



BRADENTON BEACH



Photo: dara caudill/islandphotography.org

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Community Snapshot

W.A.V.E.S.: Waterfronts: Accessible, Viable, Ecological, Sustainable

VISION: “Bradenton Beach is a small, friendly island community that values the civic pride of both permanent and seasonal residents, maintains its “Old Florida” charm, and respects its bountiful natural resources. History, hospitality and spirit are the hallmarks of our thriving waterfront, offering ease of mobility by land and sea.”

DESIGNATION: 2005

APPLICANT: City of Bradenton Beach

STATUS: Active; meets at least once a month. The W.A.V.E.S. Committee combined with the Scenic Highway Committee in 2007 to become Scenic WAVES.

PARTNERS: Scenic Highway; CRA; Island Chamber of Commerce; Manatee County’ FDOT; Manatee/Sarasota MPO; Sarasota Bay Estuary Program; Historic Bridge Street Merchants Association; Anna Maria Island Historical Society; FWCC.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Visitor’s Guide; Cloth Bag Project; parking master plan; “Enviroscape” traveling stormwater education program; “Trolley~Up” campaign; Eco Expo; gateway enhancement; shoreline restoration; installation of biodegradable “doggie bags” to reduce pet-waste runoff into the bay.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Recreational Boating Master Plan; Scenic Byways plan update; Communities for a Lifetime.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	15
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$1.6 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$3.8 million

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No matter where you stand, you are never more than 350 feet from a waterway.

The City of Bradenton Beach stretches four miles along the southern end of Anna Maria Island as a gateway to the Gulf of Mexico. Beach-goers head for the sugar sand beaches, and boaters ply the waters of Anna Maria Sound and Sarasota Bay. The community of some 1,500 persons is located in Manatee County and is known for tourism and beachside homes for permanent and seasonal residents.

The modern-day economy of the City is linked to tourism. The first hotel here was built in 1906. The community was accessible only by boat until 1922 when the first bridge was constructed between the mainland and the island. Originally known as Cortez Beach, Bradenton Beach eventually became the center of commerce on Anna Maria Island, sporting a grocery store, gas station, a dance hall, a bathhouse, and an inn. A portion of the original wooden bridge serves today as a community fishing pier – located at the end of the aptly named Historic Bridge Street.

W.A.V.E.S. – THE FIRST WATERFRONTS COMMITTEE

The City of Bradenton Beach – the entire five square miles of the municipality – was designated as a Waterfronts Florida Community in 2005. The committee – known as W.A.V.E.S., an acronym for “Waterfronts: Accessible, Viable, Economical, and Sustainable” — worked with a program manager, who served

simultaneously as an elected official during the first two years of the partnership, to develop a vision, mission, and action plan.

The vision reflects the residents’ intent to be known as “a small, friendly island community that values the civic pride of both permanent and seasonal residents, maintains its “Old Florida” charm, and respects its bountiful natural resources.” Treasures and dreams identified in Bradenton Beach focused on access to the water and waterfront – by foot, boat, and automobile – and protection of natural resources and residential areas. The vision also considered “possible but undesirable futures;” including:

- We become a privatized, gated, unaffordable community with fewer permanent residents and less community pride and involvement;
- There has been a loss of historical structures and everything is brand new; and
- We don’t want to drive down the street, can’t see the water and can’t tell we are in a beachfront community.

With technical assistance from DCA, W.A.V.E.S. designed and published a visitor’s guide to the city, highlighting tourist attractions that focus on the natural amenities the community has to offer. The guide promotes bird, dolphin,



and manatee watching, biking on the multi-use trail that runs along the beach, kayaking, and scuba diving at the Regina Shipwreck Underwater Archeological Preserve, as well as education information for tourists regarding sea turtles and the “how to” for disposing of trash, filling holes, and refraining from using flashlights or shining headlights on the beach.

