



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
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**CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

**F L O R I D A**



## Annual Report 2020

March 6, 2020 was my first official day as County Administrator, and a week later our organization and community was thrust into responding to uncharted impacts on our daily lives due to the coronavirus. The Board's decision to appoint me in September 2019 allowed ample time to put our transition plan into effect immediately to prepare for prior County Administrator Sandrock's retirement in March 2020. I was able to have our Administration and leadership team in place by January 2020 and looking back, this timing was critical to managing the drastic shift we overcame in our response to the virus.



We focused on the safety of our employees and residents by adjusting operations through closures, reopenings and new ways to provide services. Our response was, and still is, a complete team effort.

While many of this past year's accomplishments began under our prior administrator, I am proud that our current team in Administration has been involved with them. I take pride that we were able to carry on the vision, execute the action plans and bring some of the projects and initiatives to completion. For those still in progress or just beginning, I'm confident with our leadership team in place, we will achieve continued success.

Delivering exceptional services will always be a high priority of Administration. This is our Mission and is ingrained into our culture. We have dedicated public servants in Administration and throughout the whole organization. It is my honor to lead them and I'm thankful to have them as colleagues.

— Hector Flores  
County Administrator

*The Annual Report is a report on the state of Charlotte County as required by F.S. §125.74(b)*

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## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S Guiding Principles

- To be recognized as a community leader in quality of life issues.
  - To improve Charlotte County government's morale and employee satisfaction.
  - To increase and enhance the organization's and Charlotte County's productivity and performance.
  - To enhance and improve our customers' satisfaction.
  - To positively change the image of government.
  - To improve communication both internally and externally.
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## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S Strategic Focus Areas

### **Public Services**

To maintain a safe and healthy community by delivering essential services from skilled, professional and dedicated public servants.

### **Economic and Community Development**

To create a business climate that promotes a diversified, growing economy consistent with sustainable growth management plans, environmental stewardship and enhanced quality of life.

### **Infrastructure**

To build and maintain countywide infrastructure that meets our evolving needs and enhances our community appearance, improves public safety and protects our natural resources.

### **Efficient & Effective Government**

To manage fiscally sound county operations with a culture of transparency, accountability, citizen engagement and innovation.

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## *Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners*



**Ken Doherty**  
District 1



**Christopher Constance**  
Vice-Chairman  
District 2



**Bill Truex**  
Chairman  
District 3



**Stephen R. Deutsch**  
District 4



**Joe Tiseo**  
District 5

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# Mission, Vision, Values

Our Mission, Vision and Values guides us all in our decision making, behaviors, and the work we do. Adopted by the Board in December of 2019, the MVV was rolled out to the organization in early 2020.



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## Water Quality

Significant progress has been made on the Board's bold goal to improve water quality. Since the goal was established, a cross-functional team comprised of members of various county departments was formed into the Water Quality Task Force to develop a plan to address the different components of water quality.

It quickly became clear that what staff was proposing was an emerging concept gaining traction in several jurisdictions around the country called the "One Water" approach. This holistic approach envisions managing all water in an integrated, inclusive and sustainable manner to secure a bright, prosperous future for our children, our communities and our country. It also became evident that this was not something the County could do by itself and that there were many other partners working in our area to protect and improve our water quality.

Although outside of the Water Quality Task Force but directly related to water quality and resiliency, staff has been working closely with staff from FGCU's Water School and other jurisdictions across southwest Florida to form the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact. This compact is intended to provide a regional response to the challenges presented to southwest Florida by a changing climate, including impacts to water quality. Charlotte County staff has taken a lead role in developing this compact and drafting a memorandum of understanding to be approved by the three counties and their municipalities in the SWFL region creating and committing to the compact.

On July 14th, 2020, The Board approved the signing of the MOU and in doing so became the inaugural member of the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact.





# Countywide Awards and Recognition

## **NACo Achievement Awards:**

Civic Education and Public Information Category

- Choices and Chances

Parks and Recreation Category

- Home School Physical Education Program
- Kids Fest
- Rec 2U

Personnel Management, Employment and Training Category

- Leadership Development Program
- Team Builder

## **Center for Digital Government**

National Association of Counties Digital Counties Survey Award

## **The Institute for County Government**

County Government Best Practices Awards:  
Leadership Development Program.

