

Charlotte County update for 1/1/20

New year a time of reflection and opportunity

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

As a new year dawns, I find myself reflecting on past accomplishments and fresh opportunities. I'm so proud of my colleagues for a range of accolades earned in 2019. Our team received a record number of Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties. Individuals were recognized for their expertise in crisis communications, floodplain mapping and industry management. Department teams won honors for procurement, water distribution, safety, innovation, video production, public outreach and road projects.

The county was named by Forbes magazines as one of the Top 100 employers in Florida, one of only three counties in the state to make the list. The United Way of Charlotte County gave its Most Generous Workplace for my colleagues' donations to its fundraising drive. These plaudits speak to the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by our team on behalf of the people of Charlotte County.

The year also saw new facilities open to provide access to services, recreation and enrichment. Two new recreation centers were completed and three others were expanded or renovated. A new library doubled the space available to patrons, including meetings rooms, teen and kids' areas and high-tech amenities such as self-checkout and 3-D printing.

Progress is visible in our community redevelopment areas. Construction cranes convey that clearly as Sunseeker Resort in Charlotte Harbor comes out of the ground, with an opening planned for 2021. The Riverwalk stretching from Live Oak Point to Sunseeker property was completed as were repairs to the park caused by Hurricane Irma. In Murdock Village, the sale of county-owned property was soon followed by site work and redevelopment plans for the new community of West Port. We're looking forward to seeing plans for the Lost Lagoon entertainment project on another Murdock Village parcel in the new year. In Parkside, the widening of Harbor Boulevard was completed in 2019 and construction is underway on Olean Boulevard.

Looking ahead, staff and contractors are working on a range of projects and initiatives, including beach renourishment, septic-to-sewer conversion, road widenings and a new family services center. Last month, the County Commission approved a new vision statement and we are preparing a countywide outreach strategy to spread the county's mission, vision and values to staff and residents.

We are working with a design firm to modernize the county website to improve its appearance, ease of navigation and accessibility. Having surpassed five million website visits for the first time in 2019, we know how important it is to provide residents, visitors and stakeholders an online portal for information, transactions and communications with county staff. Look for the new website launch in the late spring of 2020.

We launched an initiative before the holidays to widen the audience for our monthly department report by emailing it via Constant Contacts to staff, community leaders and the general public. This report features operational data, new projects and updates on ongoing facility construction

and maintenance from all our departments. You can sign up for the report by clicking Monthly Report email list on the county's Facebook page, www.Facebook.com/CharlotteCountyFlorida.

Several new senior-level staffers joined the county late last year, including new legislative and capital projects managers and a facilities director. They will be valuable additions to the management team.

On a personal note, the new year marks the beginning of my transition to retirement after more than 20 years serving Charlotte County. The County Commission has designated my longtime colleague and current deputy county administrator, Hector Flores, as my replacement. These next few months, we will be working on a smooth leadership transition, emphasizing the organizational culture of public service and implementing the commission's strategic plan and county vision. It has been an honor to serve alongside my county colleagues these many years and I feel fortunate to have played a role in the progress we've accomplished.

I wish you all a happy new year and hope yours is filled with good health and good fortune.

Ray Sandrock is the Charlotte County administrator. Readers may reach him at Raymond.Sandrock@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.