



Longboat Key News

April 17, 2026

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InsideLook



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The \$3.6 Billion Beach

Siesta Key just topped America's best-beach list again. For Longboat Key and the Sarasota barrier islands, the real story is what that crown is worth — and who's cashing in.



The sand at Siesta Beach is 99 percent pure quartz, so fine it squeaks underfoot and stays cool even in a Florida August. Geologists believe it washed down from the Appalachian Mountains over millennia, deposited here by rivers and ancient currents. You cannot manufacture that. You either have it or you don't.

This spring, U.S. News & World Report confirmed — again — that nobody has it quite like Sarasota County. In its 2026 Best Beaches in the U.S. rankings, evaluating more than 1,500 destinations using expert judgment and traveler data, Siesta Beach came out on top. No. 1 in the country. Maui behind it. Malibu behind that. Anna Maria Island, the barrier island just to our north, took No. 3. Florida claimed six of the top fifteen spots. But it was this coastline — these three

barrier islands, this county — that stood alone at the summit.

For readers of this paper, the accolade is not news in the surprising sense. It is news in the confirming sense. Rankings season arrives on the Gulf Coast as predictably as sea turtle nesting, and every year, one name rises. Siesta Beach was named best in America twice by coastal geographer Stephen "Dr. Beach" Leatherman. Tripadvisor put it at No. 1 nationally and No. 4 in the world in 2025. Condé Nast Traveler readers ranked it No. 8 in the country earlier this year. The suspense is never whether Siesta will appear. The suspense is how high it will land.

What is worth examining — particularly for an audience that understands what rankings do to real estate markets, hospitality revenues, and destination brand equity

— is what this particular honor means right now, in this particular moment for our islands.

The Three Islands and What They're Selling

It is worth being precise about geography, because each island in this chain operates as a distinct market with a distinct value proposition.

Siesta Key is the engine. Seven thousand permanent residents, two bridges to the mainland, a village of open-air restaurants and boutique shops arranged around the premise that the beach is the natural center of life. The ranking amplifies what the island already is: a family destination with broad demographic reach, strong short-term rental demand, and the kind of organic

On the Beach, page 2

Progress Has a Price in Sarasota
Sarasota needs housing. A Tennessee developer has a plan. And standing in the way are seventeen small businesses, two massive oak trees, and a block of 1920s bungalows that never forgot what this city used to be.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

You know the block. Anyone who has driven into downtown Sarasota from the north knows the block — the riot of painted bungalows hugging the north side of Fruitville Road near US 301, the hand-lettered signs, the live oaks throwing shade across mismatched roof lines, the waft of pancakes drifting into the parking lot. It doesn't look like much from sixty miles per hour. It looks like every-
See Fruitville, page 3

As Schools Cut, Longboat Funds

As the district cuts 136 teaching jobs, a timeless tension between wealth, civic obligation, and public education plays out on the shores of Sarasota Bay

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

There is something quietly poignant about the arithmetic of Longboat Key and the Sarasota County school system. Each year, island property owners — people who chose this barrier strip of Gulf-kissed real estate precisely because it is beautiful, serene, and largely insulated from the concerns of the mainland — write, in aggregate, an enormous check to a school district whose classrooms most of their children will never enter.

The number is not trivial. Longboat Key generates roughly \$28.7 million annually for Sarasota County Schools, accounting for more than 7.5 percent of the district's total property tax revenue. In exchange, the Sarasota side of the island sends approximately 33 students to those same schools in any given year. The math resolves to something approaching \$870,000 per pupil — a figure that says less about education than it does about the nature of a civilized society, and what we owe one another across the invisible lines of zip code and net worth.

For decades, this arrangement has been the unspoken compact of Florida's property tax structure: the wealthy subsidize the public commons, often for institutions they personally bypass. It is imperfect and occasionally irksome, but it has also been, by almost any moral accounting, just.

Which makes the news coming out of the Sarasota County School District this spring all the more sobering.

A Reckoning That Has Been Building for Years

Superintendent Terry Connor has announced the elimination of 136 teaching positions — a structural correction forced upon a district caught in a slow-motion financial vise. Enrollment is falling. Health insurance and utility costs are rising. And the federal COVID-19 relief funds that

temporarily inflated staffing rolls — allowing the district to add positions it could not otherwise afford — have now run dry.

Those pandemic-era dollars were always borrowed time. They masked a deeper demographic and political reality that Florida's school districts are only now confronting with full clarity: birthrates are declining, and the state's school voucher program, once limited to lower-income families, has been dramatically expanded. It is now universal. Any Florida family may use public funds for private school or home education — and a significant number are doing exactly that, quietly draining enrollment from traditional public schools one family at a time.

The district, which once served nearly the same student population it expects next fall — 36,699 students in 2016-17 versus a projected 36,648 in 2026-27 — finds itself carrying a payroll designed for a different era. At its recent peak, Sarasota County Schools employed 6,437 people. It is now pulling that number back toward something commensurate with its actual student count.

"We have to be true to staffing at the appropriate levels based on student enrollment because that is where revenue is generated," Connor said, "and 85 percent of our budget is staffing."

The cuts include a 6 percent reduction in school-level staff and a 14 percent reduction in district administrative positions — the latter coming on top of roughly 20 percent in administrative cuts already made over the previous two years.

The Teachers Who Remain — and Those Who Won't

For the educators who keep their jobs, the financial pain is more personal than abstract. The district's top-tier PPO health plan, previously covered in
See School Cuts, page 3

On the Beach, from page 1

repeat visitation that no marketing budget can buy. Families from Ohio and Michigan return the same week every year. They have been doing it for twenty years. The U.S. News ranking is the permission slip that convinces the family that hasn't been yet to finally book.

Lido Key is the middle chapter. St. Armands Circle — conceived by John Ringling in the 1920s and now a mature retail-and-dining corridor of genuine quality — anchors an island that draws a more local crowd and a more discerning visitor. Lido Beach is quieter than Siesta, its parking lots full of Sarasota residents rather than rental-car tourists. The restaurants are better than they need to be. The whole island has the quality of a place that doesn't particularly need to advertise.

Longboat Key is the statement. Twelve miles of the most private coastline on Florida's Gulf Coast, a single road running its length, gated communities, championship golf at the Longboat Key Club, and — the development that has changed the conversation more than any other in recent memory — the St. Regis Longboat Key Resort. With standard room rates that routinely clear \$1,000 per night and suites approaching \$7,000, the St. Regis has not merely added luxury inventory to the county. It has repositioned what this island means to the affluent traveler who once defaulted to Palm Beach or the Florida Keys. The effect on bed tax revenue alone has been measurable. Longboat Key already accounted for 7.5 percent of all tourist development tax collected countywide before the St. Regis opened. That share has grown.

The Numbers Behind the Sand

Visit Sarasota County reported a total economic impact of \$3.6 billion from tourism in fiscal year 2025. That figure includes not only the \$2.37 billion in direct visitor expenditures on lodging, dining, shopping, and activities, but also the downstream multiplier effects through the broader economy. For context: 2.71 million visitors generated that output in FY25, a figure that is down 6.3 percent from the prior year's 2.89 million. Visitor spending is down 7.1 percent year-over-year.

Those declines deserve an honest read. Some of the contraction reflects the inevitable cooling from pandemic-era peaks, when Florida was open while most of the country was not and every coastal market saw historically anomalous numbers. Some of it reflects legitimate competitive pressure — other destinations have invested aggressively in the years since, and domestic travel has re-globalized as pandemic restrictions faded. Some of it, specifically on Longboat Key, reflects the damage inflicted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton in fall 2024, which cost the island an entire season and sent contractors rather than tourists through local doors for much of 2025.

But the pre-pandemic comparison is the more honest benchmark. Visitor spending and economic impact both remain substantially above 2019 levels, by more than \$488 million and \$498 million respectively. The Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport is on track to handle 4.5 million passengers in calendar year 2025 — more than double its 2019 volume of 1.9 million. Fewer people may be staying in hotels. More people are landing here.

Quality Over Quantity — And Why That's the Right Call

Visit Sarasota County CEO Erin Duggan has been consistent in articulating a strategic posture that this audience will recognize immediately: the county is not trying to maximize visitor volume. It is trying to optimize visitor value.

"We talk a lot about quality over quantity," Duggan has said publicly. "We would rather have fewer visitors spending more money than more visitors spending less money." The agency's marketing for fiscal year 2026 — backed by approximately \$46.25 million in anticipated tourism development tax revenue — is deliberately targeted at the arts enthusiast, the international traveler, the sports event participant, the convention attendee who fills shoulder-season rooms. The St. Regis guest. The Ritz-Carlton group booking. The European couple on a two-week Florida itinerary.

This is not a strategy born of complacency. It is a strategy born of a destination that has looked at what it has — the geology, the golf, the cultural infrastructure, the restaurant scene, the arts institutions that make Sarasota genuinely unusual for a city of its size — and made a rational decision about whom to invite. The U.S. News ranking is, among other things, a powerful recruiting tool for exactly that target market.

