



Sarasota County EDC and North Port — Stronger Together

Business and Citizen Impact. Countywide, EDC efforts create an annual \$1.1 billion impact. A very real portion of this impact is in North Port, where more than 1,100 North Port residents are employed by companies the EDC has assisted. In addition to the value of those jobs, this creates retail, restaurant and other opportunities for North Port businesses serving those 1,100 employees.

Critical Strategic Partner. The Sarasota County EDC is designated pursuant to state law and County policy as Sarasota County's Economic Development Organization (EDO) and thereby the designated economic development partner for Enterprise Florida and all other state agencies. Every County in Florida has only one EDO. In this role, the EDC handles all project leads from the state and has access to all the state's economic development tools, all of which are critical to North Port achieving its economic development aspirations.

Unified Collaboration is Foundation of Success. One of our selling points to businesses considering coming to the region is that we are the kind of community they desire because all the municipalities are working together to support businesses. The intergovernmental agreement establishing this collaboration dates to 2005. This unity is a real strength. If the City of North Port drops out of its agreed shared funding commitment of the EDC, and that unity in the County is broken, how do we move forward collaboratively? How does the EDC justify to all the other participating municipalities continuing to offer full services and engagement with North Port — board membership, project leads, marketing, access to incentive tools, public policy collaboration?

A member of the City of North Port's Board of Commissioners sits as a voting Board member for the Sarasota County EDC. Currently, the member is Commissioner Jill Luke. Each participating municipality and the County has one.

Leveraging North Port's Investment is Smart for North Port Taxpayers. North Port's approximately \$64,400 is leveraged by other public investments of approximately \$976,000 and private investment of approximately \$700,000, providing North Port tax payers with 26 times the leveraging power of their investment, thereby helping maximize the impact of limited public funds. This makes us all stronger together.

Project Leads. The EDC is currently working on 41 project leads; 28 are attraction and 15 are expansion. North Port real estate and other location factors are matched against every lead.

- Case in point: Project Dorothy (Enterprise FI lead) is a manufacturing project that, if successful, will bring 700 jobs and \$63MM capital investment to North Port.
- The EDC actively marketed a North Port location in our proposal for Amazon's HQ2.

- The EDC proactively and recently assisted King Plastics with connecting to appropriate partners providing grants for employee training and development; and is currently working with the county on other opportunities for support.

Assisting Local Businesses. As the region's designated partner with Florida's "Grow FL" program targeting potentially fast growing local businesses, the EDC actively markets to qualified companies across the County, including North Port, to provide essential training and support of these critical companies.

- The newest addition to the Grow FL program is North Port's Earth Balance.

The EDC convenes and leads a group of small business service providers to generate collateral and connectivity to the benefit of North Port businesses.

Marketing That Matters.

- The EDC spearheaded the County's efforts to win the first University of Florida Innovation Station in the state, an economic development asset included as a potential partner in the initial Atlanta Braves announcement press release.
- Braves opportunities – The EDC has already included in this year's Strategic Action Plan an opportunity to host an inbound mission targeting Atlanta-based site selection consultants and businesses for the historic inaugural Spring Training game in North Port.
- The EDC recently hosted two separate project managers from Enterprise Florida – Capital Programs and Life Sciences – North Port is always included as a great place to relocate and grow businesses.
- The EDC annually advertises an 8-page relocation guide in Sarasota Magazine's "On the Beach" publication targeting visitors throughout the County, North Port is included in the guide that is placed in 5,600 hotel rooms and 1,000 overrun copies.
- The September 2018 issue of Florida Trend Magazine is printing a "community profile" coordinated (not written) by the EDC, and North Port is expected to be a strong part of our community's business story.
- The Sarasota Film and Entertainment Office, a division of the EDC, conducted research, identification and/or outreach to 19 separate North Port companies for potential use sites in film projects.
- Last year, the Film and Entertainment Office actively promoted the Warm Mineral Springs location for a \$10 million family-friendly, live, water-competition show. The producer, ultimately, chose another location out of Florida. Warm Mineral Springs remains one of the major locations in North Port that the FEO promotes.

Working Together to Make our Community Better for Business and Citizens.

- The EDC was very active supporting widening of River Road.
- The EDC was an integral partner with North Port's division of economic development, the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners and the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) to ensure that the interchange at I-75 and Yorkshire Rd. was jointly listed on SMMPO and Charlotte County MPO's 2040 plans.
- Legislative Agenda – The EDC works closely with the North Port Chamber of Commerce and its government relations committee to include several of their priorities in the EDC's annual legislative agenda.

