

## Historical Timeline – Recommendations from the Historic and Cultural Advisory Board

### **1950s**

1954

Mackle Brothers and their partners purchase approximately 80,000 acres along 14 miles of Tamiami Trail from rancher A.C. Frizzell. Much of this land would become City of North Port.

1956 – 1957

General Development Corporation began selling lots in the area nationally advertised for \$795, only \$10 down and \$10 a month.

1959

Florida Governor LeRoy Collins signed the city charter for North Port Charlotte. (June 18, 1959)

First residents of North Port Charlotte move into homes on East Salford Terrace.

The first City Commissioners were appointed by GDC. North Port Charlotte had no real police department. They had a force of volunteer security guards who received no compensation from the City.

Sarasota County Commission would only approve the incorporation after there were 250 freeholders living in the area. The requirement was omitted from the charter passed by the legislature. Sarasota County gave its approval and House Bill 1547 and 2289 officially created North Port Charlotte on June 18, 1959.

The first newspaper specific to North Port Charlotte, The Beacon, was established.

### **1960s**

1960

First Baptist Church of North Port opened. GDC donated 5 acres of land for the first church in North Port Charlotte in July 1960. It officially opened with 28 members on July 8, 1962.

The American Police Museum Hall of Fame opened on Tamiami Trail to honor federal, state, county, and local law officers killed in the line of duty.

North Port Charlotte Community Center opened by the City Pool (built by GDC in 1954). The pool was the center for community activities.

“Town Center” was located at Biscayne and Tamiami Trail. From incorporation of the City of North Port until the half day kindergarten in 1974 there were no schools in North Port. It was from the Town Center that a pick-up truck would come to drive kids to Englewood schools.

1961

North Port Charlotte Volunteer Fire Department is organized and the first fire truck is purchased.

1962

Mackle Company sold its shares in General Development Corporation

1963

The first mayor not affiliated with GDC was elected, Flavius Wood.

The first female City Commissioner was elected, Thelma Roeder.

1965

Commercial center established in North Port Charlotte Plaza, now North Port Center located at U.S. 41 and Biscayne Drive with the opening of Kwik-Check grocery store, a beauty salon, barber shop, laundromat, and drug/variety store.

Clubs formed in 1960s: North Port Boat Club ('62)

North Port Woman's Club ('62)

Civic Association of North Port ('62)

The Boy Scouts ('62)

Allamanda Garden Club ('65)

United States Coast Guard Flotilla 92 ('65)

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Sun Coast Inc. ('68)

Lions Club of North Port ('69)

## **1970s**

1970

Professional archaeologists were hired by General Development Corporation to survey North Port Charlotte's prehistoric treasures.

Biscayne Plaza held a store front with the First Town Hall, it contained both City Government and the Police Department. The Plaza also had the first hardware store which also served as the first Post Office.

The first traffic light in the City was at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Biscayne Drive. This was also the location of the Home Port Inn, the first restaurant in the City, and North Port Bank, the first bank, in a mobile unit.

1971

City Government was made up of 4 commissioners and a mayor. Each commissioner served as a department head (Public Works, Public Safety, Recreation/Transportation/Education, and Sanitation). Ambulance service began with 10 volunteers and 1 ambulance.

LaBrea Park was the original Little League and Mighty Mites baseball park. It was also the location of the original Scout House.

1972

The first hometown newspaper written and printed in North Port – North Port News – is established.

1973

Concerned parents started a real push for schools in North Port.

1974

North Port Kindergarten starts at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, the first school in North Port.

On April 23, 1974 North Port had approximately 2,800 registered voters, 1,273 voted in referendum to change the City's name from "North Port Charlotte" to "North Port". The vote was 1,128 to 145 in favor of the change.

North Port City Hall opens on North Port Boulevard. It served as city hall and the police department. The first fire department also opened here.

Mighty Mites, the first organized sport for younger children, was established by Joan and Ed Morgan. Carlos Perez was the pitcher.

North Port forms its own Little League team.