After the Storms

Any clear-eyed account of where these islands stand right now requires acknowledging what happened in the fall of 2024 and the year that followed. Helene and Milton were severe. Longboat Key bore significant damage. The 2024-2025 season was the quietest in recent memory for many island businesses. The Lazy Lobster — a Longboat institution — reported a 12.5 percent revenue drop for the year, which its owner described as painful but better than feared.

By the spring of 2026, however, the rebuild is largely complete. The Longboat Key Club's managing director, Rick Konsavage, characterizes the current season as a return to normal. "Now, since most of the contractors are finished, we're coming back to normal," he said recently. "We are very optimistic. It's not going to be a banner year, but it'll be slightly above last year." That is an honest assessment from someone who has been in Gulf Coast hospitality long enough to know what normal looks like and how hard it is to restore.

What the Ranking Actually Does

There is a tendency in local coverage to treat beach rankings as feel-good validation — a ribbon for the wall, a line in a press release. That is not what U.S. News No. 1 is, and readers of this paper understand the difference.

A ranking of this magnitude, from a publication of this credibility, functions as third-party validation in a media environment saturated with promotional noise. It reaches the meeting planner in Chicago weighing Sarasota against Scottsdale. It reaches the travel agent in Frankfurt building a two-week Florida package. It reaches the family in Columbus that has been meaning to try something different this summer. It reaches the prospective second-home buyer in the Northeast who has been looking at properties on the key and wondering whether the investment thesis holds.

The thesis holds. The geology holds. The county's deliberate pivot toward value-over-volume is the right call for this market, at this moment. And the Sarasota-Bradenton airport numbers — 4.5 million passengers, more than double the pre-pandemic baseline — suggest that the long-term trajectory of inbound interest is not in question, even if the short-term hotel occupancy charts look lumpy.

The sand is still the same. It is still cool in August. It still squeaks. U.S. News says it is the best in America. The market, as it tends to do, agrees.



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School Cuts, from page 1

full, will now cost teachers \$200 per month out of pocket. Supplemental pay for those working in the highest-need environments — the Title I schools, the exceptional student education classrooms — is being slashed dramatically. A Title I teacher who earned a \$3,000 annual supplement will now receive \$1,200. An ESE teacher at a Title I school will see that supplement fall from \$6,000 to \$1,500.

These are not rounding errors for a young teacher carrying student debt in an expensive coastal county.

The reductions fall hardest on first- and second-year educators — those who entered the profession, often idealistically and at some financial sacrifice, during the post-pandemic hiring surge. Among them is Julie Farnsworth, a graphics design teacher at Sarasota High School who works daily with 120 students and has logged 140 hours of continuing education over the past two years — hours she needs to complete her teaching certificate.

Her position ends June 30.

“I’ve done 140 hours of continuing education in the last two years,” she said, “and now if they don’t let me stay for one more year, I don’t even get my teaching certificate that I’ve completed all the courses for.” Her students, she says, tell her regularly that she has made a difference. “My seniors are like, ‘I wouldn’t be here, Miss Farnsworth, if it wasn’t for you.’”

It is exactly the kind of human story that gets lost when school boards speak in the language of full-time equivalents and per-pupil expenditures.

Fruitville, from page 1

thing once you stop.

That block is now under contract to a developer from Franklin, Tennessee. And if the math works out the way Bristol Development Group intends, those cottages, those oaks, those pancakes and the sixteen other businesses that share this improbable little corner will be replaced — perhaps by early 2027 — by a five-story, 324-unit apartment complex with a six-level parking garage, a gym, a clubhouse and a pool.

The project is called 1899 Fruitville Road. It had its first hearing before the city’s Development Review Committee in March. No public vote is required, because the site is already zoned for exactly this kind of development — a fact that has left neighbors and business owners with the unnerving realization that the city may have no formal mechanism to stop it.

A century of survivors

The cottages along Fruitville Road date to the 1920s — built during the same land boom that made Sarasota the city it became, in the same era that John Ringling planted his circus on the city’s north end and left his mark on everything from the architecture to the social register. Local lore holds that some of these bungalows once housed Ringling circus performers. Whether or not every story checks out, the buildings carry that particular Florida-cracker DNA: small, practical, adaptable, surprisingly durable.

The property is made up of 22 parcels assembled over decades by Marlene and Alex Lancaster, who acquired lots from 1996 through 2018 at prices ranging from \$17,500 to nearly a million dollars each, according to county records. Lancaster has reportedly been candid with tenants for years that he never intended to hold the property forever. The tenants understood. That didn’t make the news easier when it finally arrived.

Today the block hosts seventeen businesses — Siegfried’s Restaurant and German Biergarten, The Artful Giraffe, BlueAloe Day Spa, The Breakfast House, Discover Sarasota Tours, The Crystal Stargate, a yoga studio, salons, a bubble tea shop, artisan galleries and more. Together they serve more than twenty thousand customers a month. They are an incubator for Sarasota’s quirky retail identity — the kinds of businesses that define a city’s personality and almost never find their way back once the rent moves up.

The Breakfast House

The Breakfast House has become the emotional center of this story, perhaps because its origin is so perfectly Sarasota. In 2008, Jazz Wingard’s mother was driving down Fruitville Road, spotted a small dilapidated bungalow and decided she could make something of it. Her family thought she was joking. They went to college. They came back. They are still there, sixteen years later, serving eggs and pancakes out of a cottage that has been the one constant thread of their lives.

That kind of story doesn’t fit on a pro forma.

Wingard says she wasn’t entirely surprised — her landlord had been honest with her for years. But knowing something is coming doesn’t make it land gently. Other tenants at a recent Gillespie Park Neighborhood Association meeting described the experience of sitting in Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, looking at renderings of the building that will replace their livelihoods, as something between grief and disbelief.

“These are livelihoods for people,” one business owner told reporters. “This is how we make money, this is how we live, and to take that from us — that’s hard.”

Another called the proposed building “beautifully designed for this time period, but completely out of place for a neighborhood as historic as Gillespie Park.”

What the Developer Says

Bristol Development Group has developed apartment communities across the Southeast for twenty-six years and describes itself as a builder of high-quality, amenity-rich urban living at attainable prices in growing Sunbelt cities. Sarasota, they say, has been on their radar for a long time.

In a statement, the company expressed enthusiasm for the project and said its design and legal teams have been diligently following proper procedures for developing in the city of Sarasota. Construction is projected to begin in early 2027, pending administrative approvals expected throughout the rest of 2026.

The project’s lead designer framed Fruitville Road itself as part of the problem — a wide, fast arterial that has long functioned as a hard edge between downtown and the historic Gillespie Park neighborhood to the north. The new development, he argued, offers an opportunity to soften that barrier with wider sidewalks, shade trees, underground utilities and improved pedestrian infrastructure. Two of the site’s massive grand oaks — with trunk diameters of 67 and 72 inches — are intended to be preserved in a courtyard that could become a semi-public gathering space.

The project also carries a social-equity component: utilizing the city’s downtown attainable density bonus program, 36 of the 324 units — roughly eleven percent — would be reserved for households earning between 80 and 120 percent of area median income. For a single person in Sarasota, that means incomes roughly between \$60,000 and \$129,000. In a region where the gap between wages and rents has become one of the dominant civic conversations, that is not nothing.

The Trees, the Rules, and the Room Where it Gets Complicated

Not everyone is ready to accept the developer’s framing on the oak trees. Local organizer

What Longboat Key’s Contribution Actually Means

For Longboat Key residents who follow these matters, the district’s financial troubles present a particular kind of complexity. You are, in a very real sense, major stakeholders in a system you rarely use directly. Your tax dollars pay teacher salaries, fund classroom supplies, support counselors and bus drivers and cafeteria staff serving tens of thousands of children — most of them on the mainland, most of them from families with far fewer resources than your own.

That is not a criticism. It is a description of how public education has always worked, and has always had to work, in a society that believes — or at least says it believes — that a child’s opportunities should not be wholly determined by the accident of their parents’ bank balance.

The question worth sitting with, as Sarasota County enters this period of contraction, is what comes next. Superintendent Connor has expressed confidence that many displaced teachers will find new positions within the district through natural attrition as veteran educators retire. That may well prove true. But the structural forces at work — demographic decline, voucher expansion, the perpetual fragility of public sector funding — are not going away.

Longboat Key will keep sending its \$28.7 million across the bridge. The schools will keep serving children whose faces most island residents will never see. And somewhere in that transaction — impersonal, automatic, anonymous — is the quiet machinery of a community deciding, year after year, what it values.

Right now, the system is under stress. The people feeling it most acutely are not the ones writing the checks.

Kelly Franklin has been pressing the city publicly on its Grand Tree Ordinance, arguing that the developer’s plans would require removing five protected grand oaks, not two — and that the city has an obligation to enforce its own rules regardless of what the developer proposes.

The city’s Historic Preservation Senior Planner has notified the applicant’s attorney that the city continues to encourage relocation or salvage of any structures that can be preserved. It is, in the language of municipal bureaucracy, a nudge rather than a mandate.

