

Charlotte County update for 1/15/20

Charlotte County experiencing a building boom

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

Charlotte County issued 223 single-family residential building permits in December 2019. With the 162 issued in November and the 184 issued in October, that's 569 new homes starting in the last quarter of 2019. In the coming months, when those homes are completed, we'll be welcoming more than 1,000 new neighbors to Charlotte County.

We're seeing increases in building permit activity across the county in every category: gated communities, subdivisions and infill in mature neighborhoods. The growth is coming from large developments like Babcock Ranch, subdivisions like South Gulf Cove, apartment complexes like the Springs at Port Charlotte and infill construction in areas of Port Charlotte, Deep Creek, Rotonda, Englewood and more. Neighborhoods where the last new homes were built more than a decade ago are seeing lots cleared, slabs poured and block laid for new homes.

Commercial activity is also robust, with hotels, retail stores, restaurants, storage facilities, auto repair shops and service stations in the pipeline, under construction or already open for business. Subdivisions that suffered during the housing bust and financial crisis of 2007-2008 are reemerging, such as Heritage Landings (the former Tern Bay) on Burnt Store Road. New subdivisions are being platted on long-vacant property, including adjacent to the Murdock Village Community Redevelopment Area, fulfilling another goal of the village vision to invigorate the area between U.S. 41 and State Road 776. West Port and Lost Lagoon in Murdock Village will bring even more commercial and residential development.

Growth brings challenges county staff are working hard to anticipate and address, including services such as utilities, transportation, recreation and public safety. The state is also planning for the current and expected influx, with public input meetings about the widening of Harborview Road and a visioning process for U.S. 41., which is already seeing the addition of multiuse paths in Port Charlotte to improve pedestrian and cyclist access and safety. The federal government is working on new flood maps that will determine insurance and building requirements in coastal areas of the county. Meetings set up by the county drew hundreds of residents seeking information and giving feedback.

Looking further into the future, the county is working with the Census Bureau to ensure it has the workers it needs to achieve as complete a count of our population as possible in the upcoming Census. A report last week showed hiring in Charlotte County is near 70% of the bureau's goal, while every other county in Southwest Florida trails that figure by 20 or more percentage points. Millions of dollars of federal funding for social services, infrastructure and education are determined by Census counts, in addition to business location decision driven by population data. We encourage all residents to respond to Census questionnaires. We will be partnering with the bureau to ensure residents are aware of the key dates and deadlines.

It's an exciting time for Charlotte County. Longtime residents can tell you the myriad changes they've witnessed and we are living through another transformational time that will bring more.

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