

Charlotte County update for 11/9/16

County approves agreement for Murdock Village

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

The Charlotte County Commission on Tuesday approved a purchase and sale agreement with Private Equity Group for 452 acres of property in the Murdock Village Community Redevelopment Area.

The agreement puts in motion a development that is projected to create up to 2,400 residential units, 200,000 square feet of retail and commercial space and a 150-room hotel. Studies conducted by the county's consultant and PEG projected nearly \$92 million in annual economic impacts from jobs created and economic activity. Over a 20-year period, construction activity is projected to be \$396 million and create 378 permanent jobs. Also during that period, the tax revenue to all county taxing districts is projected to be \$151 million.

The agreement commits the developer to making road and infrastructure improvements to O'Donnell Boulevard, which will connect U.S. 41 to State Road 776. The agreement also requires the developer to construct multiuse paths throughout the property, which will connect to North County Regional Park, and demolish and remove degraded roadways within the parcel.

For more information on the project, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs) in the left-hand menu.

Tourist tax

Tourist development tax revenues collected during fiscal year 2015-2016 exceeded fiscal year 2014-2015 by 6.28 percent. Nearly \$3.8 million was collected in FY '15-'16 and almost \$3.6 million was collected the previous year. This is the most TDT revenue Charlotte County has collected during a fiscal year since the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau inception in 1997.

Each year, the bureau conducts marketing, sales and promotional campaigns to increase awareness of and visitation to Charlotte County. In addition to generating economic contributions, the bureau is also focused on developing ecotourism and soft adventure travel. These popular low-impact industries enable the county to preserve the invaluable natural resources that contribute to its ecological and economic health, while distinguishing the area and drawing visitors.

During calendar year 2015, Charlotte County welcomed an estimated 395,800 visitors and tourism generated an estimated \$345 million in direct expenditures and made an estimated \$526 million economic impact in Charlotte County.

Floating docks

Installation of the floating docks at Port Charlotte Beach Park was recently completed. The low-profile docks built by a non-profit sailing organization were funded in part by a \$50,000 grant from Charlotte County. The docks provide water access for disabled and able-bodied boaters and include base fittings for lifts that enable disabled persons to be lowered into vessels safely.

The project included seawall and sidewalk repairs, as well as a wheelchair-accessible ramp to the docks. Other floating docks built with the grant are already in place at Laishley Park Marina and the Punta Gorda boat basin near Gilchrist Park.

Food drive

In coordination with the Florida Department of Health and Charlotte County Human Services, Charlotte Academy teacher Katie Forbes' class conducted a month-long Healthy Food Drive to provide nutritional assistance to needy families with young children.

"In the field of health and human services, we recognize the role good nutrition plays in physical health, social and emotional development," said Lori North, family services manager for Charlotte County. "Simply put, students who eat healthy perform better in school."

Many families throughout Charlotte County struggle just to make ends meet and when it comes to food, the healthy choice is sometimes the more expensive choice.

The recipient of the donated items is Accel Academy in Port Charlotte. Many of the academy's families are low-income and receive scholarships through the Early Learning Coalition. According to Director Tiffany Profita, the donations came at a perfect time and will help Accel replenish their food pantry. The healthy foods were delivered on Oct. 31.

Training session

The Senior Services Division hosted the 4th annual PSA8 Regional Case Management Training for all lead community care for the elderly provider agencies and the Area Agency on Aging for Southwest Florida. All required Florida Department of Elder Affairs training topics were covered. In addition to meeting training requirements, regional participants were able to collaboratively communicate through team building activities.

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