

Charlotte Harbor buzzing with activities, developments

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It is a busy time in the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Area and Bayshore Live Oak Park, completed last year, provides the perfect venue to host events and bring the community together.

On January 23 at 10 a.m., the community is invited to attend a celebration to recognize the completion of several key infrastructure projects that have been a top priority for the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and the CRA Advisory Committee for many years. Properties south of Edgewater Drive/Harborview Road within the Charlotte Harbor CRA boundaries now have access to a central, low-pressure sewer system. This project will eliminate the use of septic tanks in the area, which is great news for the environment and for encouraging development in the area.

To encourage and facilitate property owners connecting to the new system, the CRA has approved an infrastructure grant program that provides assistance to income-eligible property owners in the area to help cover the cost of onsite improvements and connection fees. The CRA Advisory Committee is reviewing options to expand that grant program to encourage additional connections.

Additionally, a new water line and 24 fire hydrants have also been installed within the CRA boundaries along US41. This project will improve water pressure and provide enhanced safety standards with the installation of fire hydrants. Although these infrastructure projects are not highly visible to the average citizen, they could have the greatest impact on moving the Charlotte Harbor Redevelopment Area forward.

The installation of the “Welcome to Charlotte Harbor” community identification sign and the landscaping at the foot of the Gilchrist and Barron Collier Bridges completed Phase I of the Gateway Beautification project. Phase II of this project is scheduled to continue this year and will include enhancing pedestrian access to the waterfront for fishing or simply to enjoy the views. The CRA is currently negotiating a contract to complete the surveying, engineering and permitting phase for Phase II.

The Charlotte Harbor CRA Advisory Committee recognizes the importance that Bayshore Live Oak Park has on the overall redevelopment of the area and is participating in developing community events at the park to encourage both residents and visitors to visit and enjoy the park. Don't miss the next Movie Under the Stars featuring “Runaway Bride” starring Julia Roberts and Richard Gere on February 13. The movie starts at 7 p.m. and admission is free. No coolers allowed. Please bring your own lawn chairs or blanket to enjoy the show.

On January 24, the first annual Hands Across the Harbor event will take place at Bayshore Live Oak Park. This fun event is a joint program with the City of Punta Gorda CRA and will bring together runners, walkers, and bicycle riders to enjoy the views of the Charlotte Harbor from both sides of the bridges. Event information and registration

forms are available at www.zoomersrun.com or at The Tropical Store, 306 West Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda.

If you are not interested in participating in the 5K competitive run, fun walk, or 15 mile bike ride, you can stop by the park and enjoy the live music provided by Michael's Hibiscus Band or meet Helmutt, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) safety dog who ALWAYS wears his bike helmet! FDOT safety staff will be providing free bike helmets and will fit them for children and adults who attend the event. Information on bicycle and pedestrian safety and maps of pedestrian/bicycle trails will also be available.

Keep your eyes on Charlotte Harbor. In the next few months, expect to see the installation of lighting at the fishing pier; construction to begin on the eight-foot-wide sidewalk from the foot of the south-bound US41 Bridge to Olean; and the development of design plans for Phase II Gateway Project. These projects are part of the CRA's neighborhood improvement plan to provide a safe and pedestrian-friendly environment that will lead to enhanced business and residential development within Charlotte Harbor.

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