## **American Water Works Association Florida Section**

Distribution System of the Year (2020), Charlotte County Utilities

## **National Procurement Institute**

Purchasing Division 24th Annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement

*The division has now earned this distinction 16 times.*

## **Accela Trendsetter Awards**

Civic Hero for Building Communities Award  
Community Development Director Claire Jubb

## **Building Officials Association of Florida, Gulf Coast Chapter**

Building Official of the Year: Ben Bailey

## **Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International "Arian" Awards**

- Campaign: "Outsiders Welcome"
- Campaign: 2019 Visitor Guide "Adventure Journal"

# Water Quality Project

On Jan. 29, 2020, the Charlotte County Water Quality Task Force held a One Charlotte, One Water Assembly. This Assembly was organized by Community Development staff to bring together the community in support and collaboration regarding water quality, conservation and sustainability. We had representatives from the local, state, and federal level with across the board insight and expertise. These individuals with diverse backgrounds were placed in several breakout groups to discuss these topics to further gain perspective on how water effects their business or industry. This was an all-day assembly with about 45 people attending, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.



# Imagine A Day Without Water

Oct. 21, 2020 was Imagine a Day Without Water, a nationwide day of advocacy to raise awareness about the need to invest in water and wastewater infrastructure. Due to the pandemic, all activities were held virtually. On Facebook, we engaged our followers by asking how water has impacted their lives, featured water-usage facts, and shared staff's water stories. It was a great day to imagine how our life would be if we didn't have water.



Together all Charlotte County Utilities' customers



## West County Water Improvement Projects Completion

Construction of potable water main from the Walenda Booster Station to the 5-million-gallon ground storage tank in Rotonda was completed. The Biscayne section of the project was a 16-inch water main for a total of 1.45 miles, from El Jobean Road (SR 776) to Adalia Terrace. The Ingram section of the project was a 24-inch water main for a total of 3.3 miles from Gasparilla Road to the Rotonda storage tank. A water booster pump station was also constructed in conjunction with in the El Jobean Vacuum Station project. The booster station will increase potable water pressure to West County at the Myakka River, improving the overall service to West County properties in the Charlotte County Utilities service area.

## East Port Water Reclamation Stage 5 Reclaimed Water Improvement Project

This project included the construction of a 95-million-gallon reclaimed water storage pond, a new high service pump station, a 1,500-kilowatt emergency generator, and electrical, instrumentation and control improvements. The \$5.25 million project was part of the Phase 3 Reclaimed Water Expansion project that was partially funded by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. This project will help maximize reclaimed water production, storage, and distribution to customers within the Mid and West County Master Reuse Systems.

## Meeting in a Box

In February 2020, the county launched a campaign to spread the word about the new Mission, Vision and Values statements adopted by the County Commission. The Public Information Office created a Meeting in a Box program to help departments reinforce the MVV message in their meeting with employees. Boxes containing meeting guides, MVV materials such as notepads, stickers, pens, and more were distributed to departments. Digital materials, such as lockscreen graphics, posters and PowerPoint templates, were posted to the Connect@Work intranet site.



## Website Redesign

On Aug. 14, 2020, the county unveiled its redesigned website featuring dramatic aerial videos, easy-to-find service functions and a mobile-friendly design. An “I Want To” menu allows users to transact business with the county online, by phone or email or in person. The new website is designed to be equally functional on laptop, desktop and tablet computers, as well as mobile phones.



