



Historical Background

The Gilchrist Park complex consists of Gilchrist, Alice, Pittman, Berry, and Shreve parks and runs along Retta Esplanade from the PGI Waterfront Hotel until the street ends at the path to Fisherman's Village. The park was deeded to the City of Punta Gorda on November 6, 1914 when the city took the park by eminent domain from the bankrupt Florida Southern Railway Company. The use of the park is governed under Chapter 16 Park Regulations contained in the Code of Ordinances for the City of Punta Gorda. Changes to these ordinances can be made by the City Council. The city maintains the park grounds, boat docks, and launching ramp. The launching ramp is permitted for only hand launched water craft. Plans are underway to make improvements to the park from The PGI Hotel to the current playground and basketball court area. The improvements include replacing the restrooms and pavilions with new structures, relocating the parking, and other beautification steps. The playground equipment will be replaced using a combination of public and private monies. A subsequent phase under consideration is to replace the two buildings located adjacent to the current playground. These are commonly known as the Punta Gorda Boat Club and Bayfront Center buildings.

Punta Gorda Boat Club – The Punta Gorda Boat Club has a long history with the City of Punta Gorda. The club began in 1951 with 56 members and a goal to promote tourism for the City. In 1952 the club hosted the first APBA Regatta with 9000 people attending the event. By the 1960's the club was seeking a permanent home. In 1961 the City agreed to a series of 5 year renewable land leases. The membership raised \$28,000. With this money and many hours of volunteer labor they built the 100 x 150 foot seawall, filled it in, constructed the building, and hand dug the current channel and basin. The building opened in October 1962. In 1981, the lease was changed to a 40 year lease to coincide with an expansion of the building and the membership to more than 100. Additional work on the facility continued through the 1980's and 1990's. The current building is 4230 square feet. In 2012 the City dredged the basin, installed the current floating docks, and assumed responsibility for maintenance of the docks. The Boat Club continues to maintain the building exterior and interior. The existing land lease will expire on April 30, 2021. Changes adopted in 2016 make the lease renewable with the Punta Gorda Boat Club in 1-year increments starting in April 20, 2021, and added a 30-day cancellation clause. The lease documents are maintained by the City Clerk. The City Council approves the lease. The Boat Club membership is open to any current boat owners and currently numbers approximately 310. The Boat Club allows regular use of the building by the Peace River Sail and Power Squadron, Charlotte County Woodcarvers, Punta Gorda Sailing Club, and Peace River Radio Association. The building is available for rent for functions by contacting the Boat Club. The building is accessible only when there is a meeting or function in progress.

The Bayfront Center is currently leased to the YMCA of Charlotte County. The YMCA lease expires in March 2017 and it is rebid annually. The YMCA wishes to remain the primary lease holder.. The lease is approved by City Council. The City Clerk's offices maintain the paperwork. The Bayfront Center was built in 1965. The Bayfront Center formerly housed City offices temporarily after Hurricane Charley and became available to the YMCA when these offices were relocated to the Cooper Street complex. The YMCA runs regular adult exercise classes and summer children's programs at this site. The YMCA subleases a portion of the building to the United States Power Squadron, Learn 2 Sail, and The Peace River Chapel. The building is available for rent for regular and special events through the YMCA. Access to the buildings is controlled by the users. The Bayfront Center is 8520 square feet in size.

Looking to the future – The City Council has asked TEAM Punta Gorda to collect, organize and report on the input received from the community relative to future activities that are desirable to have on the site. The results will be one element included into the next phase of the project which would be conceptual design. This allows people in the community a wide range of thought as there is essentially a "clean sheet" to work with.

However, there are some parameters that will ultimately shape what can realistically be achieved on the site. These include but are not limited to:

- Currently the property is located in a velocity zone rated VE12 and VE13 for winds in major storms.
- In these velocity zones the base flood elevation is measured to the lowest horizontal structural member. This will mean the finished first floor is likely to be 13.5 to 14.5 feet above grade. The space below the floor could be used as storage or parking. A one story structure would likely be in the 25-35 foot tall range as measured from the existing grade to the top of the roof.
- Current Land Development Regulations (LDR's) require at least 30% of the property to be left permeable. The City Council may amend these in the future.
- The building must meet Florida building codes for energy efficiency and accessibility. An elevator will be included. All bathroom facilities must meet accessibility standards and will likely be located inside the building.
- Exterior porches are allowable.
- Technical parking requirements require 1 space for every 300 square feet of interior inhabitable building space. For example, the current Bayfront facility is 8520 square feet. Under current requirements there are 28 parking spaces required.
 - Large gatherings at the Boat Club typically require 50-60 parking spaces.
- Ground level wash down facilities for small watercraft are allowable.