

PUNTA GORDA • FLORIDA



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE PROFILE



Moran, Stahl & Boyer
Site Selection and Economic Development Consultants



Table of Contents

Description	Page
Punta Gorda, Florida: A Unique Life Style Community	1
Community With an Interesting Heritage	2
Reflection of Character	3
Transportation Access	4
Area Workforce Within Twenty Miles of Punta Gorda	7
Major Colleges and Universities in the Region	9
Business Amenities	10
Office Real Estate Options	12
Quality of Life	13

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This profile was prepared by Moran, Stahl & Boyer, a nationally known site selection and economic development consultant, as an objective overview of the available resources in and near the City of Punta Gorda to support businesses seeking to locate to the area. **(Revised by City of Punta Gorda Oct. 2012, Apr. 2014, Aug. 2014 and Nov. 2014)**

Punta Gorda, Florida: A Unique Life Style Community.



“Residents enjoy the relaxed atmosphere while remaining active in the community, in their businesses, and with their family and friends.”

There is a special place on the southwest Florida coast within the Charlotte Harbor area. It is a community where people come from every state and 16 foreign countries for life style. Residents enjoy the relaxed atmosphere while remaining active in the community, in their businesses, and with their family and friends.

Punta Gorda is a place where an upscale home with a boat dock and pool in the backyard are reasonably affordable – either on a canal, on Charlotte Harbor or near the Gulf. The community also provides access to a quaint downtown area with a fusion of Old Florida, classical and contemporary architecture with gardens, waterfront parks, landscaped walkways and great local restaurants.

There has been a substantial investment in parks and trails, a conference center, schools, medical facilities, golf courses and other amenities to support a variety of life styles and business-related activities. There is office space ranging from a traditional downtown setting, to a stand-alone building or a converted historic residence. Punta Gorda’s strategic location at the geographic center of Southwest Florida’s coastal region provides some compelling resources with access to Interstate 75, Routes 17 and 41, three airports, educational institutions, several great hotels, conference center, business services and a business friendly local government poised to help your company make this community its home.



Community With an Interesting Heritage.



“The history of Punta Gorda reflects the presence of a natural harbor, a mild climate and a special character.”



Major development began in the 1950's

The history of Punta Gorda reflects the presence of a natural harbor, mild subtropical climate and a special character. Incorporated in 1887, the City began as a commercial fishing village and a port for shipping local lumber and agricultural



Former Hotel Punta Gorda

products. It has been a destination resort since 1886 when the railroad reached the City and soon after the majestic Hotel Punta Gorda was built as a winter retreat that hosted guests that included Andrew Mellon, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone and Thomas Edison.

The Peace River flows into Charlotte Harbor making it the largest fresh water estuary in Florida. Having access to both fresh water and the Gulf has made it ideal for sport fishing, sailing, boating and other water sports. The area continues to be a popular destination for tourists and seasonal residents from throughout North America and Europe.

In the 1950's, developers acquired land in the area and began digging canals, installing roads and infrastructure, building home sites and selling lots as investments. This was the beginning of a 60-year construction and real estate boom that has softened with the recent recession.

Although southwest Florida is not a frequent target for hurricanes, the City of Punta Gorda had a direct hit from Hurricane Charley in August of 2004. Faced with a serious challenge, City government chose to rally the citizens and working together, used the opportunity to forge a new beginning and developed a plan with a vision for their City's future. They rebuilt the downtown, constructed a new conference center, improved public buildings and office space, built pedestrian trails and parks, radically rebuilt and expanded Charlotte High School and built Punta Gorda Middle School.



The new Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center.

Reflection of Character.



“There is also a respect for the past and an eye to the future . . .”

Punta Gorda took what could have been a devastating blow and made it a catalyst for growth and improvement. There is a special can-do spirit in this community that is now being directed in many different areas to make this a unique place to live, work and enjoy life. There is also a respect for the past and an eye to the future that guides the City in its revitalization.



Preservation of historic buildings and residences including a historic residential district.