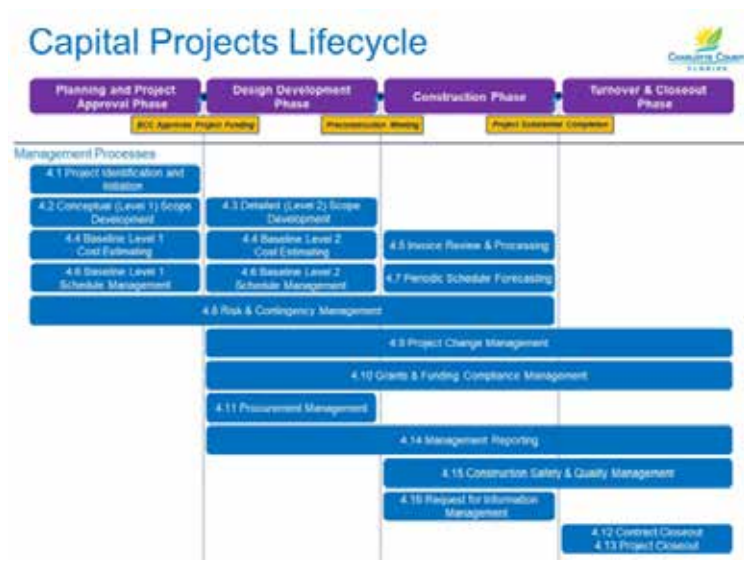
## Joint Information Center

As part of the county's local state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual Joint Information Center was activated. A COVID-19 information webpage was created with links to executive orders, Department of Health updates, testing sites, and more. JIC staff issued news releases, messaged on Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram and Twitter, and responded to incoming inquiries by phone, email, social media and the Charlotte County, FL app. The JIC launched a weekly employee message from the County Administrator to update staff on policy changes, case count information, safety protocols, teleworking options and hurricane season preparedness. CC-TV activated as part of the Joint Information Center and worked with departments to produce videos, such as virtual story time and a sing-along series. Video interviews with staff such as the Emergency Management Director and Health Department Administrator addressed topics ranging from emergency response, testing and case counts and community assistance programs.





# Capital Projects Management



The intent of the governance framework and operation guidelines manual is to standardize the fundamental aspects of project delivery across the county focusing on four phases of project lifecycle: planning and project approval, design development, construction, and turnover and closeout.

Facilities, Public Works and Utilities selected projects to exercise the governance framework. These projects represent a cross section of county projects and are in different phases of project development in order to apply the various aspects of the framework and include any process improvement to the final version.

In conjunction with the development of the governance framework, the capital projects manager introduced quarterly project manager training. This training is used to improve overall project management by:

- Reviewing and focusing on successful project management tools
- Reviewing general provisions of the contract and how to apply them
- Developing communication tools
- Reviewing plans review process
- Discussing lessons learned of completed projects

## Legislative Affairs

Charlotte County was able to maintain key objectives in our state and federal legislative agenda through a global pandemic and another Recession. We were approved for recurring funding for our county's Community Action Team and for our requested funding amount for the Manasota Key Beach Renourishment. These successes are built upon our relationship with leadership within the Florida House and Senate as well as the DeSantis Administration.

At the federal level, we continued our effort to advocate for funding of the Manasota Key Beach renourishment project. We held a secured a key meeting with Rep. Greg Steube's Office and Col. Kelly from the Army Corps of Engineers to advocate for funding of the Manasota Key beach renourishment project and get it placed on the project for the FY20 work plan. Additionally, our county was able to receive Federal funding from the CARES Act bill. Charlotte County is slated to receive \$32,963,338 to combat COVID-19 and balance our counties pandemic and economic response.



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## Information Technology

Information Technology had to respond to a rapidly changing situation when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in mid-March. As Executive orders were released daily and even hourly, changing the response efforts, Information Technology, especially Client Services had to shift gears, moving staff around within county buildings, to an all-out move to a reduction of personnel working in county facilities – creating a home work force. From the beginning, Client Service recognized the need to create as large an inventory of laptops as possible. This was done by pausing all deployments of new laptops, refurbishing those recently recovered as part of the normal refresh program, gathering laptops from libraries and Human Resource's training room. Over 290 devices were mobilized, ranging from reconfiguring existing laptops in the field for home use, deploying laptops from our newly created inventory, configuring and assisting users who were able to take their desktop computers home.

Phone calls to our helpdesk increased 110% as we assisted staff getting set up at home and our submitted tickets increased by over 68% from February to April. We upgraded our firewall to increase capacity and handle the increased connections from home. GIS worked with Emergency Management to create new maps needed for COVID-19 response.

Microsoft Teams has become a critical tool for staff, enabling them to continue working together while maintain safe social distancing. Usage went from just over 10% of staff in February to almost 70% of all users being active in Teams.

## Transit

Transit has made numerous strides this year within its technology operations disciplines. Moving scheduling and operation system software into the cloud. This has increased the speed, standardization of operations while decreasing customer scheduling wait time and improved rider on time performance, allowing for improved the customer service experience on all the vehicles now are equipped with Wi-Fi access for all the riders.

