

Congratulations, Parkside! You're off to a great start

Parkside? Where is Parkside in Charlotte County? This will make a good trivia question until we get the word out. The answer: this is the new name for the area of Charlotte County we've been calling the Medical Arts District. Kudos to Team Port Charlotte who knew they wanted a new name for the district that reflected the potential of the community and recommended Parkside.

Team Port Charlotte also realized they wanted a Citizens' Master Plan that similarly reflected the community's concerns and visions like Team Punta Gorda did in the spring of 2005. When Team Punta Gorda



Nancy Prajke

completed its Citizens' Master Plan, the organization gifted the plan to both the City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. As the City of Punta Gorda cited in a proclamation in November 2010, five years later, the Citizens' Master Plan 2005 is a document of great historical significance. It set the pace for recovery. As FEMA cited, the recov-

ery was unprecedented because of the involvement of the community and its citizens.

If Punta Gorda is any example, what may be in store for Parkside is very encouraging. Their plan calls for a total of three parks, one more than they currently have, with enhancements to make them safe, attractive, and a destination for all to enjoy. It also describes a series of pocket parks along an intricate framework of pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly pathways that meander throughout Parkside connecting neighborhoods and setting the stage for active lifestyles. Plans also call for the accommodation of golf

carts, too. I like the sound of this already.

You'll be glad to know that Charlotte County's staff incorporated significant citizen input into the plan that we see today. It will become the basis for decision making, further planning, and many collaborative projects between the County, Team Port Charlotte, and other groups like Team Punta Gorda.

The best news of all is the County Commissioners listened to the citizens. They voted to adopt the name Parkside and approve the Citizens' Master Plan at their Aug. 16 meeting. The commissioners also instructed staff to determine how they might fund

projects that are needed to fulfill the Parkside plan. There is much work to do but the future is bright. You'll find the Parkside Citizens' Master Plan at charlottecountyfl.com and select Parkside CRA/Medical District.

We commend the Parkside citizens and businesses for actively getting involved, forming a new 501(c)(3) non-profit, and making their voices heard in the development of the plan for what is the heart of Charlotte County. We need this for the well-being of our county. We anxiously look forward to that day in 2016 when we can look back over what has happened in the last five years

and say, "Wow!"

If you are interested in participating in Team Port Charlotte's Parkside activities, contact them at teamportcharlotte@gmail.com. We also welcome you to become a Team Punta Gorda volunteer. From office volunteers to committee members, we'll find a rewarding opportunity just for you. Keep tabs on Team Punta Gorda through TEAM Talk, our monthly e-newsletter, by signing up on our website at www.teampuntagorda.org. We're also on Facebook.

Nancy Prajke is CEO of Team Punta Gorda. Readers may reach her at team@teampuntagorda.org or 941-637-TEAM.