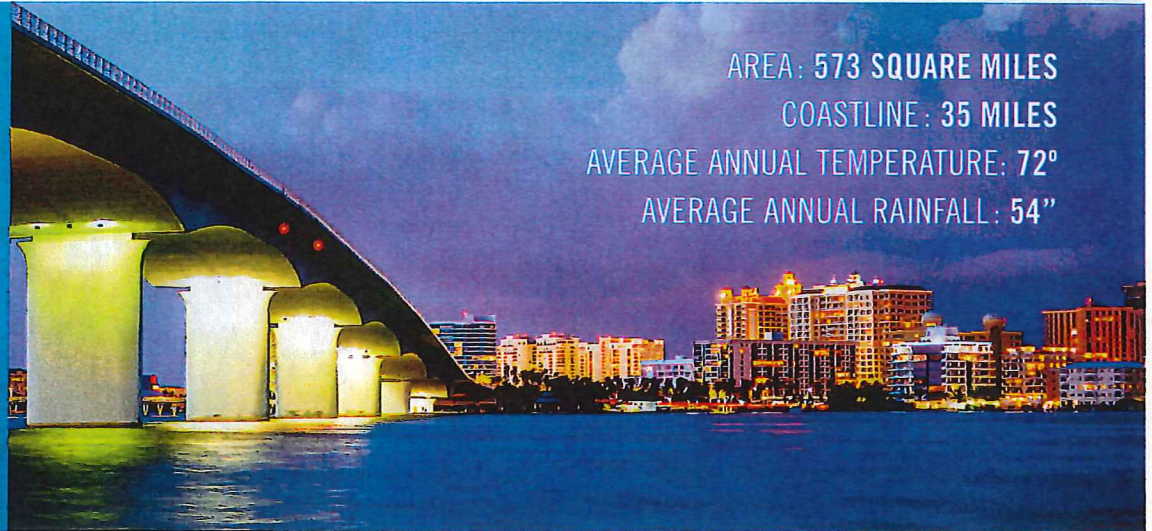
- The EDC actively supports efforts to ensure that lands throughout the county remain available for development for commercial and industrial uses by actively supporting efforts to do so through the county's unified development code changes.
- Business Competitive Report – the EDC produces this bi-annually and includes interviews with CEOs from North Port, this report directs public policy efforts to key opportunities for supporting business growth.
- The EDC Board recognized workforce attraction and affordable housing as two countywide issues and chose to tackle them at the annual retreat in June.

North Port is a valuable partner in the Sarasota County EDC, and the city's economic development and diversity is strengthened through its partnership with the EDC.

SARASOTA COUNTY

THIS BROCHURE

provides a snapshot of Sarasota County's vital statistics. It contains important information on population, workforce, schools, and other aspects of our vibrant community.



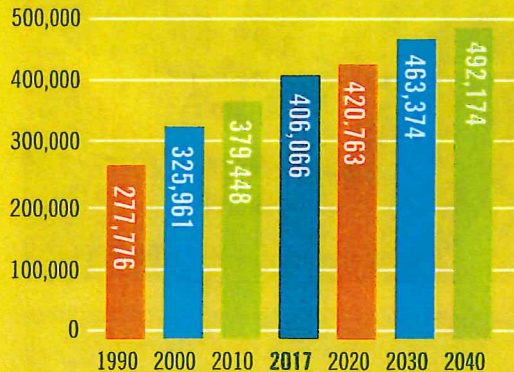
AREA: 573 SQUARE MILES

COASTLINE: 35 MILES

AVERAGE ANNUAL TEMPERATURE: 72°

AVERAGE ANNUAL RAINFALL: 54"

POPULATION PROJECTIONS



Source: FL Demographic Estimating Conference, Feb. 2017, & UF, BEBR

WORKFORCE



REGIONAL
WORKFORCE
1,677,613

MSA WORKFORCE
365,381

COUNTY WORKFORCE
189,760

Source: Local Area
Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

POPULATION JURISDICTIONS

TOTAL: 412,569

Unincorporated (261,893)

North Port (64,275)

Sarasota (56,610)

Venice (22,465)

Longboat Key (7,326)

Source: US Census Population Estimates

ACCOLADES

★ Sarasota Region ranked **Sixth Best Performing City in the U.S.**

Source: Milken Institute

★ Pine View School ranked **#1 in State of Florida, #13 Nationally**

Source: US News & World Report

★ Sarasota County Schools receive **"A+" Rating for 14th Consecutive Year**

Source: Florida Department of Education

★ Sarasota-Bradenton ranked **#1 on list of Best Cities to Launch a Small Business in the U.S.**

Source: Bizjournals.com

★ Siesta Key Beach ranked **#1 in the U.S.**

Source: TripAdvisor

★ North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton region ranked as the country's **10th Fastest-Growing Metropolitan Area**

Source: US Census Bureau

★ Sarasota ranked **#1 as Best Place to Live in the State of FL**

Source: US News & World Report

★ The Sarasota Metro area has the **9th Highest Growth Rate for the Millennial Population** (11.1%; from 2010-2015)

Source: Brookings Institute Study, The Millennial Generation: A demographic bridge to America's diverse future

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS BY AGE

0-19 (67,203)

20-34 (52,540)

35-54 (83,726)

55-64 (64,985)

65-84 (126,620)

85+ (22,778)