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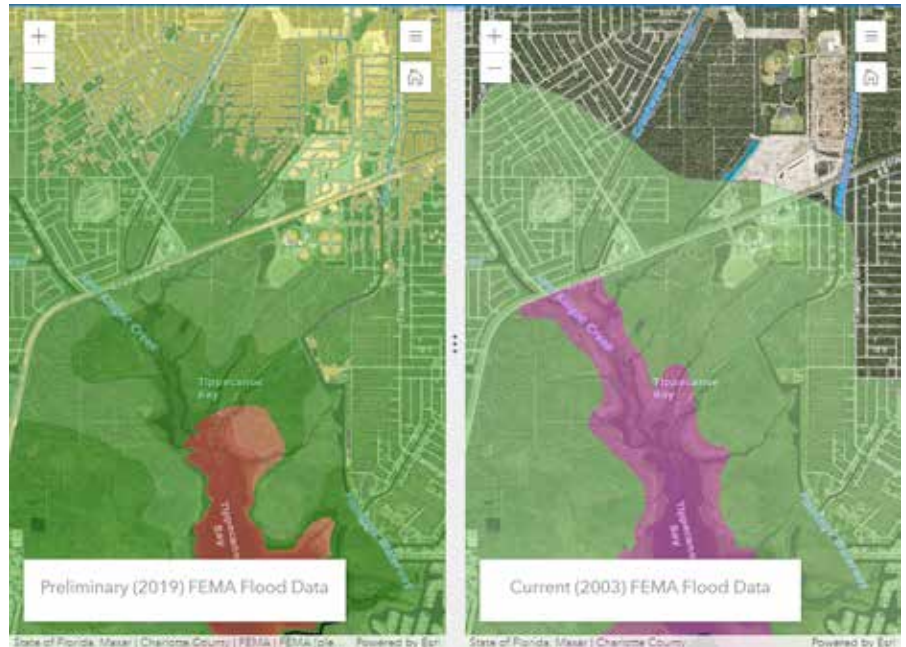
## Budget Process Improvements



As the county entered the second year of the two-year 2020/2021 budget process, Fiscal Services continue to build on its improvement to the budget website by updating the performance-based budget documents. The documents were created during the great recession, had not been updated and morphed over time from the original intent. Fiscal Services updated the format for consistency across departments, ease of use, improved aesthetics and conformance with county branding. They also worked closely with each department to update their core functions, processes and tasks, as well as removing incorrect and outdated information and data. All references to any local, state or federal mandates were reviewed for accuracy and any that were missing were added.

# FEMA Preliminary Flood Maps/Outreach

In December of 2019 FEMA published the new preliminary flood maps for Charlotte County. These maps play an important role in the County's participation and enforcement of the National Flood Insurance Program and it's crucial that this information is available to our citizens. Personnel from FEMA and State agencies partner with the County to facilitate community outreach meetings that allow citizens to view the maps and ask important questions as to how these changes will affect their property. Seeing the need to leverage technology, Community Development staff were able to build an online application that allows the citizens to see current and future changes to their property. Having this simple online comparison tool is helpful to not only the citizens but to developers, contractors, Realtors and insurance agents. The Community Development staff received high praise from FEMA officials for their superb marketing and promotion of these outreach events. Charlotte County had more citizen participation than all the surrounding County's combined.



## Online Permitting

Community Development was fortunate to have been able to implement a new online permitting software called Epermithub in time to handle the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. While our lobby was closed to the public for a period, the department was still able to process, and issue permits to keep the construction industry moving. In May 2020 the department issued 2,521 permits electronically while the lobby was closed which is within 1% of the total issued in May 2019.

By implementing this software, the department has not only cut down on the amount of people entering the building, which promotes social distancing, but also make the process more efficient for the users. Our customers have been able to go through the entire permit process without leaving the comfort of their own home or workplace. Although our lobby has been opened back up to the public, we are still processing more than 70% of the permits online.



# Community Services COVID-19 Response

In response to the pandemic, Community Services has been providing necessary services in the community, operating as the lead for mass care initiatives. This includes:

- Set up, managed and operated the county staging area that received and distributed more than 400,000 items such as N-95 and cloth masks, gowns, gloves, sanitizers and more.
- Transferred staff to support Human Services to operate the 2-1-1 service.
- Prepared and implemented business-specific safety and reopening plans to ensure the safety of staff and customers
- Transitioned to online based programming for Recreation, Library & History
- Assisted in the setup and operation of a County non-congregate shelter, multiple community testing sites, and weekly food distribution centers
- Coordinated with Emergency Management to modify our storm sheltering procedures to address operations in a pandemic, including filming training videos for staff

