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Town of Hillsboro Beach

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Community Background Report

Town of Hillsboro Beach

Boundaries

North: City of Deerfield Beach

South: Hillsboro Inlet

East: Atlantic Ocean

West: Intracoastal Waterway

Community Type: Municipality

Report Last Updated: December, 2011

History¹

The Town of Hillsboro Beach is a residential community on a barrier island north of Pompano Beach. It extends 3.2 miles from the Hillsboro Inlet on the south to Deerfield Beach on the north. Its greatest width is approximately 900 feet. The town is known for being home to the Hillsboro Lighthouse, built in 1907 to help mark the northern end of the Florida Reef. It is interesting to note that the lighthouse has the most powerful beacon on the east coast of the United States.

The Town of Hillsboro Beach was originally incorporated in 1939, but remained inactive until 1947, when it was incorporated by a special act of the Florida Legislature. The town's name is derived from the Earl of Hillsborough, to whom large grants of land were made by the English Crown during one of the periods of English possession of Florida. At the time of incorporation, the town consisted of 17 voters, nine private houses, four groups of rental cottages and apartments, and the Hillsboro Club. State Highway A1A was an unpaved road with a hand-operated bridge that connected the town with the City of Pompano Beach. Today, A1A (also known as Hillsboro Mile and Atlantic Boulevard) is the only road in town.

Community Dynamics

The Town of Hillsboro Beach is a wealthy enclave, home to residents that have been included in Forbes magazine's list of 400 richest Americans.² The sole street that runs through the town, A1A, is often referred to as "Millionaire's Row."³ The small town is entirely residential –there are no businesses, no schools, and no street lights.⁴ Hillsboro Beach is the only municipality in Broward County that does not have public access to the beach.⁵

Although Florida state law recognizes the high-water line as the boundary between public and private property,⁶ the town is able to keep its beach exclusive by limiting public access to the ocean by land.⁷ Getting to the beach from a public road requires trespassing on private property. Thus, the shore is accessible only by the invitation of a homeowner or from the water, by boat.⁸

Hillsboro Beach has gone to great lengths to limit public access to its beach. In 1989 the town's residents were able to derail a county plan to purchase land for a public park with a public beach.⁹ County commissioners passed a \$75 million bond issue to buy land for preservation, including a 10-acre parcel in Hillsboro Beach.¹⁰ Despite passage of the bond issue, the land was dropped from the list after the vote, and in 1992 the commission allowed a dozen homes to be built on the land.¹¹ According to the Sun Sentinel, "then-Commissioner Nicki Grossman, who voted against dropping the land from the list, charged at the time that subtle racism and political pull had kept Broward residents from getting a park."¹²

Since the lack of public access to the beach has long been an obstacle to Hillsboro Beach's ability to obtain public money for beach nourishment projects, the commissioners considered opening the town's beach in 2008.¹³ The town's residents made sure that the status quo prevailed, with an outpouring of opposition to public access. According to the Sun Sentinel, town officials had never seen such an emphatic response to any other issue. This led the mayor at the time to proclaim, "Let's keep Hillsboro Beach Hillsboro Beach... we need to take a stand and drop this whole thing so that it won't come up again."¹⁴ The motion passed unanimously, blocking any public access.¹⁵ It is worth noting that after an additional two years of discussion, the widening of the northern third of the three-mile beach began in 2010.¹⁶ The beach nourishment project cost \$6.4 million and was paid for by a controversial property assessment.¹⁷

Demographic Highlights¹⁸

The Town of Hillsboro Beach experienced a drop in population over the past decade – all of the population lost was White.

In 2010 the population of Hillsboro Beach was 1,875. The town has lost 288 residents over the past decade, which represents a 13 percent change—significant for a town of this size. The loss in population is due solely to White residents leaving the community. Between 2000 and 2010, Hillsboro Beach's White population fell by 325 people, representing a 15 percent drop. On the other hand, all other race categories experienced a small increase in population, helping slightly to offset the loss. With regards to ethnicity, the Hispanic population increased from 37 to 109, representing a growth of 195 percent over the last decade. Regardless, the town remains homogenous in nature, with Whites making up 97 percent of the population.