Because the site sits within a downtown edge zone district and requires no rezoning, the approval process is administrative — meaning it flows through the city’s Director of Development Services rather than through elected officials. There will be no public hearing in the traditional sense. The community’s leverage is limited to the comment process, relationships with city staff and, ultimately, the political will of city leadership.

Three technical adjustments are being sought by the developer. One reduces a facade requirement along Fourth Street to accommodate the preserved trees. Another reduces the required depth of habitable space adjacent to the parking structure. A third seeks relief from the city’s restriction on structured parking visible from primary streets. These are the kinds of asks that, in a quieter development process, would be negotiated between architects and planners out of public view. In this case they are being scrutinized by a community that feels it has no other lever to pull.

The Bigger Picture on Fruitville

The 1899 Fruitville project does not exist in isolation. Nearby, a 274-unit multifamily building called Fruitville Gateway is proposed just to the east. To the west on North Osprey Avenue, a project called The High Line is planned at eleven stories with 142 residential units. Together these projects sketch the outline of a corridor being remade — not quite downtown, not quite neighborhood, but trending rapidly toward mid-rise density in every direction.

This is not a coincidence. It is the map of a city being rebuilt, block by block, by the mathematics of land cost, density bonuses and construction financing. Sarasota is growing. It has been growing for decades and the pace has only accelerated. The people who love it most — who moved here for its scale, its Gulf light, its arts community, its particular brand of civilized informality — are watching the calculus play out in real time and finding that the things they came for tend not to survive it intact.

Whether that’s a tragedy or simply history is a matter of perspective. Cities change. They always have. The question Sarasota is navigating — the question every desirable mid-sized American city is navigating right now — is whether the growth pays for itself in kind. Whether the version of the city that emerges from this particular decade of pressure will still be worth the drive from Longboat Key.

What Comes Next...

The development review process is expected to continue through the remainder of 2026. No sale has been finalized, no permits issued, no bulldozers scheduled. For the seventeen businesses still operating at 1899 Fruitville, that timeline is both a mercy and a prolonged uncertainty that is nearly impossible to plan around.

Some tenants say they are simply trying to make the most of the time they have. Others say they cannot begin to imagine starting over somewhere else — and mean it. A few are watching the adjacent development wave roll toward them and wondering whether there will be anywhere left in the city’s core that still feels like the Sarasota they built their businesses inside of.

Meanwhile, the cottages are still there. The pancakes are still good. The live oaks are still giving shade, their trunks wider around than most people can reach. If you haven’t been, go. If you have been, go again.

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EditorLetters



Longboat Key News and Sarasota City News encourages Letters to the Editor on timely issues. Please email to: letters@lbknews.com or mail to PO Box 8001, Longboat Key, FL 34228. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Longboat Key issues. We reserve the right to edit.

St. Regis Arch

To: Editor

I entirely concur with Chuck Whittall on why the St. Regis arch should not only be permitted it should be embraced! There are many examples of great hotels in Europe, like the Carlton Cannes which have made virtues of their iconic pier arches..

- * They're stylish and distinctive.
- * They can be a memorable and romantic place to meet.
- * They are a focal point and a frame for photos
- * And yes, the tasteful St. Regis Longboat Key Arch will almost certainly become another iconic place where memories are created.

To suggest that it's 'Jersey Shore' is silly and uninformed.
Michael R Williams-Jones
Longboat Key

St. Regis Arch

To: Longboat Key Mayor Debbie Williams

Congratulations on earning the deserved respect of your colleagues and your election as Mayor.

I recall when I first met you and learned of your earlier community service talking up the need for good people to have interest in Longboat's government. I take no credit in your local career other than saying I knew you when.

With regard to the efforts of Mr. Whittall and Ms. Patten to continue to argue for the St. Regis wedding arch, I am as far removed from being a fan of this structure as there can be. Aesthetics are subjective. The best I can say for the arch is it is dumb, unsightly and unneeded. And basically installed in knowing contravention of the rules on the Town. The maneuver of having a State agency "approve" it was a neat but transparent workaround and as such offends me in its disrespect for the Commission and staff. Because a property owner (or President) wants something, or likes something, or thinks it's neat is no reason for the Town to contort itself trying to shoehorn it in. The fact that it exists currently is meaningless as far as rules are concerned. There are regulations, laws and ordinances for reasons. The time to challenge is in advance, not after presenting the governing body with a fait accompli. In this case, the Planning Commission got it right and the Commission should take their guidance.

Lest anyone think I have some grudge against Mr. Whittall or his legal team, during the years of his working his proposal through the Town, I had many meetings with him (always with a witness by my side) and don't recall a cross word in our discussions which were all held at his request.

Indeed I was Mayor at the two March 2018 hearings that gave the important initial plan approval to the St. Regis. I always found Chuck reasonable and rational, combined with the reach-for-the-stars mindset common and perhaps needed by successful developers. When compromise was called for on his part, he realistically was cooperative. Ms. Patten was always professional and very good to work with. I'm disappointed in her having gone forward with the initial side step and the continuing arguments, but I realize she is representing her client.

I wouldn't characterize this as a hill anyone need "die" on, but I would ask Mr. Whittall if the success of the St. Regis, including wedding bookings is existentially tied to a piece of metal no prospective bride ever expressed disappointment to the Town or anyone else to our knowledge by not having such a thing out on the water. Please, Chuck. It's an unneeded edifice and an unneeded battle. I hope for you to be a key corporate citizen for decades to come. Why sully the memory of all you will contribute going forward with this fight.

Terry Gans
California

St. Regis Arch

To: Terry Gans

Thank you so much for your thoughtful note and kind words. I appreciate you expressing your perspective, which is helpful given your past experience and involvement. The commission will consider yours and other comments we receive when the matter comes before us. Thank you again for your email. Please give my best regards to Diane.

Debra Williams
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

See Letters, page 6

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Her Oak Box
by Bob Parrish (c)

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You to be well and far from harm

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You looked at me as if you knew
I saw you rest your chin
As I had tears seeing you again
Your life again to keep your life



But I will be lonely
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Editor Letters



Letters, from page 4

St. Regis Owner Fights for Wedding Arch

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
The cones are still blocking the bike lane on GMD by the large house being built south of the mobile home residences. This continues to be a serious safety issue for cyclists. The cement was poured 3 weeks ago - there does not appear to be a reason to maintain this safety hazard.

BJ Bishop
Commissioner, Town of Longboat Key

St. Regis Owner Fights for Wedding Arch

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop
Thanks Commissioner Bishop. The St. Regis is still operating under a TCO. The \$200K donation is one of the requirements of receiving a CO. The developer is aware of this requirement and has indicated it will be paid prior to the CO.

No plans have been submitted for pickleball/tennis courts. The developer has been advised not to submit additional plan revisions until a CO is received. The potential pickleball/tennis courts will require a PUD amendment & public hearing approval.

Allen Parsons
Planning and Zoning Director, Town of Longboat Key

St. Regis Owner Fights for Wedding Arch

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
This article states the St. Regis is building tennis and pickleball courts. Do they have a CO yet? Have they filed plans for these courts? They promised \$200k to address the absence of

courts to the town. Has that money been received?

BJ Bishop
Commissioner, Town of Longboat Key

St. Armands Handout

To: Longboat Key Commission
This is the handout from last night's St. Armands workshop. Several points to note from the community feedback discussion:

Resiliency – Lido beach nourishment project is finishing up this month, and dune rebuilding will happen this fall.

Concerns about stormwater infrastructure maintenance and readiness for even a heavy rain event.

Concern shared about the aging water and wastewater infrastructure.

Concern shared about options for flood protection and the complexity of the issues that provide no simple answers (i.e. – water coming up through the floors or from a neighboring store).

The drainage issues by the yacht club will be addressed with the little Ringling bridge replacement. Efforts to engage landlords and businesses to understand what's holding them back from additional investments in St. Armands are in the works.

