

Where we're going may not be what you think

It's happening on the harbor! So many projects have been completed. The town is buzzing with activity. Both young and old alike find reasons to visit and recreate in a charming spot on the south side of Charlotte Harbor or the Peace River, depending on where you think that wonderful body of water changes from one to the other.

Yet, we never improve if we don't expand our horizons. A Team Punta Gorda visioning session on Nov. 13 indicated the need to continue our efforts and reach out into other parts of Charlotte County. Punta Gorda isn't an island; rather, we're a community that has many interdependencies with surrounding areas. We want the Charlotte Harbor community to thrive. We hope their vision of a Gateway Park at the Harbor's northern edge becomes a reality. We want to see the positive effects of

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change ripple northward along the Iamiami Trail. The same logic applies in all directions from the little city that could — and did!

Urban Planner Jaime Correa provided thought-provoking considerations for future planning at Team Punta Gorda's annual meeting on Nov. 10. How well will our area fare as our civilization changes in the coming generations? While Team is a non-partisan organization, we are open to considering the implications of some of the changes Correa discussed. Our role is to educate and inform, then the citizens can decide.

Consider, as the cost of fuel continues to escalate over the coming generations, where will people decide to live? In

major cities, there is already a trend to move back to the central city to live in a more walkable environment. People will want to live where they can easily access all of their needs, perhaps within blocks of home.

Consider, alternate means of transportation, like the bicycle, won't be just a fun thing to do but perhaps be a mode of getting from one point to another. Punta Gorda is already actively developing a network of multi-use recreational trails that will not only provide an exercise venue but a safe lane of transportation throughout the city. The most progressive cities have bicycle lanes to help autos and bicycles co-habitate. Sidewalks to

improve a community's pedestrian-friendliness are another imperative.

Consider, transforming our thinking from consumption to conservation. How do we become a self-sustaining community? How can we use potable water only for drinking, food preparation, and other necessities and re-use grey water to nourish our landscape? Some communities can do this because they were designed that way. It's worth our consideration.

Consider, community gardens are already emerging throughout the United States as a way for people to convert lawns and park areas into productive terrain. If we're going to water it anyway, why not grow food we're going to eat? The City of Punta Gorda, Team, and other interested citizens are working on this concept now. What about Florida-friendly landscaping? There are many alternatives to grass lawns that

conserve resources and are a lovely addition to the landscape. The Charlotte County cooperative extension offers considerable information on this topic.

You'll be hearing more from Team as we consolidate all of the input from our recent planning sessions. Our journey is just begin-

ning. If you'd like to join Team in this process contact us at team@teampuntagorda.org or 941-637-TEAM. Find more information about Team at www.teampuntagorda.org. Team is honored to have been selected as the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce 2009 Non-Profit Business of the Year.