Source: Florida Demographic Estimating Conference, February 2017, and UF, BEBR

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS BY RACE

83.7 % WHITE

8.6 % HISPANIC OR LATINO

4.4 % BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

1.5 % ASIAN

1.3 % TWO OR MORE RACES

0.3 % SOME OTHER RACE

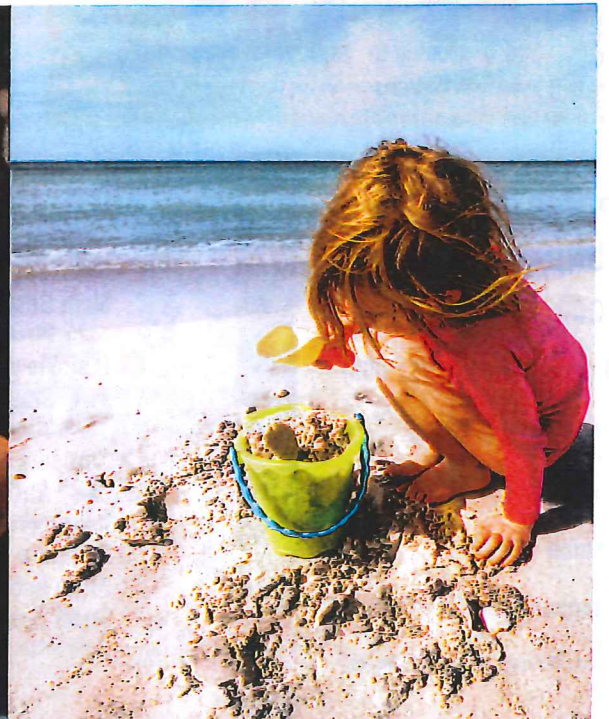
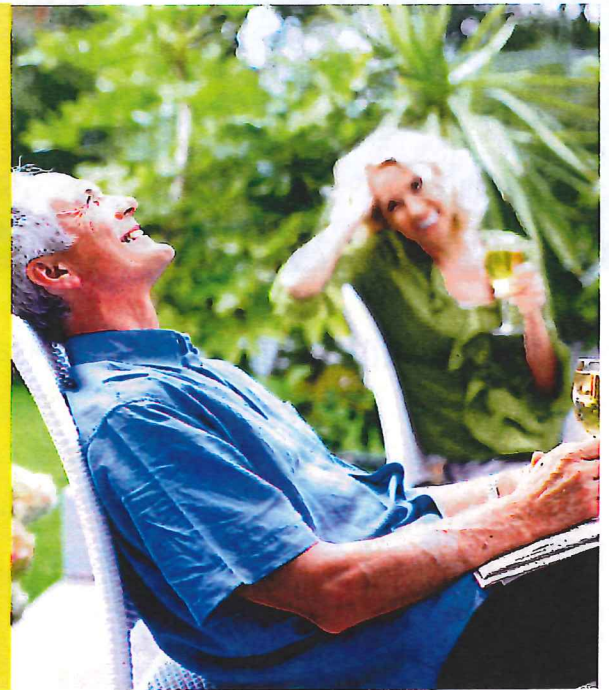
0.2 % AMERICAN INDIAN &
ALASKA NATIVE

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

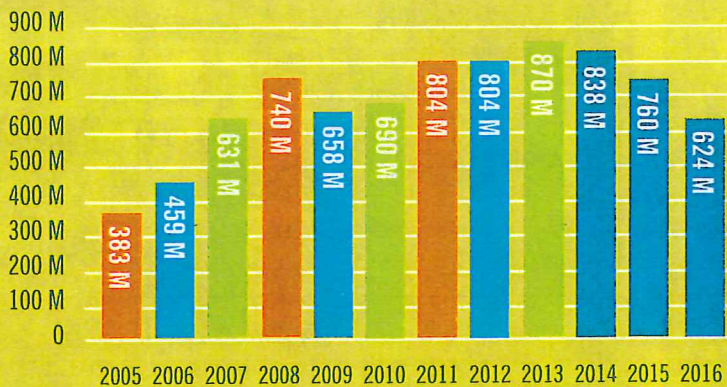
TOP TAX RATES

	CORPORATE INCOME	PERSONAL INCOME
FLORIDA	5.5%	0%
GEORGIA	6%	6%
ALABAMA	6.5%	5%
TENNESSEE	6.5%	5%
NEW YORK	7.1%	8.82%
MASSACHUSETTS	8%	5.1%
CALIFORNIA	8.8%	13.3%
NEW JERSEY	9%	8.97%