The use of gardens and brick walks is incorporated into the landscape.



Parks and trails have been established throughout the community to protect and gain access to natural areas, add to the beauty of the City and reflect the active life styles of the residents and visitors to the area.



Murals are being placed throughout the downtown area to depict a proud and colorful past.

Transportation Access.



Interstate Access

The City of Punta Gorda is strategically located in southwest Florida in the heart of Charlotte County along the south side of the Peace River within Charlotte Harbor. U.S. 41 and U.S. 17 intersect Punta Gorda. The City of Sarasota is located about 50 miles to the north and the City of Fort Myers is 25 miles to the south. Punta Gorda is located just off I-75 with easy access to principle cities within Florida and the Southeast.



Destination	Distance (Miles)
Atlanta	550
Charlotte	670
Jacksonville	295
Memphis	895
Key West	325
Miami	180
Nashville	800
New Orleans	755
Orlando	135
Tampa	100

Air Access



The area has excellent air access through three airports within the region that provide non-stop flights to major cities as noted in the table on the next page. The ongoing travel volume of permanent and seasonal residents as well as tourists supports the flight access and reasonable fare levels. The Punta Gorda Airport (**PGD**), with 7,185 feet of runway, is located just east of the City and has sustained substantial growth in commercial travel in the past five years. It now boasts a Tower that began operating in 2012. The Southwest Florida International Airport (**RSW**) is located 40 miles to the south and the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (**SRQ**) is 65 miles to the north. Airport locations are noted below.



Airlines That Serve Each Airport

SRQ:

- Air Canada
- Air France
- Alitalia
- American
- Delta
- Jet Blue
- KLM
- US Airways
- United

PGD:

- Allegiant

RSW:

- Air Berlin
- Air Canada
- AirTran
- American
- Delta
- Frontier
- Jet Blue
- Silver Airways
- Southwest
- Spirit
- Sun Country
- United
- US Airways
- WestJet



Non-Stop Destinations From Area Airports			
Destination	Sarasota/Bradenton (SRQ)	Punta Gorda (PGD)	SW Florida Int'l (RSW)
Akron-Canton			■
Albany			■
Allentown/Lehigh Valley, PA		■	
Asheville, NC		■	
Atlanta	■		■
Atlantic City			■
Baltimore			■
Bangor, ME		■	
Boston/Worcester	■		■
Buffalo/Niagara Falls		■	■
Cedar Rapids, IA		■	
Charlotte	■		■
Chicago/Rockford	■		■
Cincinnati		■	■
Cleveland			■
Columbus		■	■
Dallas/Fort Worth			■
Denver			■
Des Moines, IA		■	
Detroit	■		■
Dusseldorf, Germany			■
Flint			■
Fort Wayne, IN		■	
Grand Rapids			■
Greenville/Spartanburg, SC		■	
Hartford/Bradley			■
Houston			■
Indianapolis		■	■
Knoxville		■	
Kansas City			■
Lexington, KY		■	
Key West			■
Long Island (Islip)		■	■
Milwaukee			■
Minneapolis/St. Paul			■
Moline/Quad Cities, IL		■	
Montreal, Canada			■
Nashville			■
New York/Newark	■		■
Orlando			■
Ottawa, Canada			■
Peoria, IL		■	
Philadelphia			■
Pittsburgh		■	■
Plattsburgh, NY		■	
Portsmouth, NH		■	
Providence, NH			■
Rockford, IL		■	
Rochester			■
South Bend, IN		■	
Springfield, IL		■	
Springfield/Branson, MO		■	
St. Louis			■
Toledo, OH		■	
Toronto, Canada	■		■
Washington, DC	■		■
Youngstown, OH		■	

Area Workforce within Twenty Miles of Punta Gorda.

