

**SATELLITE BEACH, FLORIDA  
"WHERE PROGRESS PREVAILS"**



**This history is provided to the residents of Satellite Beach in the interest of preserving the rich legacy of community left by those who founded and have enriched the City.**

Before development, the area now comprising Satellite Beach consisted of saw palmetto and oak scrub. The shores of the Banana River were lined with a mangrove swamp. As late as 1871 the entire area now known as Satellite Beach was government-owned public land. It was not until 1923 that the last public land remaining in that area came under private ownership. During those five decades many people and companies bought and sold land within the future community's boundaries, and three subdivisions that exist today were platted during the 1920s Florida land boom. However, nothing permanent was built, although several individuals gained title to land by maintaining primitive homesteads for at least 5 years. Even after World War II, there were deer, bear, and panther in the area. This all changed in the early 1950s when the large number of people helping test long range rockets at Cape Canaveral needed somewhere to live. Housing was at a premium.

In 1951 Stephanie Snaith, a widow, built the first home in the City. Later that year Louis G. Olson, an attorney in Eau Gallie, built a home on Cinnamon Drive. After his wife died, he rented it to Nick Castora, who worked for a company supplying the missile program. The location of the house was so remote, and lacking in utilities, even electric power, that Mr. Castora lit bonfires to guide visitors to his home. In 1955 Four Hedgecock brothers and a cousin bought 130 acres between Ellwood and Norwood avenues extending from the ocean to the river. With other relatives from North Carolina they built homes for themselves and then for sale. They set out to build an upscale community that would be their home. By the end of 1957 there were about 50 homes, a restaurant, and a gas station in the future city. Most were clustered near A1A between Cinnamon Drive and Ellwood Avenue; with a few older homes hidden within palmetto thickets between Roosevelt and Jackson Avenues. Mosquitoes and other insects set up a din at night. Rattlesnakes were prevalent. There were no fire department, local police, community recreation program, paved roads, water or sanitary sewer service, or stormwater drainage system.

Satellite Beach as a municipality goes back only to 3 August 1957 when, by a margin of 45 to 11, residents voted to incorporate as the Town of Satellite Beach. The sole remaining voter was downrange. Evelyn Price, the secretary to the attorney who drew up the City's original charter, won the \$25 prize in a contest to name the new city. The move to incorporate, led by Percy Hedgecock and financed largely by Mr. Olson, was precipitated by the desire to prevent construction of a large trailer park. The first ordinance passed by the new Council, ten days after the vote to incorporate, limited zoning to single-family dwellings and commercial uses – no trailer parks. Percy Hedgecock was the City's first mayor, serving five consecutive terms until he retired from the position in 1973. In 1964 Phyllis Koerner won a \$25 savings bond for her City slogan, "Where Progress Prevails."

The new community had, and has, a healthy sense of self-sufficiency. The original city building, a civic center, was built by contributed contractor labor and materials between 3 August and 21 December 1957 at a cost to the new town of about \$6,500. It was finished and furnished by volunteers. Percy Hedgecock and Louis Olson both donated lots on which a baseball field, Olson Field, was built next to the building. The Garden Club, established in 1960, planted and maintained City landscape areas. Fire protection has involved volunteers since the formation of the Satellite Beach Volunteer Fire Department in 1961. When the City's first elementary school, Surfside, opened in 1962, teachers and

volunteers moved in furniture so the school could open at the start of the school year. It and Satellite High, which opened the same year, were Brevard County's first integrated public schools. In 1964 the City hired its first police officer, who led 12 volunteers sworn as auxiliary police officers. In 1965 the City hired its first professional firefighter. Also, in 1965, Satellite High hosted the first integrated football game in Florida. The interior of the original library (now City Hall) was finished in 1967 by volunteers, who then donated over 6,000 volumes to begin its collection. In 1968 the City's original recreation center next to Olson Field was built on a tennis court with \$40,000 earned from Little League concession stands and the aid of Public Works. In the same year a 34-acre tract west of the Grand Canal was given to the City by Sam Fuchs, a developer from South Florida. However, plans to develop that parcel and adjoining land bought by the City into a major park failed. In 1971, through the concerted, personal involvement of the City's Mayor and the Woman's Club, the County bought Pelican Beach Park. In 1977 the volunteer fire department bought and donated to the City the land on which the Fire Station now stands. In that year they also were the first department in the County to provide Advanced Life Support emergency medical service. In the 1980s the City hosted many national softball championship tournaments and fielded six national champion softball teams, earning the title "junior softball capital of the world". People joked about the "million-dollar grounds crew", comprised of volunteers, residents who were highly paid space program technical personnel. Starting in 1990 the 52-acre island centered on Mr. Fuchs' donated land has been transformed into Samsons Island Park, a passive park and nature preserve, by over 50,000 volunteer hours. In 1994 the City received the first annual Florida Excellence in Coastal Management Award for this conservation effort. Since then the City has placed 40% of its oceanfront into public open space. In 1996 the City obtained future title to 35 acres on which the County had operated a sewage treatment plant closed in 1991. The City then used a series of grants to develop the park with features including the area's first skateboard park, first off-lead dog park, three soccer fields, a football field, a sand volleyball court, a playground, and a paved walking/bicycle trail. Also, in 1996 a youth center, the Teen Zone, opened. Enjoying 10,000 youth visits annually, it is operated by a nonprofit supported by the Police Department. In 2002 the City opened a new, 37,000 square foot community center in what had been a derelict, vacant shopping plaza. The next year the City annexed 300 acres of privatized military housing built in 1957 that now is being redeveloped. In 2006 the City's Fire Department took the lead in implementing the state's Communities For A Lifetime program with a fall prevention program and in-home wellness checks by Community Health Paramedics. In 2012 the City convinced the County to transfer ownership of two oceanfront parks to the City, and in 2013 the City began hosting a County 100-foot ladder truck and crew in its fire station.

Through it all volunteers continue to provide more than 10,000 hours each year to youth and public service programs. Citizen committees provide recommendations to City Council. And City Council members serve without pay.

"Mayberry-by-the-Sea" continues to be a place "Where Progress Prevails".

**A video on the City's history is available at the City's Recreation Department or on the City's web site.**