## **Libraries Curbside Service**

In response to the library closures resulting from the pandemic, the Libraries & History Division instituted a curbside service to allow



staff to continue to directly serve the public. The Division is one of the only library systems in Florida to provide continuous direct service to the public via curbside delivery throughout all phases of the pandemic. Through the curbside service, staff delivered traditional materials such as books and DVDs and also craft supplies to help families participate in the Library & History Division's virtual programs for children. Staff also utilized the service to distribute items such as face masks and financial assistance forms to the community and to help other agencies distribute information and materials. The curbside initiative has been a resounding success with members of the community many of whom have expressed to staff the difference the service has made in helping them cope during these difficult times. As of Aug. 1, 2020 more than 180,000 items were checked out by 27,737 participants since the program started in mid-March.

## **Recreation Virtual Programming**

Join us for some easy games that you can do at home with the kids and family!



With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, Recreation Division staff members jumped in with both feet to keep our community engaged via virtual programming. Facebook Live has been a huge success with staff from pools and recreation centers creating 80 videos that have generated over 97,925 total views from March through June 2020. As a result, we have seen a 12.21% increase in Facebook followers since facilities were closed due to the pandemic.



# Centennial Park Aquatic Center



A 2014 Tier 2 sales tax project, the Centennial Park Aquatic Center began design in October 2018 as a contract extension to the Centennial Park Recreation Center Tier 1 sales tax project. The design was completed in September 2019 with construction starting in September 2019 and completed in May 2020. The facility was planned and constructed adjacent to the Tier 1 Centennial Park Recreation Center project completed last year. The aquatic center includes a 50-meter competition pool with diving well, short and long swim lanes with starting blocks, scoreboard, bleachers, and shade structures.

The pool house includes restrooms with showers and lockers; a pump and control room; office and storage space. Site improvements included additional parking and a community garden. The cost for design was \$216,000 with the cost for construction at \$6,483,424. The new facility benefits the citizen of Charlotte County offering additional programming availability to north county residents, a certified competition pool, and modern, code-compliant construction.



Funded by the  
1% Local Option  
Sales Tax

# Facilities Construction and Maintenance COVID-19 Measures



Facilities Construction and Maintenance continues to work hard during the COVID-19 crisis. Safeguarding employees and citizens continues to be a priority. Facilities distributed hand sanitizer, disinfectants, wipes, and disposable rags to public-facing service departments. Facilities also quickly stocked supplies difficult to acquire when supply chains are broken or overwhelmed during a crisis of this nature. Sneeze guards were installed in preparation for the county's reopening plan. Facilities posted social distancing, facility guidelines, and similar signage at county facilities and were ready to open facilities to the public June 1.



# Leadership Development Program

Human Resources successfully completed the pilot Leadership Development program, creating a leadership pipeline to manage the future of our county's government. The program aims to highlight the principles of servant leadership and instill them in program participants who are ready for managerial opportunities as part of succession planning. This allows the County to plan for filling key positions with a smooth transition; resulting in increased efficiency and continued exceptional service for our residents.



# Fire & EMS

Never have emergency services and hospitals encountered such an evolving threat that required so many changes in our protocols and protective measures as we had in response to COVID-19.

Charlotte County Fire/EMS responded to thousands of EMS calls related to COVID-19. The responses required extensive protective measures for the staff and public. Many patients were extremely sick, but because of the partnerships between Fire & EMS, nursing homes, hospitals and the Health Department, many lives were saved.



# Emergency Management



Charlotte County Emergency Management activated the EOC to Level 2 on March 16 in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Due to the nature of this incident much of the work has been done virtually with efforts focused on the following:

1. Supporting first responders and healthcare providers with coordination of information and resource shortfalls.
2. Ensuring communication flow to internal and external stakeholders by leveraging the expertise of our Joint Information Center. Accurate and timely information has been disseminated throughout the incident via traditional and untraditional means.
3. Our mass care work group was stood up and has been diligently working through a myriad of issues to include: food insecurity, county staging area operations for storing and distributing critical personal protective equipment to both traditional stakeholders and private healthcare facilities, direct coordination with the Charlotte County Community Organizations Active in Disaster group, non-congregate sheltering and hurricane season planning specific to COVID-19.