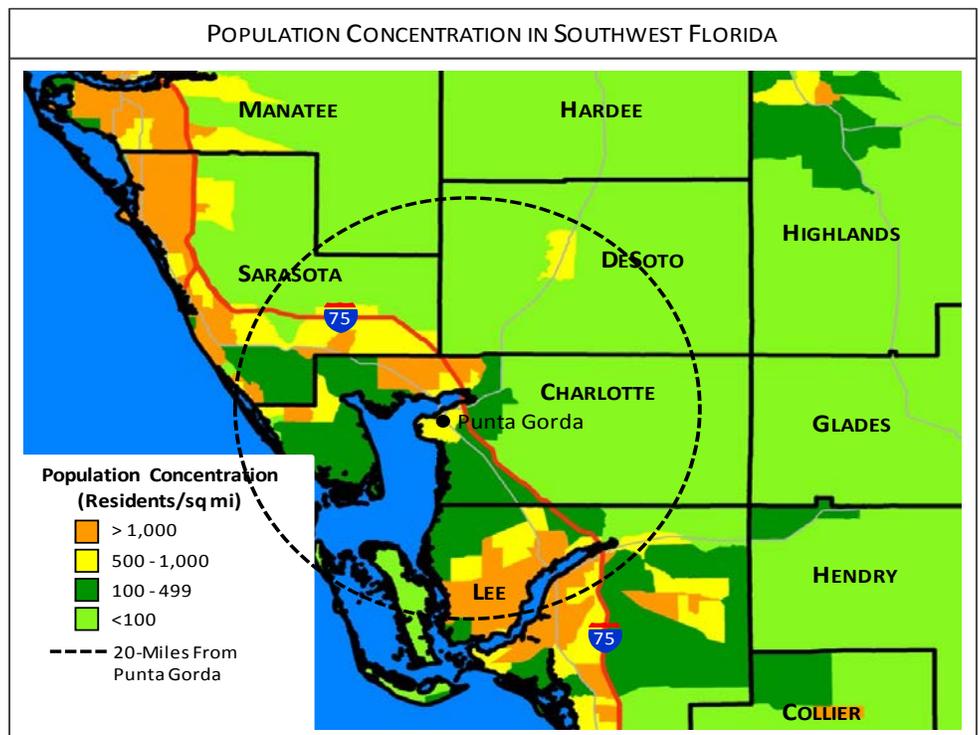


“ . . . the emerging trend for this age group (55+) is to seek part-time employment to stay active and generate some on-going income. This provides the potential employer with a highly experienced work force that brings maturity and commitment at very competitive compensation levels. ”

General Demographics

The workforce within twenty miles of Punta Gorda is over 185,000 including residents from Sarasota, Charlotte, Desoto and Lee Counties (see map below). Demographic statistics of the region and the workforce as compared to the national average are highlighted below. The area has traditionally been a fast growing destination for 55+ age groups that sought retirement. However, the emerging trend for this age group is to seek part-time employment to stay active and generate some on-going income. This provides the potential employer with a highly experienced work force that brings maturity and commitment at very competitive compensation levels. There is also an emerging younger group of individuals relocating to the area for the quality of life attributes that are seeking employment.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF POPULATION WITHIN TWENTY MILES OF PUNTA GORDA		
Description of Parameters	Within 20 Miles	U.S. Avg.
Current Population	425,000+	-
Population Growth (2000 to 2010)	21.5%	9.7%
Age Cohorts:		
• 20-34 years	13.9%	20.3%
• 35-54 years	28.0%	27.9%
• 55-64 years	14.9%	11.8%
Education Attainment of Residents 25+ Years Old:		
• High School Only	34.2%	29.0%
• Two-Year and Some College	32.6%	28.1%
• Four-Year and Above College	20.3%	27.9%
Median Household Income	\$43,500	\$51,900