Lastly, the lesson of being present was (in my opinion) once again reinforced. The city had several commissioners there as well as a number of staff. The county didn't have their stormwater director available and unfortunately only sent a lower level (non-technical) staff person to represent the department/county. That sent the signal, unintended as I'm sure it was, that St. Armands isn't a high priority for the county. On important issues, being present often matters as much or more than the message being shared. My 2 cents anyway.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager, Town of Longboat Key



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Address	Sq. Ft.	List Price	Bed/Bath/Half Bath	Days On Market	Sale Price
70 LIGHTHOUSE POINT DR	5,475	\$13,750,000	5 5 1	35	\$13,505,000
600 DREAM ISLAND RD	1,982	\$3,595,000	3 2 0	313	\$2,500,000
415 L AMBIANCE DR Unit#E507	2,385	\$2,950,000	2 3 0	92	\$2,675,000
100 SANDS POINT RD Unit#114	2,094	\$2,100,000	3 3 0	28	\$2,000,000
585 SANCTUARY DR Unit#B502	1,823	\$1,699,000	3 3 0	52	\$1,650,000
1465 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#106	1,815	\$1,295,000	3 3 0	115	\$1,200,000
2045 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#M1-309	1,265	\$899,000	2 2 0	2	\$879,000
4725 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#309	1,120	\$819,000	2 2 0	1	\$785,000
1916 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#803	1,626	\$785,000	2 2 1	46	\$642,000
2295 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#64S	1,235	\$625,000	2 2 0	247	\$595,000
4420 EXETER DR Unit#307	1,152	\$575,000	2 2 0	65	\$550,000
5310 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#18	711	\$425,000	1 1 0	222	\$395,000
171 WHITTIER DR	6,367	\$16,500,000	5 6 1	0	\$15,800,000
635 MOURNING DOVE DR	3,653	\$7,495,000	3 3 0	48	\$7,200,000
258 GOLDEN GATE PT Unit#801	3,031	\$2,995,000	3 3 1	123	\$2,800,000
1800 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DR Unit#B1006	2,070	\$2,500,000	3 3 0	1	\$2,500,000
650 GOLDEN GATE PT Unit#403	1,837	\$2,350,000	2 2 1	384	\$2,225,000
300 S PINEAPPLE AVE Unit#902	2,291	\$2,250,000	3 3 0	84	\$2,100,000
35 WATERGATE DR Unit#503	2,990	\$1,999,000	3 3 0	639	\$1,925,000
166 GOLDEN GATE PT Unit#22	2,132	\$1,995,000	3 3 0	122	\$1,950,000
1800 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DR Unit#B708	1,700	\$1,895,000	2 2 1	9	\$1,800,000
111 S PINEAPPLE AVE Unit#511	1,482	\$1,350,000	2 2 1	0	\$1,350,000
332 COCOANUT AVE Unit#508	1,159	\$1,049,000	2 2 0	142	\$965,000
707 S GULFSTREAM AVE Unit#604	1,262	\$725,000	2 2 0	164	\$705,000
1750 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DR Unit#9G	1,548	\$725,000	2 2 0	85	\$650,000
1350 MAIN ST Unit#707	1,165	\$550,000	2 2 0	90	\$520,000
1542 OAK ST Unit#6	990	\$399,000	2 2 0	667	\$375,000



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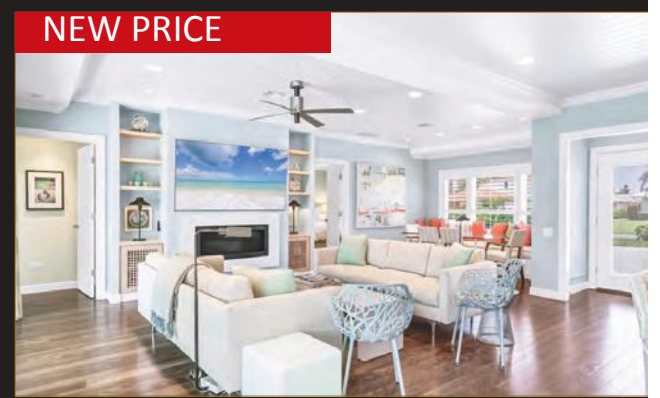
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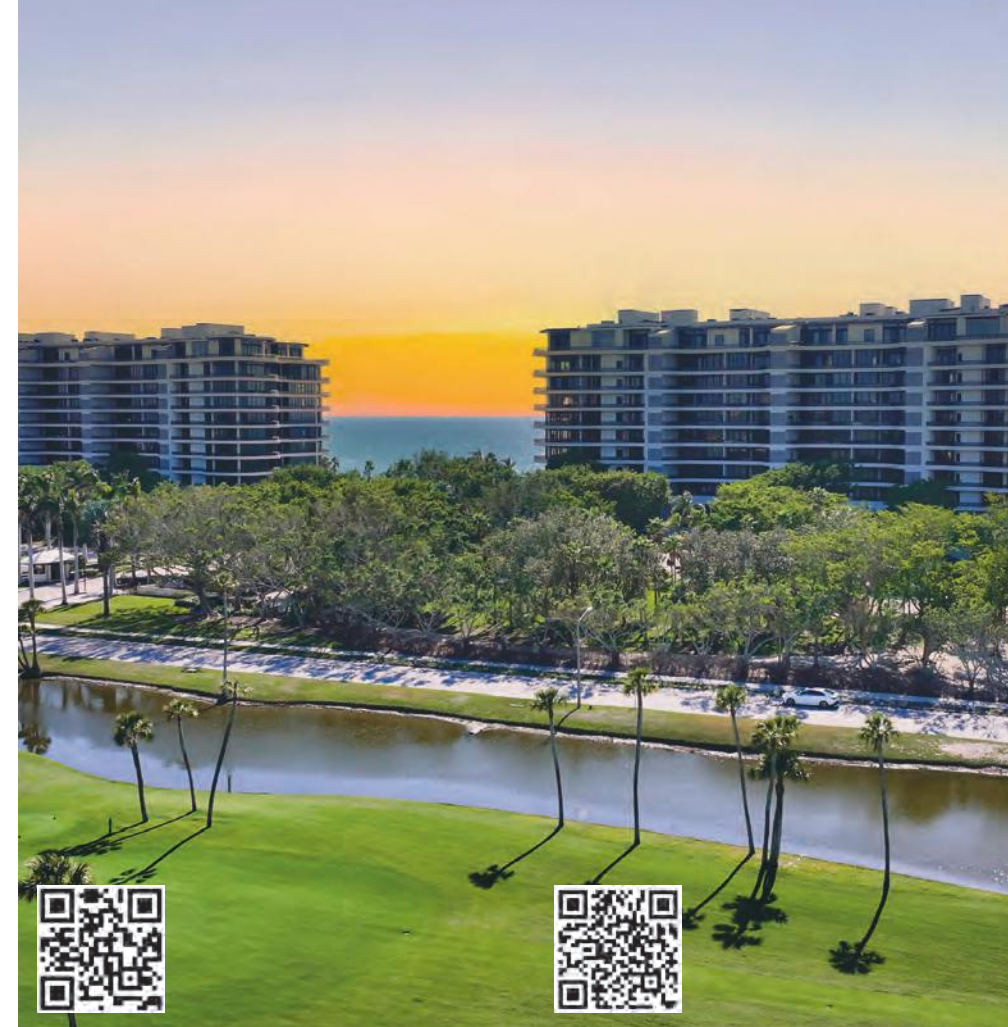
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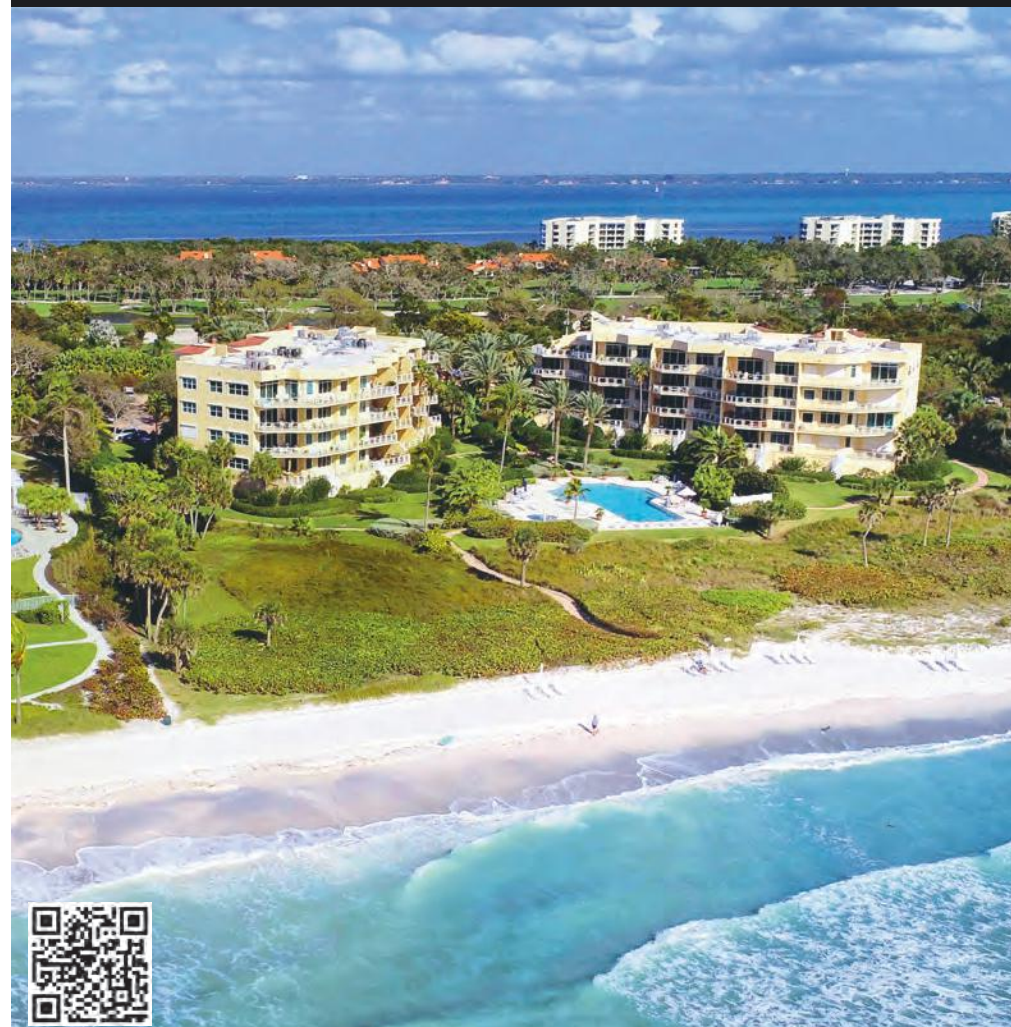
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St. Armands Key



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408JacksonDr.com

OnPatrol



The following are actual police reports as written by Longboat Key Police Officers. They are edited for length, punctuation and to protect privacy.