Source: Tax Foundation



METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA) EXPORT VALUE



Source: US Department of Commerce



TOP MARKET EXPORT DESTINATIONS

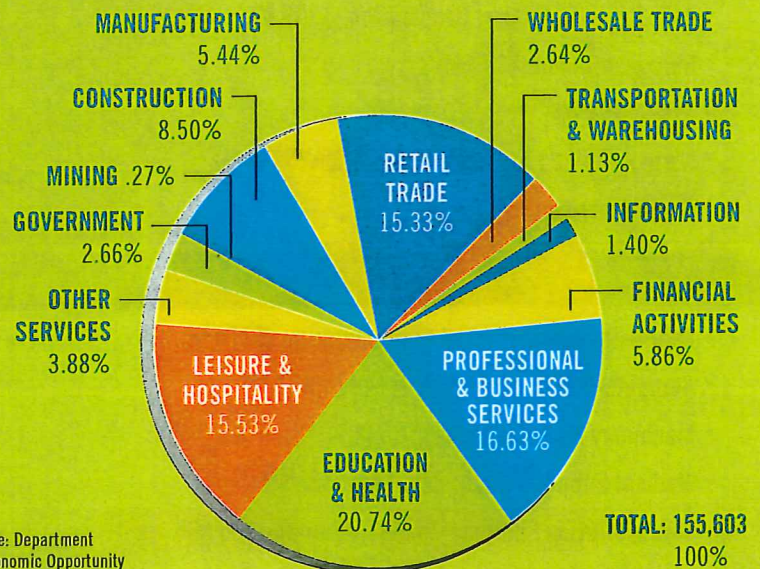
- Asia-Pacific Economy Cooperation (\$303 M)
- European Union (\$179 M)
- Asia (\$164 M)
- North America Free Trade Cooperation (\$149 M)
- South America (\$31 M)

TOP EXPORT PRODUCTS

- Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing (\$114 M)
- Computer & Electronic Product Mfg. (\$84 M)
- Machinery Manufacturing (\$68 M)
- Medical Supply & Equipment Mfg. (\$68 M)
- Transportation Equipment Manufacturing (\$66 M)

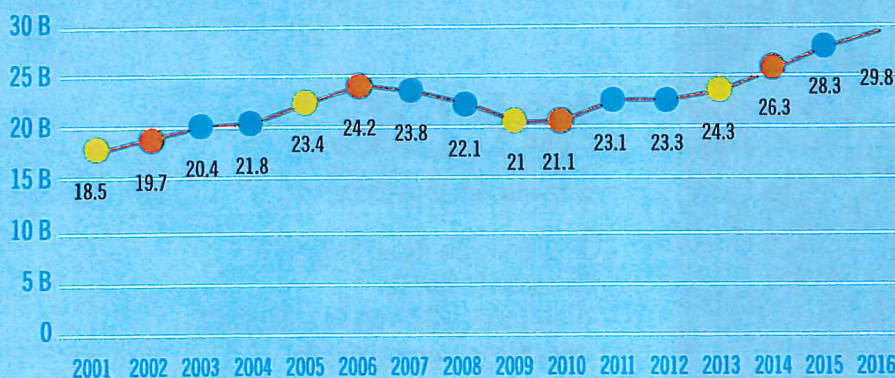
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



Source: Department of Economic Opportunity

REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)



Source: US Department of Commerce



COST OF LIVING

100 = U.S. AVERAGE

NEW YORK, NY (242.9)

WASHINGTON, DC (157.4)

ORANGE COUNTY, CA (152.4)

BOSTON, MA (145.7)

SAN DIEGO, CA (144.1)

NEWARK, NJ (121.4)

FT LAUDERDALE, FL (119.8)

BALTIMORE, MD (116.7)

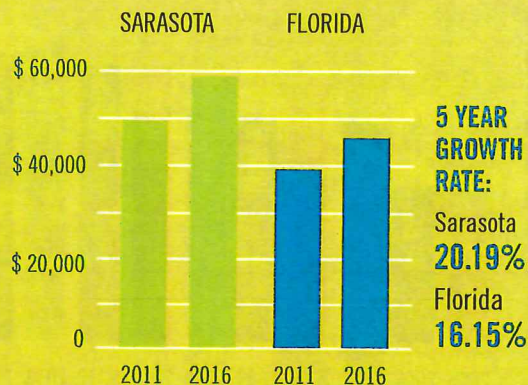
PHILADELPHIA, PA (116.4)

WILMINGTON, DE (109.2)

SARASOTA, FL (107.2)