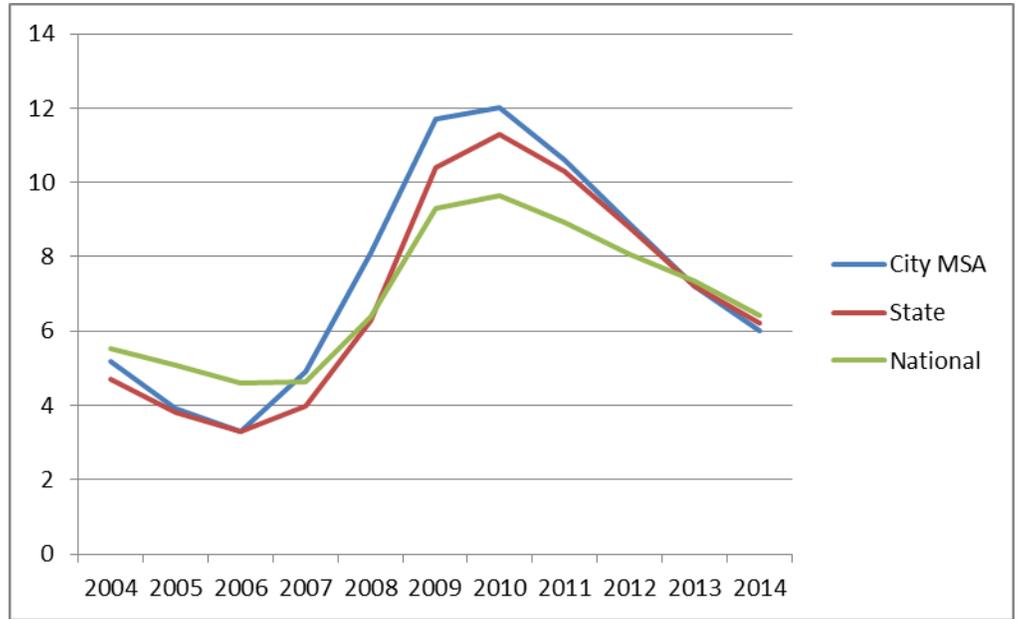




Comparison of Unemployment Rates

The unemployment rate for Charlotte County and the region tends to track higher than the national average. During this most recent recession the region proved to be more volatile than the national average due to the high dependence on home construction and sales as well as tourism. The communities are seeking to broaden their economic base as a hedge against economic swings and provide more diverse job opportunities for local residents.

AVERAGE ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Cost of labor

Overall labor cost in the region about 5% lower than national average with some variations that are driven by current supply and demand.

Job Description	With the Region*		U.S. Average Wage	Region Average as % of U.S. Average
	Quantity	Average Wage		
Accountant	4,030	\$63,758	\$68,690	92.8%
Software Developer	520	\$84,586	\$90,410	93.6%
Computer Systems Analyst	640	\$83,114	\$81,250	102.3%
Civil Engineer	760	\$77,953	\$82,280	94.7%
Customer Service Representative	6,860	\$29,288	\$32,780	89.3%
Team Assembler	2,190	\$27,857	\$29,220	95.3%
Warehouse Laborer	3,980	\$25,716	\$25,710	100.0%

*Region includes Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and Lee Counties based on U.S. Department of Labor Statistics (2010)

Major Colleges and Universities in the Region.

There are over 30,000 students in colleges and universities within the region that are engaged in a wide variety of academic programs. A profile of major schools is highlighted below.



Florida Gulf Coast University

The main campus is in Fort Myers with some offices and classrooms in Punta Gorda. The University continues to expand its capability and currently offers nearly 150 undergraduate and graduate programs in health-related fields, business, engineering, arts and sciences, education as well as resort and hospitality management.

- **Total Enrollment:** 12,000
- **Locations:** Punta Gorda, Fort Myers and other local presence.
- **Selected Program Graduates:**
 - › Business (Bachelors: 464; Masters: 110)
 - › Engineering (Bachelors: 67)
 - › IT/Computers (Bachelors: 5)
 - › Health-Related (Bachelors: 130; Masters: 64; Doctors: 19)



Florida South Western State College – Punta Gorda Campus

The main campus is located in Fort Myers. The Punta Gorda campus was completed in 1997 and consists of thirteen buildings with a total of 152,000 sq. ft. of space. The 35-acre campus offers office space and classrooms to Florida Gulf Coast University and Hodges University. There are currently ~2,000 credit students each semester and enrollment continues to rise. Programs include business and small business management, health-related, paralegal, public safety and education. The school offers Collegiate High for 400 area students to pursue both a High School diploma and an Associate's Degree within a Charter School environment.