April 10 Traffic

12:11 p.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to the 5600 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a traffic crash. Upon arrival, Officer Van Dyke spoke to a man and two women and the man said he worked it out with the other guy and therefore didn't want a police report. Officer Van Dyke asked the man if the vehicle parked several spaces down was involved, but the man said "no." The other vehicle had an Alabama license plate with damage to the passenger side doors. No indication of impairment, airbag deployment, property damage or injuries.

The vehicle appears to be operable. The driver of the other vehicle was not on scene. Based on this information, no further investigation was necessary. Case clear.



Noise

10:33 p.m.

Sgt. Montfort was dispatched to the area of 5000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a noise complaint. It was further reported that a live band was playing at a house party. Sgt. Montfort arrived on scene and observed loud music coming from the rear of the residence. Sgt. Montfort made contact with the band, who directed him to the homeowner who stated he believed the noise ordinance was in effect at 11 p.m. Sgt. Montfort informed him that the ordinance goes into effect at 10 p.m. The band agreed to cease the music for the night. Case clear.

Person

5:57 p.m.

Officer Troyer responded to Longboat Club Road in reference to a suspicious person. The complainant contacted the Sarasota County dispatch center and reported two subjects fishing from the beach. The complainant felt the subjects fishing from the beach was illegal. Officer Troyer contacted the complainant by phone and she knew there was nothing he could do, however she wanted to know the laws about fishing on private beaches or fishing on the beach at all. The complainant said she never seen anyone fish on the beach and felt it was illegal. Officer Troyer informed the complainant that fishing from the beach was not illegal, nor would it be illegal from private property. The complainant did not wish to fully identify herself and hung up the call. Due to no crime being committed, a response was not necessary. Case clear.

Person

6:58 p.m.

Officer Mathis responded to 1500 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to two suspicious males on the property. Upon his arrival, Officer Mathis made contact with the complainant who advised that when he returned home he noticed a brownish red car on the west shoulder of Gulf of Mexico Drive with flashing lights on. The complainant further explained that when he pulled into the property via the gated drive access, he observed several men pickup up coconuts. The complainant advised that during a short verbal encounter he told the subjects that they were on private property and needed to leave immediately and the unknown men responded that they were gathering the coconuts. Not wanting further confrontation, the complainant ended the conversation and continued to his residence. Once inside, the complainant contacted 911 to report the suspicious men gathering coconuts. Upon his arrival to the location, the brownish red car was gone and all suspicious subjects had left. The complainant requested that no further action take place and explained that he would be contacting his property management to remedy any future suspicious workers. Case clear.

April 11 Property

10:13 a.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to Bay Isles Parkway in reference to property damage. Upon arrival, Officer Van Dyke met with the caller who advised that his Turo rental car appeared to have minor damage on both driver side doors, indicative of a vehicle sideswipe. The caller advised the officer that he's staying at the beach on the resort for the weekend, but was unsure if the damage may have occurred there. Officer Van Dyke met with management at Publix and obtained video of the estimated timespan. At approximately 10 a.m., the caller stated that he arrived to Publix, and at 10:29, a large black SUV possibly a Tahoe, Suburban or Escalade backed into the space to the left of the caller's vehicle. The caller's vehicle was parked front end forward. Officer Van Dyke was unable to observe any indication that the vehicle definitely struck the caller's vehicle. Therefore, it's reasonable to assume the vehicle had been damaged elsewhere. Case clear.

April 12 Incident

12:28 p.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to North Shore Road in reference to a residential burglary. Upon further investigation, the case was updated to a suspicious incident. The caller stated that an unknown individual entered their residence while they were away from home. Upon arrival, Officer Van Dyke met with the property manager and called the homeowner who advised that the incident was a mistake, she didn't recognize that particular property manager. No indication of a crime was observed. Case clear.

Citizen assist

7:42 p.m.

Officer Mathis responded to Bayou Sound in reference to an open door to a residence. Upon his arrival, Officer Mathis met with the homeowner who advised that he purchased the residence a few months ago and was enjoying the breeze while tending to chores. The homeowner advised everything was fine and grateful for neighbors noticing the open door. Case clear.

Vehicle

8:39 p.m.

Officer Troyer while on patrol, observed a vehicle approaching from the north and was driving southbound. He saw the vehicle in question had a defective passenger headlight and there was no illumination coming from such headlight. Officer Troyer conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle in the 6900 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for having a defective headlight. Officer Troyer walked up to the vehicle and introduced himself and explained the reason for the traffic stop to the driver. Officer Troyer asked the driver for a driver's license which he only provided the officer with a Mexican ID card. Officer Troyer asked if he had a driver's license, to which he said no. Officer Troyer conducted a license and warrants check for the man and found that he was unlicensed. Based on his investigation, Officer Troyer found probable cause to believe the man was operating a motor vehicle upon public roadways without a valid driver's license. Officer Troyer issued the man a criminal citation and traffic citation. The man parked the vehicle in a nearby shopping center and contacted a friend to come assist him with removing the vehicle. Case clear.

April 13 Vehicle

10:15 p.m.

Officer Martinson was dispatched to Halyard Lane on a call of a suspicious vehicle. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson located the vehicle parked at the end of the cul-de-sac in front of a vacant lot. Officer Martinson ran the vehicle through NCIC/FCIC and both the vehicle and owner came back clear of any wants or warrants. Officer Martinson inspected the vehicle and everything appeared to be normal. Officer Martinson then drove up and down the nearby streets but did not locate anyone walking around. The caller didn't want to meet. Case clear.

April 14 Noise

11:03 a.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to St. Judes Drive for a noise complaint. The caller reported construction crews were playing a loud radio. Upon his arrival, Officer Maple heard music from the radio in excess of Longboat Key ordinance. Officer Maple observed a construction crew of approximately 5 men working on the roof of the two-story building. Upon his request, a worker turned down the radio and instructed him of the requirements to which he agreed to comply. The complainant did not wish to meet or be contacted. Upon compliance of noise regulations, Officer Maple departed the area and cleared the case. Case clear.

Found property

3:01 p.m.

Officer Zunz responded to the Police Department lobby for a driver's license found on the beach in the 3000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive. Officer Zunz received a telephone call from the owner of the driver's license, asking if anyone may have turned in a driver's license. Officer Zunz told her to come in to the police department to retrieve the license. She arrived shortly and matched the photo onto the driver's license, she was also able to state her correct birthdate and address. Officer Zunz had her sign the property receipt, at which point he handed over the driver's license and she headed out upon her way. Case clear.

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THE HEART BEHIND THE ADVOCATE: IN MEMORY OF A COMPANION

Her Oak Box
by Bob Parrish (c)

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You saw my tears of sorrow
I felt my hugging goodbye
That will be coming tomorrow**

**I do not want this what can be done
To help your body heal and be warm
You to be well and far from harm**

**The night before I saw your eyes
soft and blue
You looked at me as if you knew
I saw you rest your chin
As I had tears seeing you again
Your life again to keep your life**



**But I will be lonely
As I Walk out of a room
With in my arms only
Your oak box not you**

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EditorOpinion

The Map Will Set You Free: St. Armands Gets a Visioning Session, a Consultant With More Plans, and Approximately Zero Answers About Flooding

A full account of the second St. Armands Circle visioning session, in which 150 people learned that everything they needed to know is on an interactive digital map, the flooding will be fixed in approximately five years, the new speed humps are a triumph of civic engineering, and would everyone please just stop asking questions and look at the map.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

Everything felt different and somewhat disorienting as we rode the elevator up to the Keating Center at Mote Marine for the second of the City of Sarasota's St. Armands Circle "visioning sessions." And I mean that literally, because the elevator — and I say this as someone who grew up in New York City, where elevators travel between floors at roughly the speed of a moon rocket — appeared to be moving at a pace that could only be described as "government-funded."

The display said we were going to Floor 3. I had time to check my email, reconsider several life choices, briefly contemplate learning Portuguese, and compose a short mental letter to my accountant before we arrived.

This was, in retrospect, the perfect overture for the evening ahead.

