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City of Lake Worth

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Community Background Report

City of Lake Worth

Boundaries

North: C-51 Canal

South: South 18th Avenue

East: Intracoastal Waterway

West: Lake Osborne and the E-4 Canal

Community Type: Municipality

History

A 6.5 -square- mile seacoast community, Lake Worth is located 63 miles north of Miami and 9 miles south of West Palm Beach. The City of Lake Worth is a dynamic, multi-cultural city, with over 1,000 historic buildings and five designated historic districts.¹

The area that is now Lake Worth was settled shortly after the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862. In 1896 Henry Flagler extended the East Coast Railroad from West Palm Beach to Miami, which increased access to the Lake Worth area. Prior to being known as Lake Worth, the area was referred to as Jewel, and much of its land was owned by Samuel and Fannie James, two former slaves. Fannie James sold most of her land to H.J. Bryant and William Greenwood of the Palm Beach Farms Company in 1911. The city of Lake Worth formally incorporated in 1912 and the municipality began to grow, as farmers from the Midwest and the South continued to move to the area.²

In 1914, with funds donated by H.J. Bryant, photographs of Lake Worth were taken. These photographs were used to advertise Lake Worth and to attract new settlers. As a result of this successful advertising campaign, as well as the Florida land boom, Lake Worth saw tremendous development during the 1920s. By the mid-1920s Lake Worth had built a multipurpose city hall and the first bridge across the Intracoastal Waterway, had appointed a permanent fire chief, and had opened the Oakley Theater (currently the Lake Worth Playhouse). During that same decade the Lake Worth Golf Course and the Gulfstream Hotel were opened, and travelers from across the region came to bathe in Lake Worth Casino's saltwater swimming pool. The hurricane of 1928 destroyed much of the city. The wooden bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway collapsed, and was replaced by a concrete structure in 1937. From the end of the 1930 through the 1940s, many notable buildings, including the WPA Auditorium, the Lake Theater and the Lake Worth Post Office were constructed. In 1954 Lake Worth opened the Lake Worth Pier, which is still one of the longest municipal piers on Florida's Atlantic coast. The Osborne Community Center was dedicated in 1990, and the Second Avenue North Utilities Complex was

opened in 1991. In 1996 an approved bond issue secured funding for a new Public Safety Complex, where District 14 of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office is located now.³

Over the past few years Lake Worth has become a very diverse community, as people of all religions, ethnicities and lifestyle choices have settled here. The city's downtown and historic neighborhoods have undergone a cultural revival and the city is now home to several famous art galleries, cultural facilities and restaurants.

Community Dynamics

Energize Lake Worth

Energize Lake Worth is a new sustainability initiative adopted by the City of Lake Worth in 2010. This program aims to develop a comprehensive climate action plan which will help reduce energy and resource use and curb carbon emissions. The preparatory portion of the process includes public workshops (the first took place in October of 2010) and focus group meetings, energy audits for city facilities and a citywide greenhouse gas emissions inventory. Energize Lake Worth "will serve as a roadmap for addressing climate change and environmental sustainability issues in the community."⁴

The Beach Improvement Project

Lake Worth's municipal beach is one of the largest continuous public beaches on Florida's southeast coastline. Palm Beach County has allocated \$5 million via the Interlocal Agreement for the Beach Improvement Project, which will address parking facilities, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, power generation, rain collection and reuse, stormwater drainage, landscaping, site lighting and other pressing issues.⁵ For more information on the project please visit <http://www.lakeworth.org> and look for the Finance Department's FY 2011 Approved Budget.

The Casino Rehabilitation Project

The 1922 Municipal Casino Building, located on Lake Worth Beach, is a historic landmark. The original building, designed by W.B. Eckler in the Mediterranean Revival style, was once known as the "jewel of the Gold Coast".⁶ A 1947 hurricane destroyed the original building and the Casino was rebuilt according to a different design by Edgar Wortman. Since then, the building has become weathered, and the city commission has been discussing concerns about its state and structural integrity since 1979.⁷ The Casino Rehabilitation Project will cost \$6 million, and Lake Worth's city commission will pay for it out of pocket.⁸ The first design charrette was scheduled for August of 2010, and construction is to begin in June of 2011.⁹ For more information on the project please visit <http://www.lakeworth.org> and look for the Finance Department's FY 2011 Approved Budget.