# Charlotte County Sheriff District 3 Office

The new Charlotte County Sheriff District 3 Office, Evidence Facility, and Impound Yard were combined onto one property off Loveland Boulevard in Port Charlotte. The design for the new facilities started in June 2017 and finished in May 2018. Construction began in October 2018 and finished in March 2020. The District 3 Office constructed at 16,574 square feet, was designed scalable to the District 1 Office in west county and is 50% larger than its counterpart.

The Evidence and Impound Facility constructed at 24,565 square feet brought the two facilities together into one accessible property. The evidence building combined multiple disciplines into one building and provides additional space for expansion. Benefits to Charlotte County with the new facilities include a modern, code-compliant construction; a hardened storm-rated facility with generator backup to operate post storm events; and efficiency in operations to better serve the community.



## COAD

Human Services worked with other departments and community partners to create Community Organizations Active in Disaster. The COAD has created five task forces to assist with community needs. The Financial Assistance Taskforce created a universal application that serves as a single portal for residents which connects the household to eight potential sources of funding. As of Aug. 10, 2020, more than 1.5 million dollars in direct assistance has been provided, serving thousands of residents.

## Affordable Housing

The past year has seen a tremendous amount of progress in setting up a framework for affordable housing in Charlotte County. A key component of any effort to build or preserve affordable homes is the availability of land and funding. Financial tools, such as land donation, impact-fee waivers, low-interest loans, subsidies, gap financing, tax credits, and incentives may make it possible to build housing units at a lower cost, making them affordable to more people. The Charlotte HOME program, adopted by the Board on July 28, 2020, formalizes these processes for the award of incentives.

Twenty-five county-owned vacant and improved properties have been transferred to qualified nonprofits to be maintained as affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee worked for months to pre-qualify local nonprofits and align the properties with their continuing missions.

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund was funded in the amount of \$600,000, starting on FY 20/21 by the Board of County Commissioners on July 28, 2020. This fund will be used to award incentives to affordable housing builders and developers based on a scoring matrix that weighs the number and type of units, term of affordability, programming, and targeted income of residents.



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## Mosquito and Aquatic Weed Control

The division added a used tanker to supply product for larvicide operations in the field making the air applications more efficient. Staff designed and is beta testing a new solar-powered mosquito BG trap that can send data remotely over the cloud to biologists back in the lab increasing efficiency in operations by reducing daily travel time. The division also entered an agreement with Charlotte County Sheriff's Office to contract their pilots to fly for mosquito control.

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## Sheehan Boulevard Improvements

A sidewalk was constructed from the existing sidewalk on Peachland Boulevard to the sidewalk on Noble Terrace. The project also included a connection to a constructed sidewalk at Alton Road as well as utility improvements and a bridge replacement at the Yale Waterway. The existing bridge on Sheehan Boulevard over the Yale Waterway was built in 1968, making the bridge deck and rails substandard. One-percent local option sales tax funds have supplemented MSBU Funds allowing for the inclusion of sidewalks on both sides of the Bridge. The project was completed in June 2020.

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## Fleet

### *Fleet Webpage*

Fleet has launched a webpage to provide departments the needed information for vehicles and equipment. Information now available includes repair status, preventive maintenance, driver tips, vehicle replacement and fueling instructions.

### *Fueling system*

During the past year the County installed a new fueling system with fuel monitoring, real time fuel levels at all major fueling sites and critical needs generators throughout the County, vehicle fuel usage, emission data. This will be a key asset during Hurricane season to ensure all fuel needs are met. Live cameras were also installed to aid with onsite fueling concerns and security.

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## Stormwater Structure

The HAV 5.72 at Bachmann Boulevard Stormwater Control Structure Improvement project provides for the design and permitting of a stormwater control structure under Bachmann Boulevard at the Haverhill Waterway. As a result of the Stormwater Master Plan completed in 1998, it was determined that many existing stormwater control structures were undersized or had deteriorated since being built in the 1960s. The new structure replaced a 60" corrugated metal pipe with a 72-inch reinforced concrete pipe. This project was started in January 2020 and completed in July 2020.





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## Charlotte/Sarasota County Regional Beach Project

Charlotte and Sarasota Counties partnered for a Regional Nourishment Project of the Manasota Key and Knight Island/Don Pedro beaches. This project involved the placement of 1,158,250 cubic yards of sand along approx. six miles of coastline. All the sand was to be pumped from two offshore borrow areas located between 2.5-7 miles offshore. Charlotte County's portion of this project entailed placing 887,000 cubic yards of sand along 4.1 miles of its beaches.