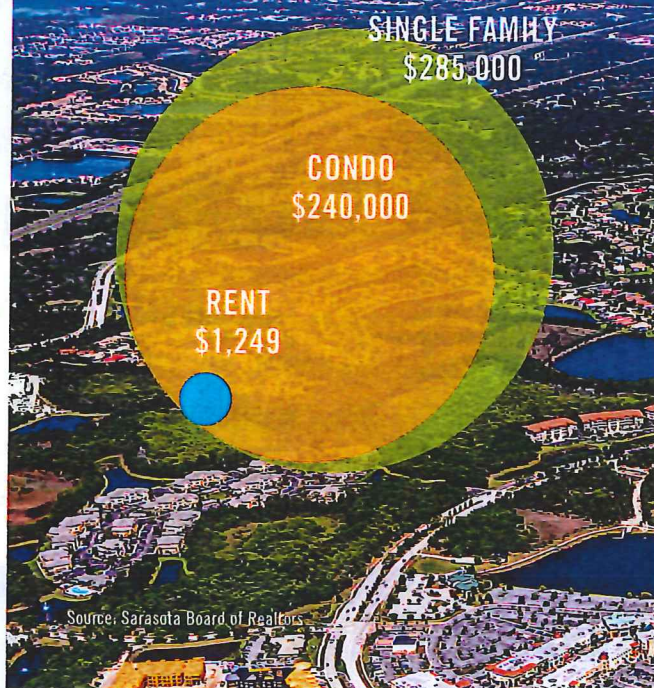
Source: www.coli.org

PER CAPITA INCOME



Source: US Department of Commerce

HOUSING



AVERAGE SAT SCORES

READING / WRITING

MATH

DISTRICT

572

558

STATE

518

494

NATIONAL

538

533

Source: Sarasota County Schools



EDC
 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 SARASOTA COUNTY

1680 Fruitville Road, Suite 402
 Sarasota, FL 34236
 (t) 941.309.1200 • (f) 941.309.1209
edcsarasotacounty.com





Legacy Trail – Board of Directors Discussion Guide

Recently there was a change to the ballot language that states \$2 million *shall* be used for the North Port connector of Legacy Trail.

From the Friends of Legacy Trail Web Site – This is what happens if the referendum passes.

- It gives the county approval to borrow money needed to complete the project.
- It is estimated that it will be 5 years before the trail extension is completed.
- The County will:
 - Buy and pave the existing railroad right-of-way to Payne Park / Fruitville Road
 - Build Bridges over Clark and Bee Ridge Roads
 - Add Parking Areas / Trailheads, Rest Stops / Rest Rooms
 - Landscape the Trail (Trees / Flowers)
 - Add Connector to North Port / Warm Mineral Springs via Deer Prairie Creek Preserve (exact route to be determined – see map on back)

Pros (from the Friends of the Legacy Trail website)

- **Popularity:** Already today, the existing trail hosts about 225,000 visitors each year.
- **Safety:** The trail is beneficial to cyclist/pedestrian and driver safety.
- **Health:** Trails and parks have demonstrated positive impact on public health indicators.
- **Accessibility:** The trail will enable access from many adjacent neighborhoods between Downtown Venice and Downtown Sarasota, with a planned connector to North Port.
- **Quality of Life:** We know that Sarasota County will always be among the most desirable places to live, and facilities like the Legacy Trail are iconic community resources that reinforce our competitiveness.
- **Property Values:** Numerous studies show that property values of both commercial and residential land increase adjacent to parks, trails, and natural lands.

Cons (from community discussions)

- **Concern About Perceived Pressure to Change Zoning:** Some have expressed concern that the property values of industrial land along the current abandoned rail bed will so escalate that we might lose our already limited industrially zoned properties as the demand to transition to residential or commercial uses increases (as is presently occurring around the celery fields).
- **Property Tax Impact:** Sarasota County projects that the millage rate increase necessary today to pay off the bonds would be 0.08 mills. That equates to \$8 per \$100,000 in assessed property value.
- **North Port Concerns:** Leaders in North Port, including the NP Chamber of Commerce, would like a reasonable assurance that the North Port leg(s) of Legacy Trail will be the next portion to be completed.
- **Alternative Needs:** Other needs for public funds, such as a hurricane shelter in Venice, have also been brought up. We understand and agree with this need. We do not believe the Legacy Trail to be at odds with meeting it, and in fact would suggest that the increases in property values from this and other public investments will enhance our ability to meet basic needs.