Lake Worth CRA

The Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Association is involved in an array of projects to revitalize the city. The Bicycle Network Plan aims to create a network of safe routes and convenient facilities for bicyclists. Pedestrian activity has also been promoted through the sidewalk demonstration project, which created sidewalks for residents of the Tropical Ridge neighborhood. Other projects promoting investment and renewed interest in the city include the

creation of community gardens and the encouragement of green spaces throughout the city, as well as the Citizens' Master Plan of Transit-Oriented Development.¹⁰ For more information about Lake Worth CRA activities please visit <http://www.lakeworthcra.org/>.

Demographic Highlights¹¹

The population of Lake Worth has been declining, and the trend is forecasted to continue.

Lake Worth's population grew from around 28,000 to over 35,000 during the 1990s, but in the 2000s the trend reversed. The city's population declined 2% in the years between 2000 and 2009, and is projected to decline another 3% between 2009 and 2014.

The median household income in Lake Worth is considerably lower than for Palm Beach County.

In 2009 the median household income in Lake Worth was \$40,659, while the median household income for Palm Beach County was \$62,114.

More than half of Lake Worth's residents have a high school diploma or less.

In 2009 24% of residents of Lake Worth had a high school diploma, whereas 27.5% had not finished high school. Only 14% of residents of Lake Worth had a college education.

Over ¼ of Lake Worth's residents are non-citizens.

Only 64% of residents of Lake Worth are native-born citizens. 10% are naturalized citizens, and 26% are non-citizens.

Lake Worth has a lower percentage of residents 65 and older than the rest of Palm Beach County.

Only 14% of residents of Lake Worth are 65 and older, whereas 22% of residents of Palm Beach County are 65 and older.

The percentage of households in Lake Worth with an income of \$100,000 and over is considerably smaller than in Palm Beach County.

In 2009 11% of households in Lake Worth had an income of \$100,000 and over, compared to 26% in Palm Beach County. During the same year 16% of households in Lake Worth had an income of less than \$15,000, as compared to 10% in Palm Beach County.

The percentage of residents of Lake Worth who work in construction is twice as large as for Palm Beach County.

In 2009 16.2% of residents of Lake Worth worked in construction, as compared to 8.6% of residents of Palm Beach County. 15% of Lake Worth's residents were in the professional, scientific, management and administrative sector, 15% were in the finance, insurance, real estate/rental and leasing sector, and another 15% in the arts, entertainment, accommodation and food services sector.

Transportation Trends¹²

The tables below illustrate projected transportation trends in the City of Lake Worth:

Average household transportation costs:

2009: City, \$7,865.00/County, \$9,162.52

2014: City, \$9,619.49/County, \$11,276.10

Average household transportation costs for public transportation:

2009: City, \$418.01/County, \$607.69

2014: City, \$525.80/County, \$783.55

Forecasted travel time to work for the employed population, 2014:

Work at home: City, 3 percent/County, 5 percent

Less than 15 minutes: City, 17 percent/County, 20 percent

15-29 minutes: City, 42 percent /County, 37 percent

30-59 minutes: City, 30 percent /County, 31 percent

60+ minutes: City, 7 percent /County, 7 percent

Forecasted means of transportation to work for employed individuals, 2014:

Car, Truck, Van to Work: City, 91 percent / County, 92 percent

Public Transportation to Work: City, 2 percent / County, 1 percent

Other Transportation to Work: City, 4 percent / County, 2 percent

Forecasted number of vehicles per household, 2014:

No vehicles: City, 9 percent / County, 6 percent

1 vehicle: City, 46 percent / County, 41 percent

2 vehicles: City, 34 percent / County, 42 percent

3 vehicles: City, 8 percent / County, 9 percent

4+ vehicles: City, 2 percent / County, 2 percent

Lake Worth Transit-Oriented Development: The Citizens' Master Plan

In June of 2008 a transit-oriented development (TOD) charrette to determine the locations of future transit stations in the city of Lake Worth was held at Lake Worth's shuffleboard courts. The event, organized by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, the Lake Worth CRA and the City of Lake Worth, featured the work of a design team and was open to discussion and comments from the town's citizens. Many residents, business owners, local government staff and elected officials were present at this event, which is why the plan is known as the Citizens' Master Plan. For more information about this plan and its implementation please contact the Lake Worth CRA at (561)493-2549 or at <http://www.lakeworthcra.org>.