Willie Nelson Opens the Meeting

The session was facilitated by David Brain — which is either his real name or the most optimistic professional branding decision in the history of consulting — who is the consultant/facilitator/behind-the-scenes ideas man who, now that his consulting work is technically done, has naturally developed several exciting new ideas that will require more consulting. He opened by apologizing for his laryngitis. Someone cranked the microphone way up, producing a vocal quality that could only be described as Willie Nelson meets a carton of Chesterfields and a very long night of late-night bourbon. It was arresting. It was unique. It was, frankly, the most interesting part of the meeting. It was the voice of a man who had seen things. Important things. Zoning things.



REID

The Ai Tried. It Really Tried.

The session opened with an AI-generated visual montage — a dreamlike collage of what people said they wanted St. Armands to look like in 20 years, assembled from all those little cards filled out at the first session. Apparently someone fed everything into a generative AI, which dutifully produced a swirling, slightly scrambled series of images that we all stared at for approximately three minutes before it was hastily clicked off the screen.

It looked like what would happen if Google Gemini tried to imagine a wealthy coastal Florida shopping district based entirely on the emotional responses of 150 people who hadn't slept well since Hurricane Helene. Which is, come to think of it, exactly what it was.

The sun was streaming in through the windows, baking everyone's foreheads at a temperature somewhere between "outdoor yoga" and "slow roast," until mercifully someone pulled the shades. The scrambled AI montage and the blazing solar radiation were, together, a fitting prologue to the discussion that followed — which was also somewhat scrambled, and also somewhat blinding.

The Trojan Horse Question

Your wary neighborhood newspaper editor had written, prior to this meeting, that the whole thing might be a Trojan Horse — a velvet-gloved attempt to get developers and property owners what they wanted (read: taller buildings, upstairs rental units, a parking garage with a valet and several layers of hotels stacked above it like a real estate napoleon pastry) while residents smiled and nodded and ate their complimentary cheese cubes.

It wasn't quite that bad. But it wasn't not that bad, either.

Brain made an early observation: after reading all the comment cards from the first session, he concluded that commercial property owners — arguably one of the most important constituencies in any discussion about what to do with a struggling commercial district — were conspicuously, almost heroically, absent from these meetings. He proposed a separate consulting session just for property owners and business interests, run in conjunction with the city's Economic Development coordinator, a genuinely lovely woman who got up and explained, with great warmth and sincerity, that they just wanted to understand what incentives and zoning flexibility might be needed to encourage property owners to finally invest in the Circle and turn things around.

She didn't say "turn this crap hole around." But essentially.

Brain noted that of roughly 200 people in the room, only about 3% appeared to be commercial property owners. Someone did the math. Three percent of 200 is six people. Six people, out of 49 total commercial property owners on St. Armands. Which is, as someone helpfully noted, actually a higher participation rate percentage-wise than the barrier island residential community managed to turn out — but these kinds of statistical nuances became boring very quickly, and the mob was getting restless.

The Lottery. Except with Flooding.

If you have ever read Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" — the one where the whole village seems perfectly normal and civic-minded right up until the moment they stone someone to death — you have a reasonable framework for what happened next. The crowd, which had been politely absorbing PowerPoint slides and consultant-speak, suddenly and collectively decided it had had enough.

The targets of the evening's frustration were, in roughly equal measure: flooding, and the new traffic speed humps.

The flooding grievances were existential and completely legitimate. People are still dealing with the aftermath of the 2024 hurricanes, nearly 18 months later. They wanted to know when the drainage grates were going to be cleaned. They wanted to know about the pumps. They wanted to know why standing water still accumulates. They wanted to know why they'd been told to wait five years, and what exactly "five years" means to someone whose ground floor still smells faintly of the Gulf of Mexico.

A Triumph of Speed Hump Engineering

The speed humps were a different kind of frustration — more comedic in nature, though no less real.

The city engineer took the podium and announced, with the unmistakable pride of a man who has achieved something genuinely significant, that the new speed humps on St. Armands were a highlight — an exciting development, a cause for celebration, a crown jewel of the city's resiliency efforts.

The room received this announcement with the kind of silence that has its own texture.

Then a resident, and then another, and then essentially the entire room, explained that the speed humps do not work. They are — and this is a technical term used by multiple attendees — "whoop-dee-dos." You can take them at speed. You can arc over them in a graceful, almost balletic trajectory, actually gaining momentum on the descent, arriving on the other side traveling faster than when you started, in an improved position to mow down pedestrians and cyclists with additional authority.

The speed humps are, in short, the infrastructure equivalent of a firmly-worded letter. The city engineer nodded thoughtfully. This would be revisited.

Five Years. Five. Years.

The flooding discussion turned darker when residents learned that the real fixes — the meaningful, substantive work on the stormwater system — were five years away. The \$13.5 million in Resilient SRQ funding, it turns out, will take half a decade to actually be invested in stormwater infrastructure. The room absorbed this information the way you absorb finding out your flight has been canceled: a brief moment of disbelief, then a kind of cold, focused fury.

It also emerged that the city controlled very little of this directly, as the project had migrated into county jurisdiction. There was, apparently, a newly hired flood coordinator who regretted being unable to attend because he was — and I am only partially joking here — reportedly studying shoreline conditions somewhere in the vicinity of Lake Pontchartrain. Which is either inspired field research or the most perfectly timed vacation since Noah took a boat trip.

The Map. Please Look at the Map.

Running graceful, patient, nearly saintly interference throughout all of this was a Sarasota County employee — part of the new flood team, which is either very reassuring or a sign of how bad things have gotten, depending on your disposition — a woman of seemingly limitless composure who had, on approximately 75 separate occasions across the evening, sprinted to the microphone when a resident asked a pointed drainage question.

Her answer, delivered each time with the calm of someone who has made peace with her mortality, was some variation of the same theme: We have a map. And also: transparency.

Transparency was, it turned out, the word of the evening. Possibly the word of the year. The map, she explained, existed to provide transparency. The county's entire approach was built on transparency. The goal — and she wanted to be transparent about this — was transparency. When someone asked why the drainage grates hadn't been cleaned, she wanted to be transparent: it's on the map. When someone asked about the pumps, she wanted to be transparent: also on the map. When someone asked a question so convoluted it involved three separate flooding events, two different jurisdictions, and a swale that may or may not legally exist, she leaned into the microphone and said, with great warmth: "I want to be transparent with you." Then she mentioned the map.

By my count she used the word "transparent" or "transparency" no fewer than eleven times. I stopped counting at eleven because I wanted to be transparent about the fact that I had lost track.

The map itself was, she explained, a digital marvel — a living, interactive document on which everything had been catalogued. Every drainage grate. Every swale. Every pothole. Every flood vulnerability. All of it mapped, all of it transparent, all of it — if you would just go online and look — fully explained, including timelines, costs, and projected completion dates. For things not yet scheduled? Also on the map. The map would tell you. The map was the answer. The map was, in a very real sense, the whole point of having a county flood team at all, because once you have a map this good, what else do you really need?

You really need to look at the map.

It was a masterpiece of calm bureaucratic communication. She earned every cent of her salary, her pension, her health insurance, and whatever retirement benefits Sarasota County provides, and she earned them all in a single evening. When residents asked questions that even the map could not answer — and a few did, because residents are creative and their basements are very wet — she smiled and said, "that's a good question — we'll get back to you," which

EditorOpinion

Opinion, from page 12

is the municipal equivalent of “I love you, but I need some space.” Transparently speaking.

Where Were the Heavy Hitters? (Checking in at The St. Regis, Apparently.)

A suspicious number of people noted that the city’s heavy hitters were absent. The interim city manager had been at the first session. Senior planning staff were nowhere in evidence. The big flood-infrastructure guns had apparently fired their rounds at the previous meeting and retreated to wherever big flood-infrastructure guns go when they are done being fired, which in Sarasota apparently involves a valet.

There were, in fact, rumors. Multiple sources — and I am being generous with the word “sources” — reported sightings of city planning staff conducting what can only be described as pre-consulting fieldwork at the St. Regis, at CW Prime, at Ocean Prime, and at various other fine establishments on and around St. Armands Circle. The fieldwork, by all accounts, was going extremely well.

Picture the scene, if you will. A candlelit table. A developer — let’s call him Klaus, because developers who want to build hotels on barrier islands are often named Klaus — leaning forward over a beautifully seared piece of Chilean sea bass, gesturing upward with his fork in the universal gesture of a man explaining how many floors he intends to build. Across from him, a city planning staffer, nodding thoughtfully, raising a glass of Prosecco. They clink. They gaze out at the Circle, shimmering in the evening light. Klaus sighs contentedly and says: “Three stories. Maybe four. A boutique flag on top. Rooftop bar, obviously. Very tasteful. Very St. Armands.” Another sip of Prosecco. A distant look in the eye that could only be described as vertical.

