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City of Riviera Beach

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Community Background Report

City of Riviera Beach

Boundaries

North: Silver Beach Road

South: North of 59th Street

East: Atlantic Ocean

West: Beeline Highway and Hayerhill Road

Community Type: Municipality

History

The City of Riviera Beach is a seacoast community and a harbor city located in northeast Palm Beach County, directly north of the City of West Palm Beach. It is 78 miles north of Miami and 5 miles north of West Palm Beach.

In 1881 Frank L. Dimick purchased 80 acres from the United States Government for \$93.30. In 1882 Judge Allen E. Heyser bought the plot of land for \$500 and settled in the area, which would later become the City of Riviera Beach. Judge Heyser built a three-story, 20-room hotel named Oak Lawn. A journalist visiting the Oak Lawn Hotel in 1893 was so impressed with the beauty of the place, that he called it the “Riviera of America”. On September 29, 1922, the area incorporated as the Town of Riviera. The Aquarium building on Broadway served as the town hall until 1925, when a formal hall was built. In 1928 a hurricane destroyed many town structures, and the coming depression devastated the economy. By the 1940s the population of Riviera increased to 1,654 residents, and to 4,000 by the end of the World War II era. In 1940 the town purchased 100 feet of beach on Singer Island, which led to further growth and tourism in the area. In 1959 the town changed its official name to “City of Riviera Beach”. By that time the city’s population had grown to over 13,000 residents.¹ According to 2009 Census estimates, the population of Riviera Beach was slightly over 30,000 residents.²

A 2006 Palm Beach Post article described Riviera Beach as bitterly divided along racial and class lines, with most black and poor residents living on the mainland, and most white and wealthy residents living along the coastline and on Singer Island.³ The authors call Riviera Beach “...a rare mix of rich and poor, black and white, oceanfront splendor and inner-city squalor — all within 8 square miles.”⁴

Community Dynamics

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of Riviera Beach is active and committed to helping the city rise. A recent project of the Riviera Beach CRA was the Neighborhood Revitalization Charrette, during which residents came up with ideas on how to revive and develop their respective neighborhoods. The Riviera Beach CRA has also been working on a plan to revitalize the Riviera Beach Marina, known as the International Harbor at Riviera Beach Project. Due to the economic crisis, the progress of the project has slowed, but development plans are still pending.⁵ For more information about the activities of the Riviera Beach CRA please visit <http://www.rbcra.com>.

Demographic Highlights ⁶

The rate of growth of the population in Riviera Beach has slowed and is projected to decrease.

The population of Riviera Beach grew only 1% in the years between 2000 and 2009, and is projected to lose 2% between 2009 and 2014.

The majority of residents of Riviera Beach are African American.

In 2009, nearly 65% of Riviera Beach's residents were African American, and this percentage is expected to rise to nearly 67% by 2014. In 2009, only 27% of residents of Riviera Beach were White, and 1.5% were Asian.

The overwhelming majority of residents of Riviera Beach speak English and are native-born citizens.

As of 2009, 88% of residents of Riviera Beach spoke English and 89% were native-born US citizens. Only 5% spoke Spanish, and 5% spoke another Indo-European language.

The median income in Riviera Beach is considerably lower than in Palm Beach County.

In 2009 the median income in Riviera Beach was \$43,380, as compared to \$62,114 in Palm Beach County, and \$54,180 in the United States.

In 2009 the rate of unemployment in Riviera Beach was almost twice as high as in Palm Beach County.

The 2009 rate of unemployment in Riviera Beach was 11% among males and 9% among females, as compared to 6% and 6%, respectively, in Palm Beach County.

The majority of residents of Riviera Beach have a high school diploma or less.

In 2009, 23% of residents of Riviera Beach had less than a high school diploma, and 28% had graduated from high school. Only 6% had an associate's degree, 14% a bachelor's degree, and 7% a graduate degree.

As compared to Palm Beach County, Riviera Beach has a higher percentage of households with an income of less than \$15,000, and a lower percentage of households with an income of \$200,000 and over.

