

## Fish goes off to college

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# OUR TOWN

## City's team sees first fruits

### Ribbon-cutting event a sign of progress

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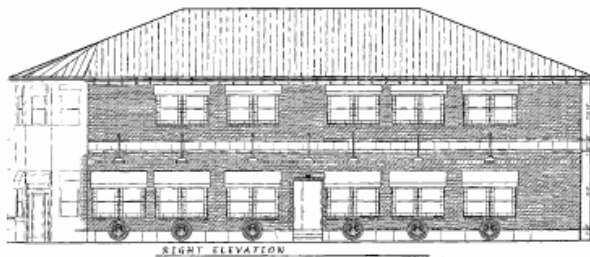
PUNTA GORDA — For Roger Kress and other Team Punta Gorda members, the ribbon-cutting Thursday morning for the new Thomas Ryan Associates building was special. Kress, president of Team Punta Gorda, saw the building as the first sign that the grassroots group's Citizens' Master Plan is becoming a reality.

"It's been less than a year since our (workshop), and

it's just impressive that the town is moving that quick," Kress said, referring to Team Punta Gorda's public workshops in March where residents and property owners gave their input to Jaime Correa, Knight Professor of Community Building, University of Miami, whom Team Punta Gorda hired to lead the planning effort.

Team Punta Gorda rose from the devastation caused by Hurricane Charley on

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Provided by Thomas Ryan Associates.

This architectural rendering shows how Shannon Gadbois, owner of the Thomas Ryan Associates real estate firm, wanted his building to capture old Punta Gorda. Gadbois and his consultants, DCF Design Corp., worked with Team Punta Gorda and city planners into incorporate an old feel to new construction.

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Aug. 13, 2004. In the wake of the hurricane, Kress and others wanted to put together a master plan that might help to coordinate and guide the rebuilding of the city.

"And it's just beginning," Kress said.

The Thomas Ryan building on the 200 block of West Marion Avenue incorporates the new urbanism and historic Punta Gorda architectural look espoused by Team Punta Gorda's master plan and city planners' goals for the historic downtown.

When Hurricane Charley hit the city last year, the storm significantly damaged the building that Thomas Ryan owner Shannon Gadbois was leasing and which had to be demolished. Even before the storm, Gadbois said he was trying to buy the property, but the storm gave him the opportunity to start fresh.

"You can't build a historic building, but we wanted to make this a landmark building in Punta Gorda," Gadbois said. "It is an investment, so I had to look at the bottom line, but I plan to be here a long time."

The \$2 million project calls for a two-story building that will echo the style of the Princess Hotel, a 1940s-era brick structure in downtown Punta Gorda. Gadbois is even going to try to purchase bricks from older buildings to give his new building an old, historic feel.



Provided by Punta Gorda Community Development Department

This photo shows downtown Punta Gorda along West Marion Avenue in the 1940s. On the right is the Princess Hotel, and Shannon Gadbois, owner of Thomas Ryan Associates, wants his new building to reflect the look of the hotel.

"We are just going to put a modern twist to it," Gadbois said, explaining how the base of the building will be ringed with granite.

Gadbois added that he wanted to build a building "right," so that it could withstand a hurricane.

The new building will be 10,000 square feet, 3,000 square feet larger than the building destroyed by the hurricane. His firm will occupy 7,000 square feet, and the rest of the space will be leased. Gadbois hopes construction will be completed in June.

Gadbois working with Team Punta Gorda is not surprising, since he was among

its founding members. However, he also said he worked closely on developing the plans with the city's Chief

Planner, David Hilston. "From (Hilston's) guidance, what the city wanted Punta Gorda to look like and looking at (old photographs) of what was here, (Correa) said

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— Shannon Gadbois,  
Thomas Ryan building owner

having a "working partnership." "It's nice to see a groundbreaking," Hilston said. You can e-mail Steve Reilly at [retilly@sun-herald.com](mailto:retilly@sun-herald.com).