The committee initiated programs to market itself and the goals of the vision. The 4th annual Eco – Expo was held in March 2008. The expo focused on environmental issues such as water conservation, sea turtles, wildlife, biodegradable products, native landscaping, and water quality. The group added a native plant sale to last years event; local vendors offered plants and information to help attendees take the guess-work out of finding drought-tolerant, native plants for landscaping. The committee also co-hosts the Bridge Street Festival, where the City’s main street is closed to vehicular traffic and open for local merchants to sell their wares on the sidewalk, where musicians and artists line the street.

Individual establishments and merchants also work to promote the Bradenton Beach area. The Beach House restaurant, whose owner is a committee member, hosts an annual “Sand Blast” featuring a sand sculpting competition. Proceeds from the competition go to Keep Manatee Beautiful, a local offshoot of the Keep America Beautiful program that organizes volunteers to participate in litter cleanups, outdoor beautification projects, and tree and flower plantings.

W.A.V.E.S. used the “Girl Scout” approach to increase membership and meeting attendance: members encouraged each other to “bring a friend.” The start-up group, comprised of local business owners, residents and at least one journalist who reported committee activities in the local newspaper, met at least monthly.

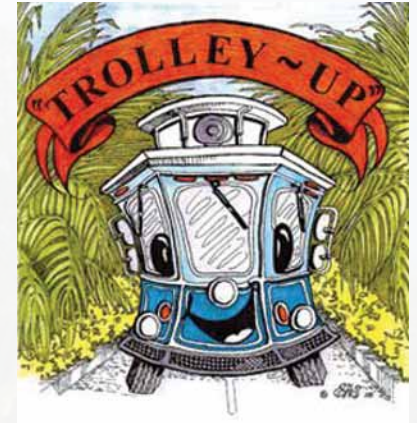
SCENIC WAVES

The original W.A.V.E.S. committee merged in 2008 with Bradenton Beach’s Scenic Highways Committee to form the “Scenic W.A.V.E.S. Partnership Committee,” which serves as a “super” advisory board to the City Commission. The group functions with co-chairs, consisting of one person from each of the original groups. The program manager, who worked with W.A.V.E.S., stayed on as a full-time employee to organize capital projects, grants, and meetings related to the City’s Community Redevelopment Area.

While the timing of projects sometimes overlaps the organizational shift, the Scenic W.A.V.E.S. committee recently obtained partial funding from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program for two of its



signature public awareness programs: the use of cloth bags instead of plastic and the pet waste eradication project. The cloth bag program seeks to eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in the City, particularly on the beaches. The cloth bags showcase the W.A.V.E.S. logo on the front as well as local vendor sponsors. Scenic Waves installed pet waste “disposal stations” that offer biodegradable bags to pet owners in areas with high dog-walking traffic.



The group partnered with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, Sierra Club, and Manatee County Volunteer Services to remove 12,000 pounds of concrete rubble and replace it with salt marsh cordgrass at the Herb Dolan Neighborhood Park. The new grass beds provide additional marine habitat stabilization of the shoreline.

Through a DCA technical assistance grant, Scenic W.A.V.E.S. also hired a consultant to conduct a parking study for the CRA to ensure accessibility to local businesses. Once completed, the committee weighed the options and decided to pursue a “Trolley~Up” campaign, where signage and communication with the business community would be improved to promote the use of the trolley that provides service along Anna Maria Island from Holmes Beach to St. Armands Circle and downtown Sarasota. While public parking is available at the local beaches, the community wanted to reduce the number of cars that use the road and park on nearby neighborhood streets – yet, at the same time, support the growth of the local economy. A local artist donated her time and talent to sketch the logo for the campaign.

The Bradenton Beach Partnership initiated – and maintains – many accomplishments. The Partnership’s new organizational structure will allow for the Partnership to expand the list of community improvements. Upcoming projects for the City and Scenic W.A.V.E.S. include consideration of a mooring field, development of a recreational boating master plan, an update to the Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan, and boat launches for non-motorized craft.