- **Total Enrollment:** 16,950
- **Locations:** Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, and Naples.
- **Selected Program Graduates:**
 - › Business (Associates:79; Bachelors: 39)
 - › Engineering (Associates:24)
 - › IT/Computers (Associates:24)
 - › Health-Related (Associates: 345; Bachelors: 82)



University of South Florida – Sarasota/Manatee Campus

The school offers undergraduate and graduate courses in business, education, arts and sciences (including IT), as well as hotel and restaurant management.

- **Total Enrollment:** 1,880
- **Location:** Sarasota (near the Sarasota/Bradenton International Airport)
- **Selected Program Graduates:**
 - › Business (Bachelors: 158; Masters: 12)
 - › IT/Computers (Bachelors: 14)
 - › Health-Related (Bachelors: 3)

Statistics Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Degrees shown are completions within the 2010-2011 academic year.



Business Amenities.

Hotels and Conference Center

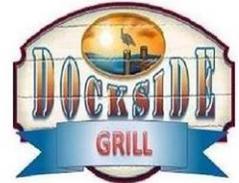
Punta Gorda is also host to three business-class hotels that are well appointed for a business meeting or conference. All hotels are within view of Charlotte Harbor as well as within walking distance of downtown and the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center. The Center has 44,000 square feet of space for meetings, conferences and team building activities that offers the laid back environment of a small town with a high quality of amenities and level of hospitality.



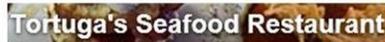


Restaurant Options for Business and Pleasure

Local restaurants offer Asian, European, Hispanic and Classic American cuisine along with fresh local seafood. There are many options for a business lunch or a dinner with family and friends. Dining options include upscale formal rooms and informal outside garden, deck and waterfront settings.



Elena's South Restaurant



Amimoto Japanese Restaurant

Santhinos Restaurant



Office Real Estate Options.

Examples of the types of available office space within Punta Gorda are noted below.



	Sunloft Center
	Price: \$16/sf/yr (Class A)
	Total Space Available: 3,337 sf Minimum: 923 sf Max. Contiguous: 3,337 sf
	Setting: Downtown Mixed Use Building
	Year Constructed: 2008

	Five Star Commons
	Price: \$18-25/sf/yr
	Total Space Available: 28,400 sf Minimum: 13,400 sf Max. Contiguous: 15,000 sf
	Setting: Mixed Use Building near Downtown
	Year Constructed: 2008

	Bal Harbor Plaza
	Price: \$10.50/sf/yr
	Total Space Available: 58,613 sf Minimum: 1,500 sf Max. Contiguous: 11,434 sf
	Setting: Neighborhood Center
	Year Constructed: 1991

	Sunstate Commerce Center
	Price: \$7-10/sf/yr (Class A)
	Total Space Available: 12,400 sf Minimum: 12,400 sf Max. Contiguous: 1,306 sf
	Setting: Commercial Flex Space
	Year Constructed: 1986

Quality of Life.

Cost of Living

The cost of living in the Punta Gorda area is 6% less than national average and comparable with other lower cost Florida metro areas.

COST OF LIVING INDEX FOR SELECTED LOCATIONS					
Location	Overall Index	Housing	Food	Utilities	Health Care
Punta Gorda Area	94	84	104	93	105
Fort Myers, FL	90	68	105	80	102
Miami, FL	115	138	111	91	105
Sarasota, FL	97	89	105	80	102
Tampa, FL	95	89	99	94	97
Orlando, FL	105	106	98	108	97
Jacksonville, FL	94	84	103	99	91
Atlanta, GA	105	128	95	91	97
New York City	159	260	121	142	110



