

ST. ANDREWS





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Community Snapshot

MISSION: “To organize and manage the revitalization of St. Andrews through a comprehensive revitalization strategy, advocate public and private partnerships, and promote economic development while preserving the scope, character, and identity of the area.”

DESIGNATION: 1997

APPLICANT: City of Panama City

STATUS: Active; meets monthly; Partnership established as a non-profit organization.

PARTNERS: St. Andrews Community Redevelopment Agency; AmSouth Bank; Florida Department of Health; Surfside Middle School; University of West Florida; Florida Humanities Council; Florida Department of Transportation; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; All Departments in the City of Panama City.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Construction of Bayside Boardwalk and gazebos; renovation of the publishing building for Waterfronts office; façade grant program; bird trail; boat ramp enhancements; neighborhood design overlay; Beck Avenue streetscape improvements; business recruitment plan and market study.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Attracting desired commercial enterprise.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	50
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$7 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$38 million

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St. Andrews, a historic community within the City of Panama City on St. Andrews Bay, is one of Florida's oldest known settlements, with artifacts and middens attesting to a legacy of Native Americans dating back many thousands of years. The area has historic ties to a few of its sister Waterfronts Communities — it was slated in the early 1800s by St. Joseph (Port St. Joe) as a seaport, and an entrepreneur from Bagdad developed a large saw mill near St. Andrews in the late 1800s. During the Civil War, it was a strategic supplier of salt to the Confederate troops, which made it a target for the North. Many raids were made in the area by Federal troops, and eventually the town was destroyed in 1863.

The town flourished again in the late 1800s with salt, fishing, boat building and shipping along the Gulf coast. About this time, the St. Andrews Bay Railroad, Land, and Mining Co., locally known as the Cincinnati Company because they were based in that town in Ohio, advertised mail-order real estate. Homes in historic Cincinnati Hill and other neighborhoods date from that era. St. Andrews is known as one of the first communities in Florida to fall victim to the Florida purchase-by-mail land schemes; the town could have had a population rivaling the City of Fort Lauderdale by the turn of the century — had everyone who had purchased a lot for \$1 actually developed their property (or had their property been developable). The area was marketed by mail order as:

“The loveliest location in all Florida. In a land where the genial climate of a winterless round of years will reward your every effort with the most bountiful harvests; where the summers are joyous seasons of refreshing breezes and invigorating nights of cool and healthful slumber; and where the winters are but bewitching contrasts to the summers in heightening and intensifying the delicious pleasure of a life in the fairest land the sun ever blessed with its genial kiss. There is but one Florida, and St. Andrews Bay is its brightest jewel.”

Incorporated for a time in the early 1900s, Panama City annexed St. Andrews in 1927. During the Second World War, Panama City became a boat building center and the Air Force developed Tyndall Field, making St. Andrews' restaurants and hotels a destination. Since then, St. Andrews and Panama City grew steadily from the military and growing tourism presence.

By the 1980s, St. Andrews' historic commercial district saw an economic decline as interest in condominium development in Panama City Beach soared. The City declared the area blighted in 1989 and established a Community Redevelopment Area, and after a slow start to revitalization, applied for a Coastal Partnership Initiative Grant to develop a vision for the area. In 1994, the Oaks by the Bay Park was purchased and the visioning process drew more than 200 citizens within and around the district to participate.

By the time the City was designated a Waterfronts Florida Community in 1997, the vision was complete. The vision was broken down into five focus areas:

- Economic Development — increase visitation to St. Andrews, assist current businesses, and attract new businesses and developments in keeping with the community vision.
- Design and Planning — employ traditional town planning approach compatible with vision of St. Andrews as a historic village, and promote St. Andrews' environmental quality and provide for public access and enjoyment of natural resources; and promote a clean, green appearance.
- Promotion — develop a regular calendar of festivals and events to attract people to St. Andrews, find individuals and organizations to carry out these events, and carry out joint advertising campaigns through various media.



- Organization — form a partnership consisting of key stakeholders in St. Andrews who will see revitalization through, form a citizens' group to aid in grassroots efforts to strengthen St. Andrews' central business district and neighborhoods, and help with fundraising for revitalization.
- History — promote awareness of St. Andrews' history and find ways the community's past can catalyze revitalization.

To complete these goals, the City and the Partnership took on several projects with the help of various partners and re-visioning in 2001 to stay focused. The City completed the following projects: construction of a police substation; construction of the Bayside Boardwalk and gazebos; implementation of a storefront grant program; adoption of design standards for new construction; development of a Web site; development of a historic biking/walking trail; renovation of the Truesdale Park playground; construction of the pavilion at the Oaks by the Bay Park; placement of gateway signage; development of a bird watching trail; award of a historic preservation grant for the renovation



of the Panama City Publishing Company building; construction of streetscape improvements to Beck Avenue, the town's commercial corridor; and completion of design guidelines for infill housing to maintain compatibility with the area's historic character and charm.

Through a technical assistance grant from the Department of Community Affairs, in 2007 the Partnership completed a marketing study and recruitment plan based on the vision plan and what citizens believed made the community different and unique. The marketing study took a look at what businesses already exist and thrive in St. Andrews and looked at what gaps could be filled by incoming businesses. By using hospitality and real estate industry components to anchor business development, recruitment and retention of businesses will continue to refine the shape of the community. The recruitment plan created a list of desired businesses to be invited to the area and its recommended strategy is currently being explored by the City.

After completing so many planning and sticks and bricks projects, the program manager is an expert at coordinating activities and projects with the various non-profit, for-profit, city, county, and state agencies; applying for and administering grants; and keeping the community informed about project activities. The Partnership Committee reviews all development plans within the

designated Waterfronts area and makes recommendations to the CRA Board. What's still lacking in St. Andrews is an influx of desired businesses despite the significant investment in streetscaping, the boardwalk, the historic restoration of various buildings, and the large condominium next to the marina. The recent recruitment study has provided a plan for attracting businesses — particularly recommending incentives to attract new commercial ventures once the economy rebounds. Knowing the City's proclivity for follow through, they will certainly give it 100 percent.