In 1990 the town was the only Broward municipality without a Black resident.

According to the 1990 Census, the Town of Hillsboro Beach was the only Broward municipality without a Black resident.¹⁹ Census data from 1980 indicated a population of

seven Black residents. However, apparently the Black population counted was “live-in help.” In a Sun-Sentinel article published at that time, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attributed the lack of a Black population to both discrimination and the economics of extremely high property values.²⁰ The Town of Hillsboro Beach had three Black residents included in the 2000 Census, and seven in the 2010 Census. However, it is not clear whether the Black populations counted in these two instances were also “live-in help” or Black resident homeowners or renters.

The town’s population is significantly older than the county’s, and the average household size is smaller.

In 2010 the town’s median age was estimated to be 67, significantly higher than the county’s median age of 40. Over the past decade, the town’s median age has increased by two years. With respect to household size, Hillsboro Beach’s average is 1.66 persons per household, compared to 2.52 for the county.

Hillsboro Beach’s housing stock has remained relatively flat over the past decade.

There are currently 2,224 housing units in Hillsboro Beach. Over the past decade, 93 units were added to the housing stock, representing only a four percent growth. Of the units that are occupied, 87 percent are inhabited by homeowners, as opposed to 67 percent for the county.

Nearly half of the town’s housing units are vacant, for seasonal and recreational use.

Slightly less than half (49 percent) of the housing units are vacant. By way of comparison, Broward County experienced a 15 percent vacancy rate during this same period. Of Hillsboro Beach’s 1,092 vacant units, 93 percent of these were identified as for recreational or seasonal use. This figure makes sense when taking into consideration that town officials estimate that their population doubles during the winter.²¹

Hillsboro Beach’s median income is higher than the county median.

According to the American Community Survey, in 2009 the Town of Hillsboro Beach’s median household income was \$65,096 –higher than the county’s median of \$51,731.

Transportation Trends²²

The tables below illustrate projected transportation trends in the Town of Hillsboro Beach.

Travel time to work for the employed population, 2014

	City	County
Work at Home	14%	4%
Less than 15 minutes	22%	16%
15-29 Minutes	34%	33%
30-59 Minutes	26%	38%
60+ Minutes	4%	8%

Average household transportation costs

	City	County
2009	\$9,503.59	\$8,836.33
2014	\$11,670.70	\$10,880.30

Average household transportation costs for public transportation

	City	County
2009	\$691.14	\$555.02
2014	\$884.52	\$721.64

Forecasted number of vehicles per household, 2014

	City	County
0 vehicles	2%	7%
1 vehicle	59%	40%
2 vehicles	33%	40%
3 vehicles	5%	10%
4+ vehicles	1%	3%

Forecasted means of transportation to work for employed individuals, 2014

	City	County
Car, Truck, Van to Work	82%	93%
Public Transportation to Work	3%	2%
Other Transportation to Work	0%	2%
Work at Home	14%	4%

The information below briefly summarizes transportation services and projects in Hillsboro Beach:

Community Bus

The Town of Hillsboro Beach and Broward County Transit (BCT) provide a community bus service with six stops within the town's limits, and connections to BCT's routes 10, 11, 34, 48, 83 and the US1 Breeze, as well as to community buses from Pompano, Lighthouse Point, and Deerfield. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.broward.org/BCT/Services/Documents/hillsborobeach.pdf>

SR A1A

The Town of Hillsboro Beach is a long, narrow island, with SR A1A as the only road in town.²³ This stretch of State Road A1A is part of the Broward County A1A Scenic Highway.²⁴ Until the mid-1990s, the town's motorists shared the road with bikes. In 1992 a bike and pedestrian path was proposed. The paved, 4-foot-wide path, on both the east and west sides of State Road A1A, would run three miles, from the Hillsboro Inlet north to Hillsboro Boulevard in Deerfield Beach.²⁵ After a 1994 town survey showed that Hillsboro Beach residents favored the road and shoulder improvements on A1A, the road was repaved and the shoulder widened to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists

that travel the length of the road.²⁶ Crossing A1A is also a safety concern for the town. In 2007 the Florida Department of Transportation conducted traffic studies in which it collected pedestrian and traffic volume data, identified where and how often pedestrians cross this two-lane road, and measured gaps in traffic flow. The studies resulted in a new crosswalk at 1225 Hillsboro Mile, in front of the Royal Flamingo Villas.²⁷ In 2011 town officials began to collect information from condominiums about residents' interest in additional crosswalks.²⁸