K-12 Education

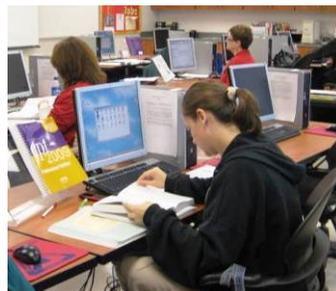
Residents in the Punta Gorda area are located within the Charlotte County Public School System that has an “A” rating and is consistently ranked in the top ten within the state. The overall graduation rate is 85% and ranked #1 for the percentage of students that pass Advanced Placement (AP) exams. SAT scores track above national average. The performance of students at Punta Gorda Middle School and Charlotte High School based on Florida standardized tests (FCAT) is noted below. The schools pride themselves in more than numbers but in the commitment by administrators, teachers, parents and students in making an innovative and engaging environment to get an education.

FCAT TEST RESULTS FOR READING, MATH AND WRITING BASED ON % OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING RATING OF 3+*							
School	Grade	Reading		Math		Writing (Essay)	
		Local	State	Local	State	Local	State
Punta Gorda Middle School	6	72	67	61	57	-	-
	8	54	54	75	68	99	96
Charlotte High School	10	47	37	82	73	95	94

“The schools pride themselves in more than numbers but in the commitment by administrators, teachers, parents and students in making an innovative and engaging environment to get an education.”

*The Florida standardized testing program (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test – FCAT) administers tests for multiple disciplines that are graded on a 1-6 scale. The numbers noted above correspond to the percentage of students that achieved a 3 or above on the respective test.

Within the Charlotte County School System is the Charlotte Technical Center for career-related learning that is available for all ages. Programs cover areas such as aerospace (in partnership with Embry-Riddle University), computer systems technology, medical fields, culinary arts and digital design.



The Punta Gorda Middle School and the Charlotte High School are co-located on a 90 acre campus along with the Charlotte Performing Arts Center. The two schools have a capacity of 3,200 students and are considered one of the top secondary school campuses in the State.

The middle school is an entirely new facility that was completed in 2008.

Charlotte High School includes a portion of the original facility that was substantially rebuilt and expanded. The high school was completed in 2010.

The Campus is LEED Certified by the U.S. Green Building Council at the silver level for the middle school and gold level for the high school – the only high school in the Southeastern U.S. to achieve this status. The certification requires that the facility meet a comprehensive list of environmental and energy standards. The design of the facility includes the use of solar panels for generating electric power.

Punta Gorda Middle School



Charlotte High School



Housing Options and Costs

Housing in the Punta Gorda area ranges from downtown lofts to Old Florida homes in the historic district and contemporary homes in suburban neighborhoods on or near water. Examples of homes that reflect the local market are highlighted below.

Downtown Condo/Loft



Lease Price: \$1,700 - \$2,000/month

Size of Home: 1,801 sq. ft.

Bedrooms/Bathrooms: 3/4

Size of Lot: Multi-Resident Building

Year Constructed: 2008

Historic Home



Price: \$585,000

Size of Home: 2,261 sq. ft.

Bedrooms/Bathrooms: 3/2

Size of Lot: 0.24 acres

Year Constructed: 1900

Access to Water (at various price points)



Price: \$775,000

Size of Home: 3,256 sq. ft.

Bedrooms/Bathrooms: 3/3

Size of Lot: .32 acres

Year Constructed: 1994



Price: \$434,000

Size of Home: 2,397 sq. ft.

Bedrooms/Bathrooms: 3/2

Size of Lot: .26 acres

Year Constructed: 1999



Price: \$285,000

Size of Home: 1,879 sq. ft.

Bedrooms/Bathrooms: 3/2

Size of Lot: .23 acres

Year Constructed: 1982



Community Safety is Rated Very High

Punta Gorda takes great pride in community safety and emergency preparedness and has an individual Crime Rate Index of 2359.6 – one of the lowest in the state. The violent crime portion of the index is also very low. Index crime rates per 100,000 residents for selected counties are noted below.

