

Punta Gorda poised to shine in the future

Several years ago a developer told me that with all the revitalization that has been completed, we're a community at the tipping point. We're ready to reach the next level of our community's evolution. We're poised to shine in the light of progress. That was music to my ears and such positive reinforcement.

Then came an economic downturn. I don't need to detail what has happened over the past several years. Despite the difficulties brought before us, many of us are choosing to greet these challenges as bumps in the road or perhaps a detour. We know we'll reach our destination although the trip might be longer than first planned. We're choosing to celebrate successes that prove something is happening.

Just in the last three



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years, during economic challenges, we've seen a myriad of projects come to completion. We're enjoying new shopping areas, new multi-use buildings, renovated buildings, new building facades, enhanced landscaping, airlines flying into Charlotte County, new office parks, new retail shops, new restaurants, companies locating distribution facilities here, new multi-use recreational paths, new linear parks, a new performance stage, a rebuilt marina, a new event and conference center, new hotels, a new church,

a new Artisans' Atelier, a new award-winning parking garage, new farmer's markets, renovated historic buildings, a new entrepreneurial academy, a new CRA, a new Team Port Charlotte, new community events, and the list could go on and on.

Even with this vast list, more change is coming. Despite tough economic times, citizens continue to be filled with the hope and expectation of the possibilities. We continue to put the building blocks in place, as individuals or through the collaborative efforts of private enterprise, civic groups, and government leadership. One example is how Southwest Land Developers is fulfilling the request of the County's working group by offering a land swap arrangement between themselves and Charlotte County. Team

Punta Gorda's Board reviewed and supports this proposal as one step in both providing shovel-ready land to prospective businesses at no cost to the taxpayer while beginning a process of turning Murdock Village into a "diamond in our own backyard."

While Team Punta Gorda's initiatives have had economic impact, we're increasing our direct involvement in economic development. We're proud to be serving on the board of Enterprise Charlotte Economic Council and have several other activities in progress in the very formative stage. We'll detail this in future columns.

We're also showcasing Charlotte County on March 19 by co-hosting the Pedal and Play in Paradise Bicycle Tour with Isles Yacht Club. We're offering five bicycle rides from 62/30/15-mile,

a 7-mile Mystery Tour, and the ever-popular City Manager's/History Tour co-led by City Manager Howard Kunik and local historian Captain Louis Desguin. Get a pre-registered rate of \$30 and you'll be amazed at the extraordinary value you'll receive and have a great time. The ride benefits the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and Team Punta Gorda's bicycle-friendly community initiatives. Check out Pedal and Play in Paradise on Facebook or on the web at www.pedalandplayinparadise.com.

We applaud those who are helping our community create positive change. It truly takes an entire County to make it happen. Everyone can play a role. For some it means being a part of economic and business development-generation activities. For some it means opening that busi-

ness that was on a "bucket list." For some it means patronizing local businesses to keep the Charlotte dollars recirculating. For some it means joining a civic organization's or non-profit's committees. For some it means keeping your neighborhood attractive. Your participation is key to keeping this ball rolling.

To be more involved in Team Punta Gorda's happenings, contact us at 941-637-TEAM or e-mail team@teampuntagorda.org. Check out our website at www.teampuntagorda.org and sign up to receive our e-newsletter, TEAM Talk, right on our home page. We welcome your participation.

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