1975

First library in North Port opened at 108 E. South Highway Drive – a small one-story home and carport purchased by the Friends of the North Port Area Library, an organization formed by the North Port Women's Club. It became part of the Sarasota County library system.

1977

Temple Beth El building is completed, the first temple in North Port.

Little Salt Spring is added to the National Register of Historic Places.

1978

At least one of the monthly City of North Port Commission meetings started being scheduled in the evening to allow working residents to attend meetings.

The first Christmas parade was held in North Port, now called the Poinsettia Parade – still held today.

Wilfred Churchill Community Education and Senior Center opened.

1979

Michelle Hashem became the first female policewoman.

Clubs formed in 1970s: Kiwanis Club of North Port ('72)

North Port Girl Scout Troop 327 ('74)

American Legion Post 254 ('74)

FISH ('76)

Ministerial Association ('76)

## **1980s**

1980

The first daycare in North Port opened, the North Port Learning Center and Day Care.

The following parks were opened or established: Hope Park, Pine Park, and McKibben Park.

Eugene (Gene) Matthews won a seat on the Sarasota County School Board. Gene promoted North Port schools and has been so far the only North Port resident to be elected to the Sarasota County School Board.

Henry Jakimer began his fireworks show that lights up the night skies at the North Port July 4<sup>th</sup> Festival, Charlotte Sports Park, and more until he retired in 2018.

1982

Beginning in 1982, James and Coleen Henry provided hot air balloon rides. Until 2002, they entertained more than 3,500 people. The balloons were also used as a marketing tool and the slogan "Discover our Pride" was used.

1983

North Port Little League went into the Guinness Book of World Records hosting Steve Wallenda's longest high wire walk at Bob Glasser Field on Pan American Blvd. On March 26, 1983 Steve Wallenda walked 4,000 yards in 5 hours.

1984

North Port Elementary opens on Price Blvd. It was renamed to North Port Glenallen Elementary School and in 1992 renamed again to Glenallen Elementary School.

1985

North Port Ambulance Service and North Port Fire Department are combined.

1988

The City names its first City Manager, James W. Pierce. The following City Departments and positions were formed: Public Works and Sanitation, Planning Director, Roads and Drainage, Parks and Rec, Finance Director, Police Chief, and Fire Chief.

Olde World Restaurant opens and becomes the center for many public meetings and political candidate parties. The owners have been facilitators in major donations to the Muscular Dystrophy Association for many years.

Clubs formed in 1980s: North Port Chorale ('80)

Knights of Columbus North Port Council 7997 ('82)

Business and Professional Women, North Port Chapter ('82)

North Port Area Business Alliance ('82)

North Port Orchestra Inc. ('83)

Shriners Club of North Port ('85)

North Port Area Chamber of Commerce ('86) (replaced Business Alliance)

Rotary Club of North Port ('87)

North Port Area Art Guild ('88)

## **1990s**

1990

GDC filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in April 1990 and later reorganized as Atlantic Gulf Communities which filed for Chapter 11 in 2001. A year later it converted to Chapter 7 and dissolved.

1991

A petition drive started by Bruce "Butch" Erny to amend the city charter and eliminate the mayor's position passed and it became a City Commission of 5 without a Mayor.

The North Port Fire Department was unionized.

Shoppes of North Port opened on the corner of Sumter Boulevard and U.S. 41 with a Publix anchor store.

1992

The City of North Port purchased GDU's North Port facilities for \$16.5 million to regulate the utility.

North Port made National headlines when a storm dumped 20 inches of rain in 6 days. Damage amounted to \$5 million for over 2,000 homes and \$750,000 for North Port streets.

1993

North Port Toledo Blade Elementary School opened. It was renamed to Toledo Blade Elementary in 2002.

Myakkahatchee Creek Environmental Park located at 6968 Reistertown Road opened. It was originally GDC land which was set aside to be used as small ranches.

1994

The South Biscayne Baptist Church moved to a site in the old North Port Mall. The former church is now the Gene Matthews Boys and Girls Club.

The community meeting room at the North Port Library on U.S. 41 was dedicated to Nello Juliano who was instrumental in the construction of the library expansion.