INDEX CRIME RATE PER 100,000 RESIDENTS		
County	Major City	Index Crime Rate
Charlotte	Punta Gorda	2,321.0
Hillsborough	Tampa	2,571.3
Pinellas	St. Petersburg	4,162.5
Manatee	Bradenton	3,716.7
Sarasota	Sarasota	2,918.6
Lee	Fort Myers	2,577.7
Collier	Naples	1,804.5

Medical Facilities

Bayfront Health Punta Gorda is a 208-bed Joint Commission Accredited and an award-winning hospital with our stroke, orthopedics, and respiratory care earning national distinction. Our commitment to our community is evident in all areas of Bayfront Health Punta Gorda’s care.

Bayfront Health Punta Gorda has an array of specialty services including:

- Award-winning Stroke Care Services
- daVinci® Robotic Surgery system
- Joint and Spine Academies
- Riverside Behavioral Center
- Breast Health Center
- The Rehabilitation & Wellness Center
- Wound Care Center
- Clinical Decision Unit
- Same Day Surgery Center

Bayfront Health Port Charlotte is a 254-bed Joint Commission Accredited full service hospital that serves residents in Charlotte, Sarasota, and Desoto counties. Bayfront Health Port Charlotte staff includes roughly 900 Associates, with over 300 physicians representing more than 40 specialties. Supporting our health care staff is over 200 volunteers who donate thousands of service hours each year.

Bayfront Health Port Charlotte has the only:

- Licensed Obstetric and Pediatric Units, as well as Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, in Charlotte County
- Fellowship-Trained Bariatric Surgeon in Charlotte County
- Physician Board-Certified and Fellowship-Trained in emergency pediatric medicine in the area
- Center to diagnose and treat balance disorders using the Neurocom EquiTest® in the area
- Full-service cardiac center in Charlotte County.



Recreational and Cultural Opportunities

Punta Gorda is a very livable city with trails, parks, recreation facilities and many options to get exercise, relax, test your skills and be creative. It has great weather and access to multiple water venues and activities. The destinations described below are examples of the many options available to local residents and visitors.



BOATING

From kayaks to sail boats and power boats there are plenty of places within Charlotte Harbor and the nearby Gulf to explore and enjoy. The community is host to two yacht clubs and several marinas for the avid boater.

SPORT FISHING



Charlotte Harbor and the Gulf waters offer renowned sport fishing for Tarpon, Snook, Trout, Redfish, Barracuda, Cobia and Grouper.



The Beach

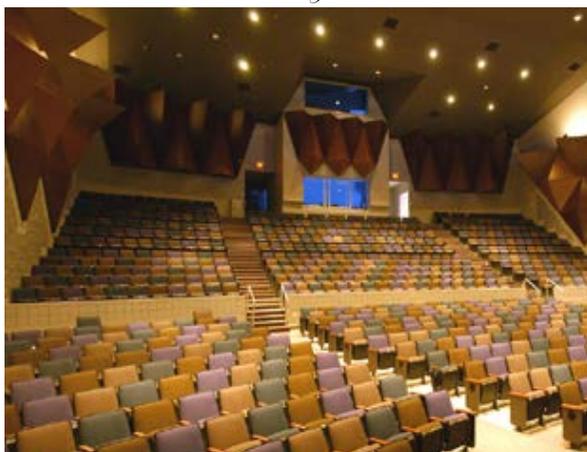
There are a number of public beaches that are easily accessible from the Punta Gorda area.

The Visual Arts

The City has an arts center, multiple galleries as well as other destinations and events to engage in art or to just enjoy observing the final product.



Charlotte Performing Arts Center



This 900-seat theater show-cases local talent in various performances of music, dance and drama. It is the home of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, the Charlotte Jazz Society and Charlotte Chorale.



Blanchard House Museum

The historic home highlights the contributions made in the founding and growth of the community by African-Americans.



Peace River Wildlife Center

A destination for all ages to observe the care, protection and preservation of wildlife.



Military Heritage and Aviation Museum

Local veterans have helped put together an impressive tribute to our soldiers in uniform in multiple wars and theaters.



