolina and Nevada.

In the time between Satcher's retirement at the end of the year and Romine's arrival, Brian Cruddas will serve as interim CEO. Cruddas is currently Chief Operating Officer at Bayfront Health Port Charlotte.

Romine holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of Texas, Permian Basin, and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of North Florida.

Hands Across the Harbor January 30, 2016

The Charlotte Harbor and Punta Gorda Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs) invite residents to participate in the 8th Annual Hands Across the Harbor - Half Marathon Bridge Run, Ride, and Roll.

The event will be on January 30, 2016 and features a half marathon, 5k competitive run, 13.1 mile competitive longboard race as well as 5k fun walk, 13.1, 20 and 30 mile bike rides.

This IDSA Sanctioned Longboard Race and the ½ Marathon will follow the same course that can be viewed at <http://www.walkjogrun.net>. Participants of the Longboard Race must be members of the International Distance Skateboard Association (IDSA) before registering. IDSA membership is available at <http://www.theidsa.org>.

Pre-registration for the ½ Marathon Run and Longboard Event is \$75 from now until January 15, 2016. Pre-registration special rates for all other events are \$30.00, or \$25.00 for students with an ID, through January 15, 2016. Rates go up for all events after that. This is a green event and we ask your help in making it a success by signing up online at <http://handsacrosstheharbor.org>.

Pre-registered participants will receive a high-performance t-shirt, free pancake breakfast, awards and a chance to win the Fabulous Getaway Prize - a two-night stay at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa plus a \$200 hotel gift card.

Proceeds from Hands Across the Harbor benefit the education programs at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. For more information, visit <http://www.handsacrosstheharbor.org/>.

Enterprise Zone

To encourage economic development in economically distressed areas of the state, in 1982 Florida launched an Enterprise Zone program by providing incentives to induce private investment. At the 2015 legislative session, extension of the Enterprise Zone program was not authorized, and the program will sunset on Dec. 31, 2015.

Incentives include business machinery and equipment sales tax refund, building materials sales tax refund, job tax credit, and property tax credit for Florida corporations. To qualify for the incentives, a business or home must be within the Enterprise Zone, and further specific eligibility criteria must be met. The Charlotte County Enterprise Zone was approved by the state in 2013. The zone includes portions of the Punta Gorda Interstate Airport Park, Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), Parkside CRA, and Punta Gorda, totaling approximately 16 square miles.

Visit http://FloridasInnovationCoast.com/index.php/site_selection/enterprise_zone for more information.

Applications must be approved by the Florida Department of Revenue before the sunset date.

For more information contact Debrah Forester, Redevelopment Manager with the Charlotte County Economic Development Department, at 941-764-4943 or Debrah.Forester@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.

FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

- Orange County has 3rd biggest arts and recreation industry ([AP](#))

US ECONOMIC NEWS

- Healthcare industries are projected to become the largest employer in 2024 ([Florida Trend](#))

ENTREPRENEUR NEWS

- More military veterans moving into entrepreneurship ([Miami Herald](#))
- Where the jobs will (and won't) be In 2016 ([Forbes](#))

Join Our Mailing List!

Charlotte County Economic Development Office
18501 Murdock Circle | Suite 302
Port Charlotte, FL 33948 | 941-764-4941
FloridaEDO@CharlotteCountyFL.com
<http://www.FloridasInnovationCoast.com>