Critical questions, you see, needed answering in the field. What would it take to get developers to finally invest in the Circle? How many hotel rooms are we talking? How much parking? What zoning flexibility would make Klaus — and the other Klaus, there are always other Klaus — feel truly comfortable going vertical? These are not questions you can answer in a conference room. These are questions that require atmosphere. They require the tasting menu. They require a second glass of Prosecco and a long, meaningful look at the skyline and a quiet toast to what this place could be, aesthetically speaking, if you just removed a few of the current zoning restrictions and one or two of the existing single-story buildings and possibly the objections of approximately every resident on the island.

I want to be absolutely clear: I am not suggesting that anyone is on the take. These are dedicated public servants. They are hungry. They are hungry for answers, and also for the branzino. It is purely a coincidence that the answers to Sarasota’s most pressing development questions tend to congregate in the private dining rooms of five-star establishments on a barrier island. This is simply where the data lives. Klaus has the data. Klaus is ordering dessert.

Meanwhile, back at Mote Marine, everyone’s forehead continued to bake, the map lady was on her forty-seventh mention of transparency, and the flood coordinator was studying shoreline conditions in Louisiana.

The Voice of Geological Experience

The leader of the Lido Key homeowners association rose to speak with the weary authority of a man who has been attending these meetings since approximately the Pleistocene. He had lived on these barrier islands for what appeared to be thousands of years, he said, and it was always the same thing: fix the infrastructure, maintain the character and scale of the community, manage the traffic, and do not, under any circumstances, turn a fragile barrier island into a high-rise development pressure cooker. Enough was enough. Fix the drainage. Keep it pretty. Get the traffic under control.

The woman at the microphone was on her feet before he had fully returned to his seat.

You really need to look at the interactive map.

A Personal Confession: I Also Have a Map

And here is where I must make a personal confession, because I believe in transparency, and also because my wife will read this eventually and she deserves to know that I have been thinking about her concerns very carefully, and I have made a map.

Sitting there in the Keating Center, gently baking in the residual heat while residents spoke of drainage grates and five-year timelines, I had an uncomfortable realization: the City of Sarasota and I are running exactly the same operation. The same deferred investments. The same optimistic timelines. The same answer, delivered with a calm smile, to anyone who asks about the current state of affairs.

I too have a home full of deferred infrastructure. I too have a map.

The Pool Pump: A Eulogy in Progress

The pool pump groans through the night with the tortured, metallic keening of something dying — not, let me be clear, the satisfying groan of marital bliss and two bodies riding ecstasy through the night, but the industrial death-rattle of metal grinding on metal, the sound of a machine that has given up on life and is determined to take the pool wall with it on the way out. My neighbors are aware of the pool pump. My neighbors’ neighbors are possibly aware of the pool pump. Somewhere, a sound engineer is aware of my pool pump.

It sounds less like mechanical failure and more like my mother-in-law used to sound, yelling from another room that she was thirsty — and just like that noise, anyone within earshot will do absolutely anything to make it stop. Someone always rushes to the refrigerator. The pressure is relieved. Everyone disperses. The underlying problem remains unaddressed.

The pool itself is held together by a heroic program of ad-hoc grout repairs that I perform while floating in the cold water — I am essentially conducting underwater tile conservation while simultaneously doing the backstroke — supplemented, on ambitious days, by targeted applications of epoxy putty. The pool is a testament to the human spirit. Also to structural denial. It is on the map.

Then there is the irrigation system, which has developed a deeply complicated relationship with the root systems of the large, beloved trees on my property. The roots hate the irrigation. The irrigation hates the roots. I have resolved this conflict by abandoning the irrigation entirely and replacing it with soaker hoses wherever possible, which is either a creative adaptive solution or a complete and unconditional surrender, depending on your perspective. It is on the map. It is labeled “pending.”

The Appliance Situation (Non-Negotiable)

The appliances do not match. My wife finds this troubling in a way I have never fully understood, because they function. The washer washes. The dryer dries. That they are different brands, different finishes, and occupy the laundry room with the awkward energy of two strangers on a first date — I genuinely do not see the problem.

My philosophy: if it works, keep it. Like the good people at Plymouth Harbor or Sarasota Bay Club — you don’t throw someone out just because they’re aging and don’t match the updated decor. You keep them going. You celebrate their remaining functionality. I hold this view with great conviction. I will continue to hold it until the washer dies, and possibly beyond. This is the hill I will die on, along with the fence.

The fence, for the record, is what I would describe as high-end ramshackle — an eclectic, evolving composition of repurposed boards, creative structural improvisations, and what a generous observer might call “layered character.” There is no consistent fence line across any of the properties I own. I do not intend to create one. A fence doesn’t need to be consistent; it needs to be present. I am very much in the “present” camp on fencing.

The German Cars: A System of Organized Denial

I drive German cars, because I enjoy the experience of a precision warning light illuminating to inform me that something is wrong with a system I cannot identify, cannot locate, and absolutely cannot afford to fix. The O2 sensors. The catalytic converter. The various items that cars apparently require and that I have been deferring for what the dealership gently describes as “an extended period” and what I prefer to call “a philosophical position on maintenance.”

My full name, in automotive terms, is Worse-Than-Murph-Clobber-At-The-Colony.

All of this — the pool, the pump, the irrigation, the appliances, the fence, the cars, my son’s vehicle (still pending; listed on the map under “funding aspirational”), the flooring from a previous decade, the crack in the wall my wife spotted last Tuesday, the college debt, the countertops she has mentioned with increasing frequency — all of it is mapped. All of it is tracked. All of it has a timeline, and many of those timelines are, like St. Armands’ drainage fixes, approximately five years out, pending funding that remains, at best, optimistic.

I am, in short, running a household on the same model as a mid-sized Florida municipality. I have simply not yet hired a consultant to confirm this.

Late Night. The Map Cannot Come to the Phone.

Late at night, as I drift toward sleep — and when you have been married for 30 years and have six children, sleep is genuinely one of the things that happens in the bedroom — my wife begins to ask questions. Good questions. Reasonable questions. Infuriating questions.

What are we going to do about the flooring? Did you hear the pool pump tonight? Christopher still needs a car. There’s a crack in the wall — I saw it today. I think the foundation is moving. The appliances don’t match, and I know you think that’s fine but it is not fine.

And as I dissolve into the warm fog of unconsciousness, I tell her about the map.


It’s all on the map, I say. You really need to look at the map. It’s all about transparency. Everything is on there — timelines, costs, current status, projected completion, funding availability. Just go online. Don’t ask me. Look at the map. It’s interactive. You can click on anything.

She is quiet for a long moment.

Then, from the darkness: “You know, I’ve been able to see right through you for thirty years.”

Which is, come to think of it, exactly what the residents of St. Armands Circle have been trying to say to City Hall all along.

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PO Box 8001
Longboat Key, FL 34228
941-387-2200
www.lbknews.com

Steve Reid, Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

Associate Publisher
Melissa Reid

Sales
Lillian Sands
Steve Reid
ads@lbknews.com

Graphic Production
Dottie Rutledge

Letters to the Editor
letters@lbknews.com

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WineTimes



The Great Topo Chico Crisis

We can only hope that direct action will break the grip of the Coca Cola cartel on the supply of Topo Chico and restore the Ranch Water trade balance.

S.W. and Rich Hermansen
Guest Writers
wine@lbknews.com

The great Topo Chico crisis originated in the central mountains of Mexico. The worldwide caffeinated soft drink cartel, Coca Cola, which had for years flooded bars, restaurants, and grocery stores with the sparkling mineral water in distinctive glass bottles, has now cut back on supplies, leaving addicts roaming the streets in search of their next Ranch Water hit (Tequila Blanca, lime, and Topo Chico in a tall Collins glass with ice).

The coincidence of the Iran Military Adventure and the closing of the Strait of Hormuz have fermented speculation about a connection between the Trump Administration's latest round of bloody diplomacy and the Topo Chico crisis. Nonetheless, impartial observers doubt that Trump would care about a Ranch Water shortage. Insiders suspect that Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo's warning about the purchasing power of the 663 million inhabitants of Latin America may have aggravated the crisis. After all, an average of three bottles purchased by each inhabitant would drink up the equivalent of the entire quantity of Topo Chico produced in 2025.

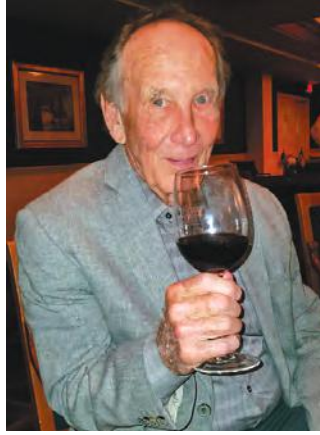
To provide perspective, the Topo Chico shortage has driven on-line prices up five times the 2025 price for a 12oz bottle. A bottle of Topo Chico now costs more than a gallon of regular gasoline. Economists worry about the impact of these price increases on inflation rates. And when they worry about something bad happening, something bad usually happens, though often not the thing they had worried about.

