

Published August 1, 2008

Construction Update

By Andrew Baker, Director, Facilities Construction



Three years ago Hurricane Charley destroyed the Charlotte County Event Center. After the decision was made to rebuild, the County hired the design/build team of Mathews Taylor/Harvard Jolly to design and construct a replacement facility. The intent was to build a multi-purpose facility that would expand on the usability of the original building while incorporating the waterfront setting into the building and the site. The new building also had to meet Miami-Dade as well as FEMA standards for wind and wave activity. Concurrently as the design process moved forward funding issues with insurance, FEMA, as well as City of Punta Gorda participation, all needed to be resolved in order for the project to be successful. Additionally the Board of County Commissioners put additional funds into the project for more square footage and the city contributed close to two million dollars for architectural enhancements and for the riverwalk portion of the project. The final design and the facility you see today is a building of over 43, 000 sq/ft which is approximately double the size of the original auditorium.

This includes the main hall, breakout conference rooms, kitchen areas, dressing rooms, office space and back of house operations. Construction work began in June of 2007 with extensive site work and the actual construction of the building began in October of that same year. We are using a tilt-wall construction method which has a number of practicalities for a building of this type. We also used a multi-phase approach to construction which allowed us to start various pieces of the project as we finalized a wide range of outstanding issues which normally hold up actual construction. The total cost of the new facility is 19.6 million dollars. Our expectation is a final completion in early fall of this year.

Another large project the County is engaged in is the renovation of the Sports Park Complex. The County entered into an agreement in late 2006 with the Tampa Bay Rays that will bring them to Charlotte County in spring of 2009 for Spring Training. A significant part of the agreement involved a renovation of the current stadium site as well as a new clubhouse facility for the Rays. The County signed a contract with Hunt/MT/HOK Sport in early 2007 for the design and construction of the project. HOK Sport is the acknowledged leader nationwide in the design of sports stadiums for professional franchises having completed similar projects such as Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Bright House Field in Clearwater, Victory Field in Indianapolis, Tempe Stadium in Arizona and Grizzlies Stadium in Fresno, California. Our project, when completed, will include approximately 6000 new fixed seats as well as additional 1000 plus general admission seating areas. There is also a 360 degree access to the stadium itself via an elevated boardwalk as well as renovations to the suite area, press boxes, concession areas, playing fields, and updates of building systems as well as a number of other site improvements. Additionally under construction is a new 42, 000 sq/ft clubhouse building for the Rays which includes locker areas for the players, training rooms and various office spaces. Funding for the project is a combination of state grant funds, tourism tax dollars and funding from the Rays. Site construction began in August of 2007 and is expected to be complete in January of 2009 with the Rays occupying the stadium for spring training in February of 2009. Visit our website at CharlotteCountyFL.com to access live cams at the stadium to watch the construction progress.