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Punta Gorda: Extreme Makeover Celebration

By Christina Hernandez, WINK News
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PUNTA GORDA, Fla. - Five years after Hurricane Charley destroyed a lot of Punta Gorda, people celebrated it's revitalization. It's being called an "extreme makeover" for good reason.

The things people said in Punta Gorda Saturday were all the same. Everyone WINK News spoke with said the revitalization of the downtown area exceeded their expectations, because no one thought so much change could be made in just five years.

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The re-building is being called an "extreme makeover" for the city, and the people who live in Punta Gorda like what they see. They got an up close and personal look on an hour long revitalization tour.

"I never thought they could turn it around this quick, because we did move away after Hurricane Charley, and just came back, and we're thrilled that we did," Juanita Kukla said. "This is beautiful."

Five years ago, many landmarks and structures were destroyed, and about 200 small businesses just disappeared. Now, people living in Punta Gorda say it's better than ever.

"It's great," John Keglovits said. "It's great seeing the recovery, especially economically, like the Crab House. I was just talking to some employees. They've already hired like 90 people. That's great."

Everyone WINK News spoke with remembers Charley's uninvited visit like it was yesterday.

Al Wiker said, "We spent three and a half hours in a closet with two dogs and a cat, and it was kind of, not much fun."

They say it was so bad, they thought it would take years for the city to recover.

"Like a lot of people, I drove around the next day and was just in awe of the damage," Keglovits said.

Most people never expected the city would look brand new in just five years.

"It's wonderful," Kukla said. "It's been a great experience... and how everyone pulled together."

"The city came back well and I give credit to the people that made it happen," Wiker said.

Those people who helped restore Punta Gorda are being called "Charley's Angels."

If you want to find out more about Punta Gorda's "extreme makeover" go to www.pgmakeover.com.

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