1996

Myakka State Forest, under management of the Florida Division of Forestry and comprised of 8,592 acres is officially dedicated.

Dr. Hans-Jurgen Reichardt, owner of Heron Creek Golf and Country Club donated over 27.5 acres along Sumter and Price which is now the city government complex. A fire station and the George Mullen Center were the first buildings on the site. Named after a former city commissioner, the George D. Mullen Center, a \$1.7 million structure, was hit by lightning two weeks in a row after opening.

1998

People for Trees movement was started by Alice White to fight clear-cutting of lots and to protect the City's tree canopy. She also started an "Eco-Kids" Club.

To ensure the beautification of U.S. 41 as commercial growth occurs, John Zagrobelny formed the Business & Landowner Association of Tamiami Trail and established the idea of design standards for the area. North Port recognized Zagrobelny for his many services to the community by naming the access road in front of Old World Restaurant Zagrobelny Way.

Clubs formed in 1990s: North Port Contractors Association ('90)

Miss North Port Fast Pitch Softball at Dallas White Park ('95)

Marine Corps League, North Port Detachment ('96)

Pop Warner Football ('96)

North Port Area Art Guild (reactivated) ('98)

## 2000s

2001

North Port High School opened. Auditorium became the North Port Performing Arts Center as joint city/school project. North Port put aside \$1.2 million from a one-cent sales tax for the performing arts center which was originally to be built in the city complex but became part of the NPHS complex.

2002

North Port Citizens for Tree Protection placed a first-time citizen-initiated city charter amendment referendum on the ballot for tree protection standards.

Much of the land known as Thomas Ranch was annexed into the City of North Port.

2006

North Port Library on U.S. 41 expansion was completed.

Sarasota County sold off 1900 tax delinquent lots at public auction. North Port netted 55% of the profits.

North Port City Hall at City Center open. Police Department opened on July 15, 2006.

2008

Gene Matthews was officially named Mr. North Port by City Commission.

Imagine "Lower" School opens.

2009

People for Trees planted 50 trees at all of the schools in North Port to celebrate the City's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. North Port celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 encompassing numerous events and activities, including a cookbook, a calendar and many more.

The book, Out of the Wilderness about North Port's first 50 years was written by Marshall Grove.

Clubs formed and important openings in 2000s: Heron Creek Middle School ('03)

Cranberry Elementary School ('03)

New Hope Community Church ('03)

Narramore Sports Complex ('06)

Larmarque Elementary School ('06)

North Port Leadership Institute ('06)

AmVets Post 312 ('06)

Woodlands Middle School ('08)

Atwater Elementary School ('09)

## **2010's**

2010

Warm Mineral Springs was purchased by City of North Port and Sarasota County.

2011

Morgan Family Community Center opened June 7, 2011.

North Port was first named a Playful City USA.

The Public Works Administration/Fleet Maintenance facility construction begins.

Image "Upper" School opens.

2012

The Scout House on Greenwood Ave. was renamed the Bud and Wanda Korte Scout House to honor them for their decades of service organizing and helping scouts, little league, the Boys and Girls Club, and more.

A memorial for children lost at a young age was placed behind the splash pad at Atwater Park. The memorial is inscribed with "In our arms for a little while – in our hearts forever".

2017

Shannon Straub library opened on October 17, 2017 at the Suncoast Technical College.

Holly's Hope was organized by the City of North Port to end the stigma surrounding depression and bring about a program to help those with mental health issues. The group was named in memory of Holly Morgan Fisher, who started Girl's Softball in the City and was a teacher at Heron Creek Middle School.

2018

City of North Port opened the Boundless Adventures Playground at the Garden of the Five Senses in December.

2019

Cool Today Park, home of the Atlanta Braves Spring Training, opened March 24, 2019.

North Port Aquatics Center opened in Butler Park.

Clubs formed and important openings in 2010s: Atwater Community Park ('11)

North Port Economic Development Corporation (EDC) ('11)

Garden of the Five Senses ('16)