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Charlotte Sun Editor: Lorraine Schneebeger



DAVID MORRIS

IN YOUR CORNER

\$40 routine car maintenance costs senior \$2K

I am 85 years old. I stopped at Tires Plus in Englewood at 8:30 a.m. for a 'special' they had in a (filler) for \$19.99 and an oil change. I have a 2000 Mercury Marquis with a total of 12,049 miles on it.

Focus on the waterfront

Plan could bring beach area downtown, extend the Harborwalk

By NEIL HUGHES
STAFF WRITER

If TEAM Punta Gorda its way, the city's waterfront stretch from Cooper Street to Fishermen's Village will eventually all become part of the area's defining character.

Members of the private community organization pitched to the Punta Gorda Community Redevelopment Agency Wednesday a master plan to rejuvenate the long

piece of property along Charlotte Harbor, most of which is already owned by the city.

Mike Wilson, of the TEAM Punta Gorda Maritime Development Committee, said the city's control of a majority of the waterfront places it in a unique position.

"There are no burdens caused by industry or warehouses or docks that need to be torn down," Wilson said.

The organization's proposal

would extend the Harborwalk, currently planned to connect the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center to Laisley Park, from Cooper Street to Fishermen's Village, making it the centerpiece.

It would also restore a long-forgotten sandy beach area near the Best Western Waterfront.

The ambitious plan, presented Wednesday complete with detailed sketches and very

specific aspects, also comes with a realistic time frame of 25 to 50 years of staged development.

"We hope it takes significantly less time than that," Wilson said.

Bill Pantsari, also of the maritime development committee, showed photos of the Punta Gorda downtown waterfront in 1902 and 1928.

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WATERFRONT: TEAM Punta Gorda long-term plan focuses on greatest asset

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They featured a full, sandy beachfront that has since been eroded.

Members of TEAM Punta Gorda spoke with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection about recreating the beachfront, but they were told approval for such a

project would have to come from Florida's governor.

But if the city pursues the beach as the restoration of a naturally occurring phenomenon, it has a much better chance, Pantsari said.

"We have a very strong argument to present to the governor under such

circumstances," Pantsari said.

The master plan would make phase two of the Harborwalk extension from the Best Western Waterfront to Fishermen's Village. Phase three would go from Laisley Park to Cooper Street.

Other possible additions include shade structures

every 100 feet, drinking fountains and bathrooms.

Members of the CRA were supportive of the proposal following Wednesday's presentation.

Mayor Larry Friedman asked the city manager and staff to take the master plan and "expeditiously" bring it back for a vote with associated time

frames and funding. All of the City Council members also serve on the city's CRA.

City Councilman Harvey Goldberg said a master plan would go a long way in ensuring consistency for the future of downtown Punta Gorda.

"At least it gives us a direction and a framework

from which to work and from which to plan," Goldberg said.

"If you don't have a framework and a guide, you can just go in any direction and get lost and have a very fragmented community which is contrary to the area that we want right now."

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