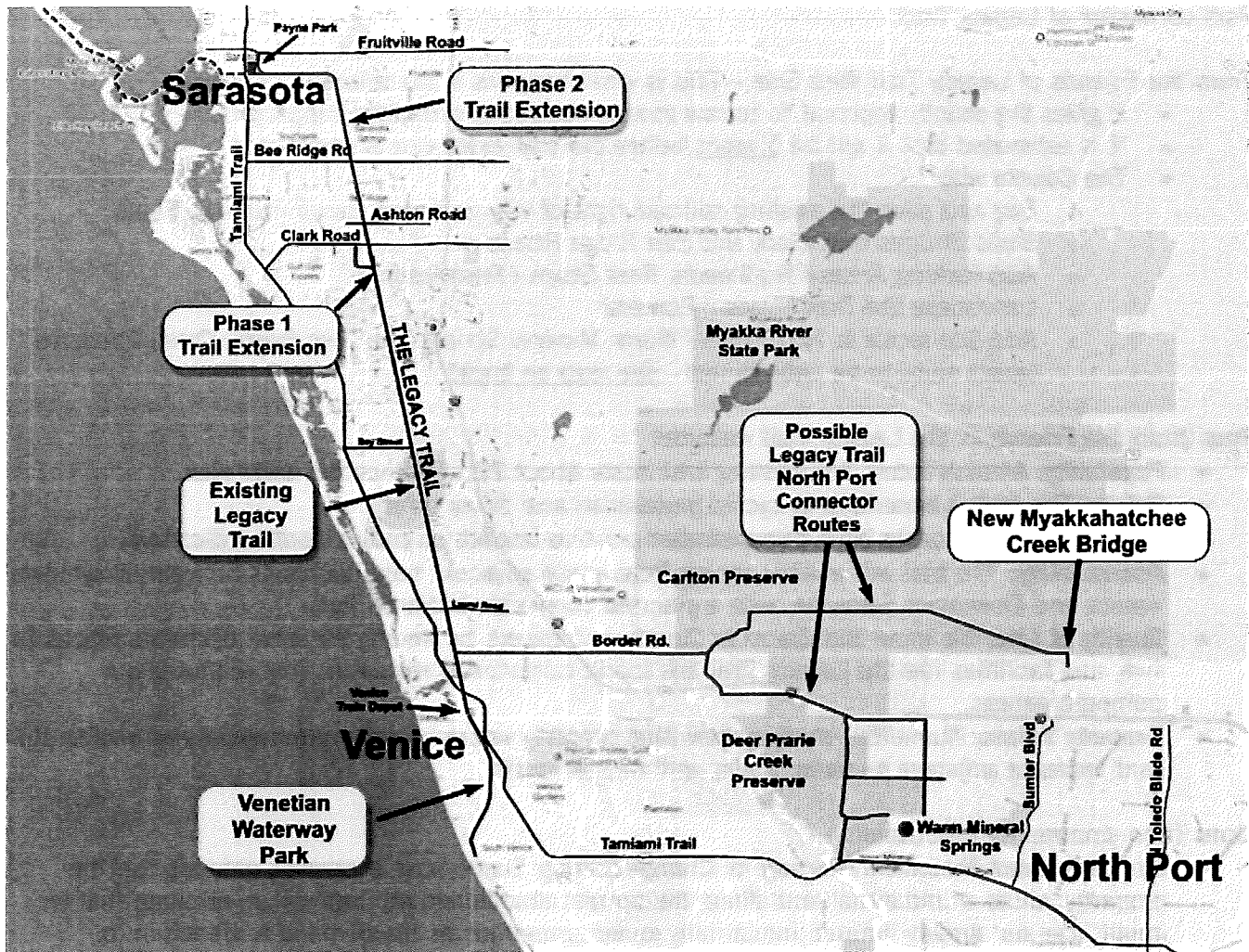


Steering Committee

Co-Chairs: Dan Bailey and Gina Taylor (also Treasurer)

Deputy Treasurer: Louis Kosiba

Committee Members: Kevin Cooper, Jack Cox, Ron Cutsinger, Teri Hansen, Rod Hershberger, Steve Matthews, John McCarthy, Shaun Merriman, Wayne Roberts, Christine Johnson, Andrea Seager, Michael Saunders, Bill Spitler, Jon Thaxton, Bob Vedder



The approved ballot language reads as follows:

SARASOTA COUNTY LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION WITH ENHANCED SAFETY AND CONNECTIONS GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

To acquire and improve the Legacy Trail Extension railroad corridor as a safe trail for walking, running, and cycling with enhanced connectivity from North Port through Venice to downtown Sarasota, with additional improvements including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility, shall Sarasota County issue General Obligation bonds, not exceeding the maximum lawful interest rates, maturing within 20 years from each issuance, not exceeding \$65 million payable from ad valorem taxes restricted to these purposes?

Yes, for Bonds

No, Against Bonds

Single Member Districts - Board of Directors Discussion Guide

Prior to 1992, Sarasota County elected their county commissioners on a countywide basis (all voters get to vote on all commissioners). That year, voters passed a single-member voting districts (voters only get to vote on the one out of five commissioners that live in their district). By 1994, voters realized that they had made a mistake and returned to at-large county commission districts.

In 2018, there will be a measure before Sarasota County voters to return to a single-member district voting system.

Arguments for single-member county commission districts

1. Reduces the cost of campaigns for politicians allowing “regular” people to run and win campaigns. There is no empirical evidence that single-member districts actually produce this result.
2. Local (single-member) issues come to the forefront for discussion during the campaign and therefore receive more attention when someone is elected.
3. Kindra Muntz’s editorial supporting single-member districts – (see attached)
<http://www.heraldtribune.com/opinion/20180603/muntz-vote-for-single-member-districts-against-big-money-machine>

Arguments against single-member county commission districts

1. Single-member districts cause parochial political decisions – There will be five diverging interests when voting on local, state and federal issues.
2. This proposal disenfranchises voters. This measure asks voters to disenfranchise themselves from voting. In effect, voters can now vote for 100 percent of the positions on the county commission including the chair. If this measure passes, each voter will only be able to vote on 20 percent of the commissioners who represent them, and will only have the chair represent them once every five years.
3. There are 20 counties in Florida that have “pure” single-member districts. Just four, are larger than Sarasota County – *Miami/Dade (which is a hybrid – see below), Brevard, Palm Beach and Broward. I doubt anyone who supports this measure advocates for Sarasota County following in the footsteps of Miami/Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties. It is more likely that the author is comparing Sarasota to counties like Orange, Hillsborough, Manatee and Pinellas that have a “mixed” system where voters either get to vote on a strong executive mayor who is elected county wide or voters get to vote on a majority of commissioners like Hillsborough County where voters have four single-member districts and three at-large districts allowing voters to participate in four out of seven elections.
4. Recently, a sitting state representative said that it would be extremely hard to fight for state appropriations for our community if there are five diverging voices clamoring for different needs. “It will be hard for me to advocate for projects for the county at the state level if there are five commissioners asking for five different things.”
 - a. For instance, in Miami, there are 13 commissioners, but 21 state representatives and six state senators who represent part of Miami-Dade County.
 - b. There are 10 state representatives for both Broward (five senators) and Palm Beach (four senators) counties and
 - c. Sarasota has five members of the house and just one senator.

