Pembroke Pines – A Look Back

The 1940s saw the aftermath of World War II, and it was then in 1943 that Henry D. Perry, a dairy farmer, sold 640 acres of his land to the United States Navy for a flight-training field between Hollywood Boulevard and Pembroke Road that is known today as North Perry Airport. Broward County acquired the airport from the Navy in 1950 and a steady growth from families and retired servicemen began. A post-World War II population explosion resulted in a need for new streets and highways in the area. The Florida Turnpike worked its way through open pastures and pine forests on the eastern edge of Pembroke Pines in 1957, and then the construction of other Interstates and highways to the west quickly followed.

With this growth, in 1960, the Village of Pembroke Pines became Pembroke Pines, and was incorporated with the casting of 425 votes in a resident's carport. The less than a square mile property at the time was between Pembroke Road (south), then Hollywood Boulevard (north), SW 72 Avenue (west) and the Florida Turnpike (east). Dr. Seth Kipnis, the first mayor, presided over a seven member Board of Alderman (or councilmen/women).

The City's name, Pembroke Pines, is traced back to Sir Edward Reed, a Member of Britain's Parliament for the County of Pembroke in 1874, who purchased and farmed land in the 1880s which today occupies much of what is now the nearby city of Dania Beach. The road put through his land came to be known as Pembroke Road. When incorporating, Mayor Kipnis suggested the name Pembroke Pines because of the pine trees growing near Pembroke Road.

At first, in the 1970s, westward expansion was blocked by the County-owned North Perry airport and South Florida State Hospital. However, a developer, Joseph LaCroix, agreed to have his 320 acres north of Pines Boulevard and east of Davie Road Extension annexed into the City, allowing for the western expansion. The 70s saw the establishment of the Southwest Focal Point Senior Center, the first of its kind in the County. In the 1990s it became a national prototype for the delivery of senior services.   Today it is not only a senior center, but also a thriving community center offering numerous classes, workshops, special events and activities year round, adult day care for the frail and those with Alzheimer's, and a host of other services and amenities.

In 1980, the largest piece of property from Flamingo Road to US 27 was annexed, which doubled the City's size. Four years later, residents voted to adopt a districting system for city government – four Commissioners, each elected from a specific district, and a Mayor, voted on by all the residents. Districts would be re-arranged as the City expanded in size and population. There were two city hall locations before the City settled into its current building in 1988.

Rapid Growth

Partly due to Hurricane Andrew in 1992, Pembroke Pines rapidly grew in the early to mid 1990s, with thousands of southern Miami-Dade County residents moving northward and settling in Pembroke Pines. This influx gave the City the distinction of being the third "Fastest Growing Cities" in the United States in 1999. Pembroke Pines began to establish itself as a retail center and its journey towards strategic economic development was on a steady path.

It's important to note that the hurricane influx, population boom and economic changes of this time didn't catch local government off guard. Years earlier, demographic studies had alerted Pembroke Pines planners that crucially overcrowded schools were imminent. In response, the City decided to start a Pembroke Pines Charter School System which has become the largest Charter School System in the County, and the largest municipally run non-profit charter system in the state of Florida.

A School Solution …

In 1996, when Pembroke Pines' Charter School legislation passed, the City adopted an ambitious school construction timeline, and was able to creatively finance the land acquisition and construction without taking away from the local public schools. The City Commission served as the Charter School System's School Board.

Within 15 months, Pembroke Pines built and opened two elementary schools and a middle school: Pembroke Pines Charter West Elementary and Middle, and East Elementary campuses. The Charter High School was then built, which was created as part of the City's Academic Village. This campus also includes a regional library, a community college, a university and a performing arts center. Two years later, another elementary and middle school were built – Pembroke Pines Central Charter Elementary and Middle Campus. Pembroke Pines Florida State University (FSU) campus, which opened in 2003, was the last campus to be built.