Public Parks

There are parks located throughout the area that support many different recreation, nature and history-related activities.



Golfing



There are both fun and challenging golf courses throughout the region.

Trails and Biking Facilities

Punta Gorda has an expanding network of trails and a BMX facility for younger bikers.



BASEBALL SPRING TRAINING



The Tampa Bay Rays have spring training just north of Punta Gorda and they are three other training camps within an hour's drive of Punta Gorda.



Muscle Car Museum



The museum features nearly 200 cars from the 1920's on and includes a 1950's style diner.



LIBRARIES

The Punta Gorda Library has proudly served the community of Punta Gorda and outlying neighborhoods for over 100 years. This library is one of four branches of the Charlotte County Library System, and also holds the spot as the second busiest branch in the County. Over 124,000 patrons were served last year alone circulating 353, 189 library materials. Available services include materials for all ages and tastes, online databases and resources, reference assistance, programs for all ages, a meeting room, a public copy machine, sixteen public internet computers with printing capability, and a free Wi-Fi hotspot with plenty of quiet spaces to stretch out. The friendly staff of the Punta Gorda Library are always ready to assist patrons from all over the County, and the world as they spend their leisure time in our fine city.



Hours of operation:

Tuesdays and Wednesdays - 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Thursdays - 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays - 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Marinas and Mooring Field

Three award winning marinas and an 85-ball mooring field are situated along the banks of Charlotte Harbor and the Peace River. The area also has several first-class marine service repair facilities.



Festivals and Special Events

Punta Gorda knows how to celebrate and have fun. Part of their culture is to enjoy the great weather and all the area has to offer. The outcome of many of the events is to raise money for worthy causes – both local and national. It’s also part of their economic strategy that attracts people from throughout the region, North America and the world to some of the events. A sampling of events is noted below.



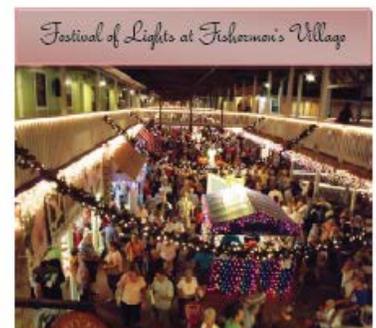
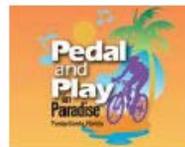
Charlotte Harbor Regatta



“Punta Gorda knows how to celebrate and have fun . . . it’s also part of their economic strategy.”



Holly Days & Downtown Tree Lighting



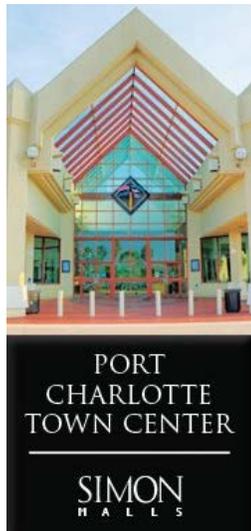


Shopping Venues

The community offers access to different shopping venues that include a revitalized downtown (with ample parking) to the classic malls, a Farmer’s Market and the Fishermen’s Village – a perennial destination for residents and tourists.



Downtown Punta Gorda has a variety of restaurants, specialty shops and even a classic hardware store.



The Port Charlotte Town Center is located north of Punta Gorda along U.S. 41 and has Macy’s, JCPenny, Bealls and Sears as anchor stores along with 100 specialty shops and eateries. There are also other upscale and outlet malls within the region.



There are multiple Farmers’ Markets in the area that provide access to local and regional fruit, produce, off-the-boat sea food, baked goods as well as local artists and other vendors.



Fishermen's Village Waterfront Mall, Resort & Marina is a place quite like no other. Located on a pier, it offers a host of specialty shops, dining, day spa, museums as well as access to harbor cruises, live entertainment, fishing charters, and boat and jet ski rentals. There are also hotel rooms available that overlook the marina and Charlotte Harbor.