5. Some recent projects that likely don't come to fruition under single-member county commission districts:
 - a. The Atlanta Braves Stadium
 - b. River Road
 - c. Shannon Staub Library
 - d. Agreement about the new I-75 Interchange in North Port (2040 MPO plan)
6. Some upcoming issues that could fall victim to single-member districts:
 - a. Celery Fields
 - b. Warm Mineral Springs
 - c. Beach Re-nourishment (could our greatest asset suffer if there are three "non-beach" commissioners?)
 - d. The Bay (formerly Bayfront 20/20)
 - e. Future Transportation projects
7. The supporters of this effort claim that it is bi-partisan. It seems with a little research that "Sarasota for Fair Elections" is supported also by "Move to Amend (MTA)." MTA formed in 2009...committed to social and economic justice, ending corporate rule, and building vibrant democracy that is genuinely accountable to the people not corporate interests. This group's main goal is to amend the US Constitution to remove money as a form of free speech. Learn more at www.movetoamend.org. There is also a group called Keep Democracy Safe (keepdemocracysafe.org) that is a major supporter of this initiative. The majority or donors to this initiative are various democratic organizations. There were no Republican organizations listed as donors.
8. Our community has been unified in its requests from our state and federal lawmakers. For instance, in recent years, the Town of Longboat Key has had River Road as one of its major legislative priorities. I doubt many LBK commissioners have driven on River Road, but it is important enough for our community that they included it. This type of cooperation between governments is very unlikely to continue with single-member districts.

Jack Cox op-ed opposing single-member districts – (see attached)

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/opinion/20180520/cox-beware-of-single-member-county-commission-initiative>

*Note: Miami-Dade County is governed by a Board of County Commissioners and a Mayor. The commissioners are elected from single-member districts. The Mayor is elected county-wide or at-large. However, the Mayor does not sit with the Board of County Commissioners in a legislative capacity, which differentiates it from Orange County. Therefore, Miami-Dade County's districting scheme is categorized as single-member.

<<<Getting exact ballot language from the Supervisor of Election's Office >>>>>>>

Cox: Beware of the single-member County Commission initiative

By Jack Cox

Posted May 20, 2018 at 3:53 AM

A seemingly benign but potentially earthshaking measure is likely to appear on Sarasota County ballots, possibly in the November general election.

The ballot summary would read: "Changes the method by which County Commissioners are elected. Currently each is elected by voters county-wide. This Amendment changes election to single member districts so that each County Commissioner is elected only by the voters in the district that they seek to represent."

The measure, led by the Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections and supported by the Sarasota County Democratic Party, proposes that each of Sarasota's five districts elect its own commissioner, and only its own commissioner, to serve on the Sarasota County Commission. Currently, all five county commissioners are elected at-large by the entire voting populace.

It's important that the people of Sarasota County understand the potentially devastating changes that would occur if this change were enacted. And in fact, educating voters has always been a part of this issue in Sarasota, dating back a quarter-century.

In 1992, a similar measure was put on the ballot, despite protestations that single-member districts would create "ward politics" in which commissioners squabble and horse-trade to finagle petty advantages in order to curry favor from the voters in their district, at the expense of Sarasotans everywhere else. The measure passed 54 percent to 46 percent.

But after just two years, residents realized the passage of the measure was such a big mistake that, in 1994, Sarasota County voters reversed their initial decision and chose to return to at-large elections.

To be sure, the concerns of 25 years ago are amplified exponentially in today's fractious political environment. Measures like these epitomize everything that is wrong with Washington, D.C., today — too much division down party lines — not something we want to see here in Sarasota County.

Sarasota is facing countywide issues — especially the many variables involved in healthy growth and development — that require unified leadership. Single-member districts throw away any semblance of countywide vision in favor of a system that pits every district against the others in a battle for money and influence.

Furthermore, it threatens to decrease voter turnout and guarantee inferior candidates get elected if people can only go to the polls to vote for a County Commission candidate for their district alone.

Currently, commission candidates are elected at-large, but they must live in the district in which they represent — a condition that garners knowledgeable representation without forcing undue single-mindedness. Commissioners are called to serve their county, a service that extends from their own district through to other districts.

Mind you, this issue is not just about the behavior of the commissioners, but the power of the people.

In our current system of at-large elections, every citizen in the county enjoys equal opportunity to elect the candidate of their choice. Because commissioners' decisions affect the whole county, so too should voters'. Single-member districts take away that right.