The contract was awarded to Great Lakes Dredge and Dock. Despite delays in receipt of the Army Corps of Engineers permit, the contract was completed in 170 days, 40 days early. The work began on March 2, 2020 and was deemed complete on June 3, 2020. Great Lakes was able to complete all of Manasota Key (578,600 cubic yards in Charlotte, 301,680 cubic yards in Sarasota) in under 60 days and removed the last of the equipment two days into sea turtle Nesting Season. The Don Pedro/Knight Island renourishment was completed in 26 days.

This project was undertaken because of the accelerated erosion brought to light by the residents in 2015. Since the project's inception, the shoreline had eroded significantly and threatened to undermine several properties on the northern segment of the Charlotte County portion of Manasota Key. The placement of the sand not only created a beach behind these residences (increasing property values) but also created a substantial buffer from storm damage. The economic benefit of having a substantial beach for public access, Charlotte County Beach Park, has been well documented. In addition, the residents are not the only ones that benefit from the sand: Charlotte County Natural Resource is documenting record numbers of Sea Turtles this season.

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## Real Estate Services

### ***Surplus Property Sales***

On a periodic basis the Real Estate Services Division reviews county-owned property and advertises surplus parcels for bid. During the past year we were able to successfully dispose of 88 parcels. The sale of these properties generated over \$500,000 in revenue and put these parcels back on the tax roll.

### ***Easements Acquired***

All the easements needed for the Charlotte Harbor Water Quality Initiative Phase II – El Jobean Wastewater Expansion have been acquired. This has allowed Charlotte County Utilities to seek bids, select a contractor for the installation of piping for the conversion from septic to sewer. This septic to sewer project will improve water quality in the El Jobean area.

### ***Habitat Conservation Plan***

This year Real Estate Services attained more than 45 acres, mostly in Prairie Creek Park, for the HCP, which now totals 224 acres.



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# Tourism COVID-19 Response

With meetings, sporting events and a very effective marketing campaign in-play, almost two full quarters of remarkable growth took place since the beginning of the fiscal year in October 2019. The Visitor and Convention Bureau outperformed markets to the north and south in terms of growth almost every month. When COVID-19 began to force closures, cancellations, and a moratorium was placed on vacation rentals etc. in mid-March, the bureau developed a short-term rental reopening plan approved by the security of DBPR. While all domestic destinations were down during this period, Charlotte dropped less than other markets, as we rely more on leisure travel and less on business travel than most comparable destinations. Since April, in-bound travel saw a steady rebound and we saw a 21% increase in tourism development tax revenues over June 2019.

The department launched their COVID-19 recovery plan in focusing on search engine optimization. Our restaurant listing system was overhauled to provide visitors take-out and delivery options via website and mobile app. We started seeing a drastic increase in organic traffic during COVID-19, indicative of pent-up demand. During May 2020, the website had over three times the number of pageviews versus May 2019.

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## Rescheduled Events

As COVID-19 forced cancellations and postponements of events across the country, it was important to salvage as many events as possible to assist our hospitality-related businesses for when venues re-opened and gatherings were permitted. Key events that were able to be rescheduled include the Sugar Bert Boxing National Qualifier rescheduled for Aug. 28-30 and the EVP Volleyball Pro-Am on the same weekend. In addition, Charlotte County benefitted by stepping up to accommodate the Senior Softball USA Sunshine Showdown, originally slated to take place in Lee County. This tournament, which took place June 19-21, resulted in more than \$500,000 in total economic impact and more than 300 hotel room nights.



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## Collegiate Sports

The Snowbird Baseball Classic and SpringFling Women's Lacrosse are two multi-week collegiate events that annually create a multi-million-dollar positive economic impact for Charlotte County. While both events were unfortunately cut short in 2020 due to COVID-19, they were still able to jointly generate more than \$20 million in total economic impact and approximately 23,000 hotel room nights for the area over the four-week period that both events took place.

## USA Today #2 Foodie Destination

Punta Gorda placed second in the USA Today's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards for Best Small-Town Food Scene 2020. Twenty destinations were nominated with Punta Gorda being the only Florida destination included. Nominations such as this help to elevate the visibility of the area through local, regional and national press and social media.