In 2009, 17% of households in Riviera Beach reported less than \$15,000 annual income, as compared to 10% of households in Palm Beach County. 5% of households in Riviera Beach reported an annual income of \$200,000 or over, as compared to nearly 8% of households in Palm Beach County.

Transportation Trends⁷

Riviera Beach is easily accessible from Interstate 95 and can be reached indirectly from the Florida Turnpike. The closest rail service is available at the Amtrak Station five miles away in West Palm Beach.

The tables below illustrate projected transportation trends in the City of Riviera Beach:

Average household transportation costs:

2009: City, \$7,153.56/County, \$9,162.52

2014: City, \$8,610.53/County, \$11,276.10

Average household transportation costs for public transportation:

2009: City, \$395.06/County, \$607.69

2014: City, \$484.51/County, \$783.55

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

Work at home: City, 4 percent/County, 5 percent

Less than 15 minutes: City, 23 percent/County, 20 percent

15-29 minutes: City, 40 percent /County, 37 percent

30-59 minutes: City, 26 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, 89 percent / County, 92 percent

Public Transportation to Work: City, 3 percent / County, 1 percent

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

Forecasted number of vehicles per household, 2014:

No vehicles: City, 11 percent / County, 6 percent

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

2 vehicles: City, 32 percent / County, 42 percent

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

4+ vehicles: City, 3 percent / County, 2 percent

Special Events

The Riviera Beach Department of Parks and Recreation maintains a list of special events on their website, http://rivierabch.com/parkandrec/parks_and_recreation.asp. Seniors' events are offered at the Lindsey Davis Community Center. There is also a fishing club, a walking club, a soul line-dancing club, a bowling league, a baseball league, etc. Below is a sampling of events as of March, 2011.

Jazz After Dark –enjoy live bands, poetry, food, drinks and much more at this monthly event. Jazz After Dark takes place on every third Friday of each month at the Dan Calloway Complex amphitheater, which is behind the Tate Recreation Center. Please call (561)845-4070 for more information.

Riviera Beach Triathlon –this annual event challenges participants with a ¼-mile swim, a 10-mile bike ride, and a 3-mile run. The event takes place in May, along the municipal beach on Singer Island. Please call (561)845-4070 or visit <http://www.multirace.com> for more information.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade and Celebration –an annual celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. includes a gala parade, a senior citizens' luncheon, and a dance extravaganza. For more information please call (561)840-4880.

Business Landscape

Major employers in Riviera Beach include Cheney Brothers (food distribution), Pepsi Cola Bottling, Lockheed Martin (aerospace engineering), Serta Mattress, Farmer & Irwin Corporation, Tropical Shipping and SYSCO Food Services.⁸ The top employment sectors are education, health and social services (22 percent), professional, scientific, management, and administrative service (13 percent), and arts, entertainment, accommodation and food services (12 percent).

The Port of Palm Beach, located in the City of Riviera Beach, ranks as Florida's fourth busiest container port (18th busiest in the continental United States), and is a major source of commerce. The Florida East Coast Railway Company (FEC) services docks and piers through the port's industrial rail-switching operations, and the Port of Palm Beach is South Florida's only port facility operating a rail system with pier-side box, hopper, and intermodal cars on a 24-hour basis.⁹

Sources

¹ City of Riviera Beach. Riviera Beach Police Department History.

http://www.rivierabch.com/police_detail.asp?page=4.

² SimplyMap. <http://www.simplymap.com>.

³ The Palm Beach Post. “Riviera Beach struggles to overcome decades of divisiveness”. July 02, 2006.

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/local_news/epaper/2006/07/02/m1a_RBnew1_0702.html.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Riviera Beach CRA. Marina Development Conceptual Plan. <http://www.rbcra.com/id38.html> .

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all statistics in this section downloaded from <http://www.simplymap.com> .

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all statistics in this section downloaded from <http://www.simplymap.com>.

⁸ Palm Beach County Business Development Board. Palm Beach County Top Employers. <http://www.bdb.org> .

⁹ Port of Palm Beach. About Us. <http://www.portofpalmbeach.com/about-us/>.