Should this measure pass, voters would no longer have a voice in issues affecting the rest of the county; our influence would be limited, almost literally, to our own backyards.

Supporters argue that single-member districts provide more power to areas of the county that are otherwise overlooked.

Unfortunately, a candidate elected only by his or her district constituents can still be outmaneuvered and overlooked in the deal-making melee that would erupt in a single-member system — and perhaps even more so. If three commissioners create a pact that serves only their three districts, the other two districts will be left high and dry.

With its current at-large commission voting system, Sarasota County can simultaneously move forward while ensuring that its residents in all corners of the county receive the service from the government that they deserve.

A single-member district system serves to stir discord and divisiveness at a time when it is vital that Sarasota County come together in unity.

Sarasota County is not made up of five insular districts, but of one vibrant, dynamic citizenry. What happens in the Gillespie Park, Midtown, Sapphire Shores, Myakka or North Port very much matters to Sarasotans in other parts of the county.

Indeed, all Sarasotans have a vested interest in the county as a whole.

So, too, should our elected officials.

Guest columnist Jack Cox is president of Sarasota-based Halfacre Construction Company.

Opinion

Muntz: Vote for single member districts, against big money machine

Posted Jun 3, 2018 at 2:19 AM

It's time to give voice to the voters.

Today, all five Sarasota County commissioners are elected countywide. It takes big money to run countywide, for expensive mailers and more.

As a result, local development interests heavily bankroll their Commission candidates, using dark money political action committees and subsidiaries to avoid limits, packing our mailboxes daily with glossy fliers. Once elected, their commissioners frequently return the favor, giving the developers a major return on investment. They spend thousands to gain millions. They would not keep doing it if it didn't work.

Grassroots candidates often run, as they are doing this year — Republicans as well as Democrats — but they face an uphill battle against the big money machine.

Is it any wonder that our traffic, neighborhoods, taxpayers and environment suffer from growth out of control, rather than balanced and sensible policies to protect us all? Examples abound: the Whole Foods wetland paving, reduction of hotel intensity limits on Siesta Key, advancing of density increases at congested Stickney Point Road and U.S. 41, gutting of the Comprehensive Plan's limits on developers, inadequate impact fees and unbalanced budgets and even two commissioners voting for concrete crushing next to the Celery Fields. It's just not sustainable for our economy and quality of life.

So we have a solution.

This November you may see on your ballot a referendum to change County Commission elections to single-member districts. Thousands of citizens, from different parties and none, have signed petitions to get it there.

By this important reform, each commissioner will be elected only by the voters in his or her district. It will cut most campaign costs by 80 percent, quintuple the influence of neighborhoods and increase by five times the importance of door-to-door campaigning and other personal contacts. For a change, the politicians must get to know the voters in their district and pay attention to them.

Commissioners, more than today, will be beholden to their constituents rather than their contributors.

Each district will have a dedicated advocate, in the south, north, east and west, as the commissioners work together for the common good. No longer will we have a situation, as has often occurred, where people in part of the county have no viable voice. And in the overwhelming majority of decisions that are of countywide impact, the popular will is much more likely to prevail.

Single member districts are nothing new: All the larger counties in Florida use single member districts in whole or in part. Sarasota County is one of the larger counties and deserves to be upgraded and modernized to join the rest. We elect our state legislators in single member districts. Sarasota County has become so populous that County Commission districts are almost as large as legislative districts. It's time for a change.

Development interests believe their dominance to be threatened by this reform. As such, they will be fighting back hard, calling in their allies and spending big bucks to defeat it. Already, the president and executive director of the Argus Foundation, a pro-developer lobby, are working against it, trotting out specious arguments but avoiding the key point: Their control of County Commission elections is at risk. They warn of ward politics but it's big money boss politics that they seek to protect.

They label this effort as partisan, although people of all political parties support it. The referendum sponsor, Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections, is a nonpartisan organization with a bipartisan board. We want everyone eligible to vote and everyone's vote to count as cast.

As Jack Cox, Argus president and building contractor, observed in a recent Herald-Tribune column, Sarasota County had single-member districts for two years in the early 1990s until it was repealed. What he doesn't tell you is that it was put on the ballot (as today) by citizen petitions. A commissioner independent of the developers was elected by support on Siesta Key

and the development interests reacted by getting the County Commission to put repeal on the ballot, which they then spent heavily to support. The reform worked then and it will work again if the voters put it back in our charter.

Cox warns of "inferior candidates" being elected under single member districts. What he fears are candidates less subject to the bosses' control.

Our Founding Fathers wanted to establish a government that was close to the people. This is a good way to do it.

It will be a long ballot in November. But one of the most important votes, crucial to your quality of life and that of generations to come, may be near the end.

Please look for it, disregard the well-funded attacks of the big money machine, and vote "yes" for integrity in local elections, "yes" to change County Commission elections to single-member districts.

The voters deserve their voice.

Kindra Muntz is president of the Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections (SAFE). Online:

<http://www.keeptdemocracysafe.org/act-now>

