

## Sunseeker grand opening is a redevelopment milestone

By Hector Flores

I was thrilled to attend the official opening and ribbon cutting of the Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor on Friday. Our community has experienced strong steady growth for a number of years and the resort could bring one of the biggest impacts yet. I'm excited to see the economic effects and the various food options the resort has to offer. Many of the 20 restaurants, bars and lounges are open to the public, not just resort guests.

One of the features of the resort is a publicly accessible boardwalk along the Peace River, an amenity required in the development agreement with the county. The public can enjoy a waterfront stroll from Bayshore Live Oak Park, past Sunseeker and onto the Riverwalk that runs beneath the Collier and Gilchrist bridges to Live Oak Point.

Coming up Whiskey Joe's restaurant will begin construction next to Live Oak Point and Harpoon Harry's Restaurant & Sports Bar and Shops at Bayshore is underway down the street from Bayshore Live Oak Park. The three developments will make Charlotte Harbor a dining and entertainment destination for locals and visitors alike.

The projects fulfill a policy goal the County Commission set nearly a decade ago when it approved the Charlotte Harbor Community Revitalization Area plan. The plan created the Riverwalk Subdistrict, which established density and height allowances based on development parameters. The intent of the new district was to encourage private investment in the area adjacent to the bridges and parallel to the waterfront.

The county added a grass parking lot at the east end of Bayshore Live Oak Park to provide public parking for visitors to the resort. The parking lot opened just in time for the Sunseeker ribbon-cutting. Upcoming improvements include the widening of Parmely Street (next to the KFC) between U.S. 41 and Bayshore Road. This project will include a multiuse path and drainage improvements.

The Charlotte Harbor CRA was established back in 1992. Since then, Bayshore Live Oak Park was developed along the shore of Peace River on Bayshore Road, the Dick Loftus Bridge was built on Melbourne Street with decorative lighting and sidewalks and Chester Roberts Park was developed on Melbourne Street. Central sewer and water lines were installed to enhance development prospects. Live Oak Point was completed in 2017 and the Riverwalk boardwalk was completed in 2019.

Charlotte Harbor is often lumped in with Port Charlotte, but it is actually far older than the General Development Corporation community, having been settled in the 1870s by Civil War veterans. It was originally known as Hickory Bluff. The county maintains the historic Hickory Bluff Cemetery off Howland Drive. The Hickory Bluff Mound historical marker nearby tells the even older story of a sand burial mound dating to the Safety Harbor period (A.D. 900-1725) when the Timucua Indians populated the region.

The new developments mark another major milestone in this historic community. I suspect they won't be the last.

*Readers may reach County Administrator's Hector Flores at [Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).*