



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Economic Development

WEEKEND WAVE

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Friday Economic Roundup

Live Oak Point offers new waterside attraction

By GARY ROBERTS Staff Writer Charlotte Sun

CHARLOTTE HARBOR - For the last 10 years, Joe Ward, with fishing rod in hand, risked the tortuous trail across ripped-up concrete and deep crevices to climb onto a crumbling seawall at the foot of the northbound U.S. 41 bridge. His goal was to drop his line into a deep pocket of water just offshore, where the big fish reside.



It has taken five years to bring to fruition the first phase of the Harbor Walk project, where a dedication ceremony was held Thursday. The next step will include the addition of a fishing pier and water taxi dock facility,

Today, he walks along a pedestrian promenade, past a shaded seating areas, to his favorite fishing spot, adding the new Live Oak Point park to the day's rewards.

"There were broken holes in the ground and a rickety old road," he said at Thursday's dedication, with his rod close by. "Now I have a place to fish and relax. It's fabulous. Can you think of a nicer place?"

Charlotte County commissioners, joined by members of the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee and other officials, hosted a ribbon-cutting and dedication Thursday for the county's newest waterfront park.

along with a raised boardwalk crossing underneath the bridge.



The Harbor Walk project offers pedestrians and bicyclists a safe and continuous trail from Chester Roberts Park on Melbourne Street in Charlotte Harbor to Laishley Park in downtown Punta Gorda.

The phase-one improvements of the Harbor Walk project include a paved pedestrian promenade and plaza, smallboat launch, bathroom facilities and parking for 59 vehicles. Extensive landscaping, including 26 live oak trees, and decorative lighting add even more beauty to this waterside retreat.

"We're part of a vision that's really starting to take place," Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch said.

Future phases will create a safe connection between the east and west sides of U.S. 41 all the way to Bayshore Live Oak Park, along with a boardwalk, fishing pier and a water taxi dock facility. Construction on this phase is tentatively scheduled to begin later this year.

"Our goal is not to mirror Punta Gorda, but have a draw on this side as well," County Administrator Ray Sandrock said. "When you drive by, it really looks nice. We've come a long way and this is just the beginning."

County officials are still wrestling with how best to resolve the ragged appearance of the privately

owned, vacant land between Live Oak Point and Melbourne Street, Sandrock said.

The newly christened Live Oak Point not only represents the start of a new era in opening up the harbor to visitor access and recreation, but also marks a return to the past. Charlotte Harbor Town, established in 1862, was first called Live Oak Point and later Hickory Bluff.

"This was the site of the area's first settlement," said Michael Haymans, a Charlotte Harbor CRA advisory board member.

In the early 1920s, it was also the launching point for the original bridge crossing Charlotte Harbor. This bridge became obsolete as soon as it was constructed, however, since it was just one lane.



A new seawall is just one aspect of the Harbor Walk project, which eventually will connect the east side of the northbound U.S. 41 bridge to Bayshore Live Oak Park on the west side.

The \$2.9 million Harbor Walk Phase 1A project involved funding from the Florida Department of Transportation, the West Coast Inland Navigation District, the Boater Improvement Fund, Charlotte County and the Charlotte Harbor CRA, which will be paying for most of the improvements through tax increment financing.

"It's a great day for the Charlotte Harbor CRA and it's another step in developing this side of the harbor," Commissioner Ken Doherty said.



County officials on Thursday dedicate Live Oak Point, Charlotte Harbor's new waterfront park at the U.S. 41 northbound bridge.

Halfacre builds facility at MacDill

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Military personnel and civilians gathered at a recent dedication ceremony to mark completion of an 8,000-square-foot Florida Army National Guard facility at MacDill Air Force Base, built by Halfacre Construction Co., which is based in Sarasota.

Halfacre was the construction manager and Bhide & Hall Architects was the designer of the building. Halfacre project manager Tom Rees and superintendent Ralph Rush attended the dedication, along with architects E. Wendell Hall and Bryan Sawyer. The Special Operations Detachment - Central (SOD-C) facility includes offices, administrative space and storage space. The building is the sixth project Halfacre has completed at MacDill, including Tinker Elementary School.



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