Special Events

The City of Lake Worth maintains a calendar of meetings and special events in the city on their website (<http://www.lakeworth.org> , click on “Meetings and Events Calendar”). Events organized by the Greater Lake Worth Chamber of Commerce are also listed at <http://lwchamber.com> (click on “Calendar of Events”). Below is a sample of events listed on those websites as of February, 2011.

Street Painting Festival – During this two-day annual festival the streets of the city come to life as over 400 artists use the pavement as canvas, transforming downtown Lake Worth into an outdoor art museum. The event takes place during the last weekend of February. For more information please visit <http://www.streetpaintingfestivalinc.org/>.

Reggae Fest – This two-day festival celebrates Caribbean food and music and is held in April in Bryant Park along the Intracoastal. For more information please visit <http://www.lwchamber.com> and click on “Calendar of Events” → “Signature Events”.

Tropical Festival –Celebrate the 4th of July, as well as Lake Worth’s birthday, with tropical flare. The festival is held at North Bryant Park and offers live entertainment, an arts and crafts fair, food, family fun and one of the largest fireworks displays in Palm Beach County. For more information please visit <http://www.lwchamber.com> and click on “Calendar of Events” → “Signature Events” or call the Greater Lake Worth Chamber of Commerce at (561)582-4401.

Tropical Triathlon –Held in September, this race follows a course along beaches and through scenic neighborhoods in the city. For more information please call the Greater Lake Worth Chamber of Commerce at (561)582-4401.

Heritage Festival –Formerly known as Hispanic Fest, this event celebrates the diversity of Lake Worth, Palm Beach County, Florida and the USA. It is held on a weekend in October in Bryant Park, in downtown Lake Worth and along the Intracoastal Waterway, and features live entertainment, dancing, ethnic foods and a unique arts and crafts show. The first day concentrates on Latin American heritage and the second day on Finnish and Irish heritage, as well as other heritage groups of the USA. For more information please call the Greater Lake Worth Chamber of Commerce at (561)582-4401.

Business Landscape

Among Lake Worth’s major employers are Palm Beach State College and American Medical Response (AMR).¹³ As of 2009 the top employment sectors were construction (16 percent), education, health and social services (15 percent), professional, scientific, management and administrative service (15 percent), arts, entertainment, accommodation and food service (15 percent) and retail trade (9 percent).¹⁴ The City of Lake Worth has a dynamic and diverse business sector. According to the Commission Approved Budget for fiscal year 2008-2009, Lake Worth raised just over \$1,000,000 from business licenses and permits.¹⁵

Sources

- ¹ City of Lake Worth. Welcome to the City of Lake Worth. <http://www.lakeworth.org> .
- ² City of Lake Worth. History of Lake Worth—How the City was Born. <http://www.lakeworth.org> .
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Energize Lake Worth, Comprehensive Sustainability Plan Overview. City of Lake Worth. http://www.lakeworth.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={A07E7E9B-43C4-4304-A9A9-D9A8BD21DC89} .
- ⁵ Lake Worth Beach Improvement Project. City of Lake Worth. http://www.lakeworth.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={79FA0975-12AD-4E1E-B5CA-654ED4336092} .
- ⁶ Palm Beach Post. “Lake Worth residents share ideas for renovating casino building”. August 21, 2010. <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/lake-worth-residents-share-ideas-for-renovating-casino-871704.html> .
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Palm Beach Post. “ Suggested design for Lake Worth casino rehab blends traditional architecture, Earth-friendly features”. Sep 14, 2010. <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/suggested-design-for-lake-worth-casino-rehab-blends-915950.html> .
- ⁹ Lake Worth Casino Improvement Project. City of Lake Worth. http://www.lakeworth.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={79FA0975-12AD-4E1E-B5CA-654ED4336092} .
- ¹⁰ Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). <http://www.lakeworthcra.org>.
- ¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, all statistics cited in this section downloaded from www.simplymap.com.
- ¹² Unless otherwise noted, all statistics cited in this section downloaded from www.simplymap.com.
- ¹³ Palm Beach County Business Development Board. Palm Beach County Top Employers. <http://www.bdb.org> .
- ¹⁴ SimplyMap. <http://www.simplymap.com>
- ¹⁵ City of Lake Worth, Finance Department. Commission Approved Budget Fiscal Year October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009. <http://www.lakeworth.org> .