The actions of the Coca Cola cartel have not escaped the attention of the Trump Administration. Secretary of War and Petro Plunder, Pete Hegseth, is hinting about a pre-emptive strike targeting a 7-Eleven at South of the Border in Dillon SC responsible, according to Pentagon intelligence, for massive sales of Coca Cola Big Gulps to children.

Moreover, in a terse press release, BS Barbie announced that the president would address this issue on Truth Social (A.K.A. Lies Continual). He has used a Sharpie to circle the headquarters of Topo Chico on a map of Little Mole Mountain in Monterey, Mexico. He may decide to send in paratroopers. An anonymous official identified only as SM suggested that illegal aliens were hoarding truckloads of Topo Chico and taking them back to Mexico as hostages. He urged that they be seized at the border and brought back to America.

The Greg Abbott administration in Texas identified the true victims of the Topo Chico crisis as the residents of the state that would have to forego their beloved Ranch Water. The Ranch Water tradition, they say, began to extend the life of a Margarita by adding Topo Chico to the glass. It then evolved into the defining drink of West Texas. The state is asking for federal relief.

A bleak reality may force Ranch Water drinkers to revert to the old practice of saltlick-shot-lime as practiced in high-end Mexican border bars such as the Cadillac Bar in Nuevo Laredo and Barbocoa La Maderna in Piedras Negras. The addict shakes salt on the back of the hand, licks it off, downs a shot of Tequila, and sucks on a slice of lime. We can only hope that direct action will break the grip of the Coca Cola cartel on the supply of Topo Chico and restore the



Ranch Water trade balance.

S. W. Hermansen has used his expertise in econometrics, data science and epidemiology to help develop research databases for the Pentagon, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Agriculture, and Health Resources and Services. He has visited premier vineyards and taste wines from major appellations in California, Oregon, New York State, and internationally from Tuscany and the Piedmont in Italy, the Ribera del Duero in Spain, the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale in Australia, and the Otago Valley in New Zealand. Currently he splits time between residences in Chevy Chase, Maryland and St. Armand's Circle in Florida.

Rich Hermansen selected his first wine list for a restaurant shortly after graduating from college with a degree in Mathematics. He has extensive service and management experience in the food and wine industry. Family and friends rate him as their favorite chef, bartender, and wine steward. He lives in Severna Park, Maryland.

TeeTime



What is a Golf Handicap and how it is explained!

What's great about the game is that two players can play each other head to head with far different abilities

TERRY O'HARA
Columnist
News@lbknews.com

As all of us know Golf is a tough game. What's great about the game is that two players can play each other head to head with far different abilities but with an established handicap those same two players can play each other either in a match play or stroke play event and compete against each other.

What is a handicap? It is a numerical score that measures the golfer's ability. In the US the USGA (United States Golf Association) oversees and manages this system. Having an established handicap allows golfers of any ability play together or against each other whether in a social or competitive situation.

The handicap that you have reflects the number of strokes a player is expected to take above or below the golf courses actual par. If Player A is a 25 handicap the USGA system is saying that golfer will shoot on average somewhere from 97-102. If Player B is a 4 handicap the system feels that the golfer will shoot on average rounds between 76-79.

In the old days the USGA would recalculate handicaps every two weeks. That gave those who are sometimes known as "sandbaggers" (we will discuss this later in another issue) a two-week window to play friends or in competition and take advantage of them. Now the system updates the GHIN handicaps daily to avoid this type of activity.

The Maximum handicap that the USGA allows for a male golfer or female golfer is 50.4. That is a lot of strokes but brand-new players can use this system to monitor their improvement as they learn the game.



Do you need a handicap to play a round of golf? In the US definitely not. In fact, when you first start learning the game you won't have a handicap at all. Many countries won't let a new golfer on the course unless they have proof of a handicap. The main reason behind this is someone who is new can really cause a major backup on a golf courses pace of play policy.

After you have established a handicap you will notice that not all golf courses are the same. A wide-open course with no water and very little out of bounds with shorter holes will be much easier to score on opposed to a course with lots of water, longer in distance and many more difficult factors. That is why the USGA has created a course rating which allows a person with a handicap to travel and play other courses and have a new handicap based on its difficulty.

The USGA determines a course rating by evaluating a courses length and 10 specific obstacle factors for both scratch (0 handicap) and bogey (roughly 20-24 handicap). Licensed regional teams use standardized formulas to calculate the average "good" score for a scratch player (Course Rating) and a bogey player (Bogey rating) typically reassessing courses every 10 years.

The Key factors that the USGA uses to come up with the final ratings is based on these items.

Raw yardage, Topography (stance & Lies), Fairway width, Green target (visibility), rough, Bunkers, crossing obstacles (water/ravines) trees, green surfaces (speed/slope) and psychology.

As you can see lots of information go into calculating a fair rating so that your "game" can travel and stay competitive. Hopefully today you learned a little more on what goes into creating a handicap.

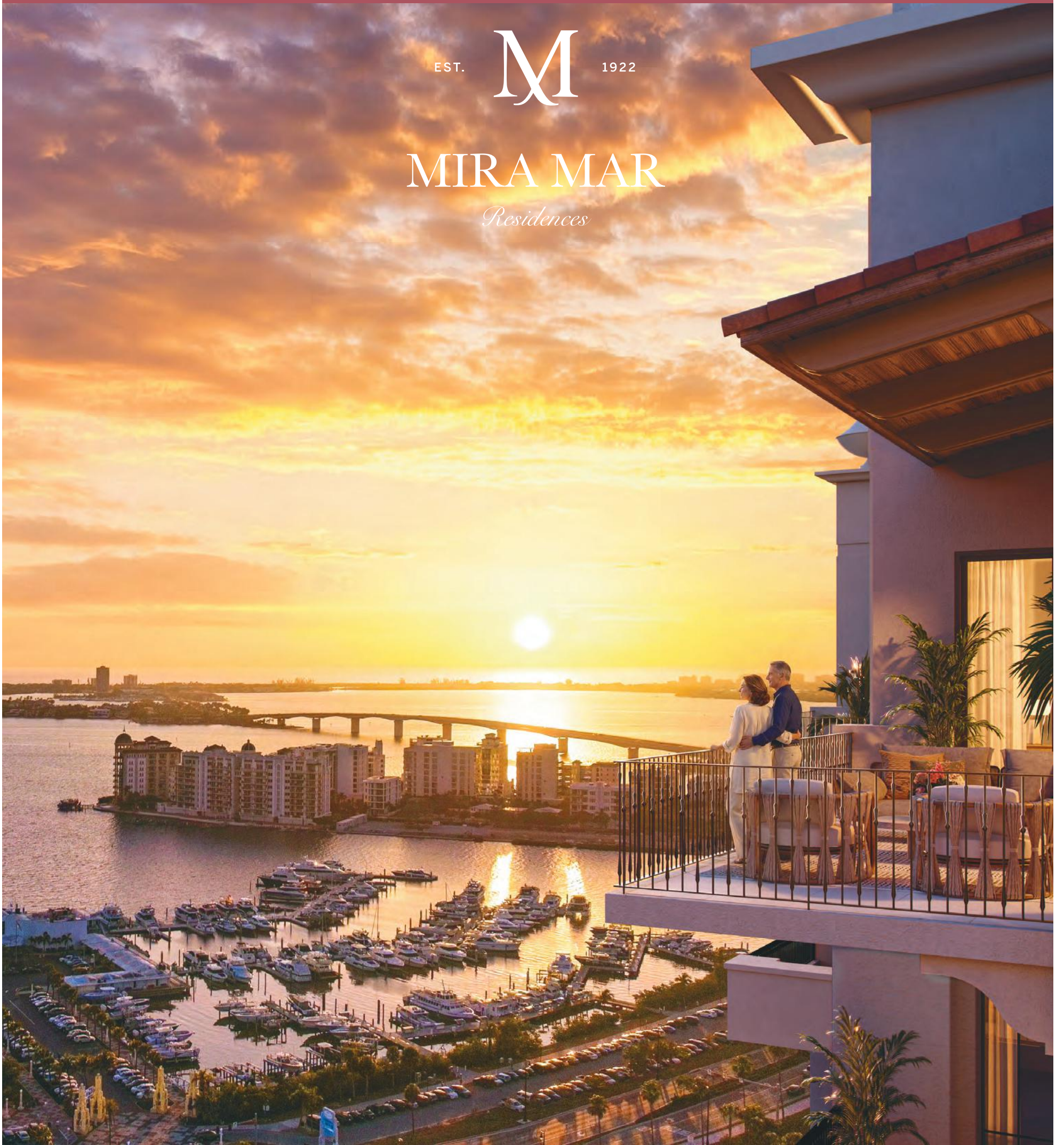
Terry O'Hara is entering his 17th year as Director of Golf at the Longboat Key Club. A 28-year member of the PGA of America, Terry is originally from Worcester, Massachusetts, and now lives in Sarasota. Terry and his wife, Lisa, have two children, Jack and Ava. His son, Jack, is also a teaching professional at the club. Terry is a diehard Boston sports fan and loves supporting all of his hometown teams.

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