Broward County's Greenways System²⁹

Broward County's Greenways System is a countywide network of safe, clean, bicycle and equestrian paths, nature trails and waterways. Approved in 2002, the conceptual Master Plan delineated the trails, including the Barrier Islands Greenway, which includes the Town of Hillsboro Beach. Proposed trailheads within the town include the Hillsboro Lighthouse and the Hillsboro Inlet Park. The purpose of the Barrier Islands Greenway is to establish recreation corridors in the county. Continuous multipurpose paths along the beach, the A1A roadway itself, and various neighborhood streets will link public beaches, resorts, waterside communities, activity centers, marinas, restaurants, municipal centers and other attractions. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.broward.org/Greenways/>

Revised Adopted Manatee Protection Rules May Affect Boat Traffic

In October, 2011 the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) adopted amendments to the Broward County manatee protection rule (68C-22.010, FAC).³⁰ The amendments revise the existing zones in several areas (mostly in the northern section of the county) to improve protection and reduce risks to manatees.³¹ The proposed changes would revise zones in and around portions of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), including zones in the general vicinity of the Hillsboro Inlet, to the south of NE 14th Street. This area was made a year-round Slow Speed zone.³² The Town of Hillsboro Beach is adjacent to or in close proximity to waterways affected by the proposed rule changes. The FWC does not expect the rule changes to have any significant impact on the local government. However, the town acknowledges that the rule change will affect the area's boat traffic in the ICW.³³

Special Events

The Town of Hillsboro does not have a recreation department and does not maintain a community events calendar. Private events are held in town throughout the year, particularly at the private Hillsboro Club.

Business Landscape

The Town of Hillsboro Beach currently does not have business-related initiatives or recent business developments, due to: 1) its status as a primarily residential community, 2) scarcity of undeveloped land, and 3) extremely high property values.³⁴ Industrial and office spaces do not exist in the town, and activity is centered solely around the Hillsboro Club and perhaps a handful of rentals; a history of the club is provided below.³⁵

Construction consists mainly of replacing the old residential units with newer homes and condominiums.³⁶

The town's main revenues come from a combination of tax receipts from ad-valorem property taxes, revenue sharing with the state on sales, gasoline and community service taxes, franchise fees, and building permit fees.³⁷

Hillsboro Club

In 1922 Herbert L. Malcolm (who would later become a town commissioner for ten years and mayor for two terms) bought land to build a winter campus for an elite boys' school.³⁸ In 1925 he turned the school into a hotel, with only 45 rooms to rent. By the early 1960s, it officially became a club, with several hundred members (the membership list is not made public).³⁹ The 15-acre property stands at the end of the island, creating a private peninsula near the inlet and the town's historic landmark, the Hillsboro Inlet Lighthouse.⁴⁰ The club has 10 tennis courts, a nine-hole pitch-and-putt golf course, and 145 guest rooms in waterfront cottages.⁴¹ Changes during the 1990s allowed area residents with connections to purchase memberships, and the location became available for special events such as weddings.⁴²

Related Links

Town of Hillsboro Beach

<http://www.townofhillsborobeach.com>

Hillsboro Lighthouse Preservation Society

<http://hillsborolighthouse.org>

Hillsboro Club

<http://www.hillsboroclub.org>

Greenway System (Hillsboro Beach)

<http://www.broward.org/GREENWAYS/Pages/HillsboroBeach.aspx>

Site Plan Requirements (Transit-Related)

<http://www.townofhillsborobeach.com/code/code124.htm>

Land Development Regulations (Transit-Related)

<http://www.townofhillsborobeach.com/index.php?sec=19&id=35>

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