

Sarasota County

By Lynn Waddell



Growth Magnet

From Sarasota County's northern border with Manatee to Charlotte County on its southern edge, signs of growth are everywhere. Start with downtown Sarasota, the county's professional and cultural heart. New condos, apartment buildings, high-rise hotels, tony shops and offices are up or in progress all around downtown. The city of roughly 57,000 has seen 4,000 new housing units in the past three years. Sarasota is experiencing what City Manager Tom Barwin says is "probably the biggest growth spurt in the city's history."

Sarasota isn't even the largest city in the county any more. In the county's southern tier, North Port, with more affordable housing and a younger population (median age of 44), is now home to about 66,000 residents. Ruth Buchanan, North Port economic development manager, calls it "the workforce engine for the metro area."

The influx of new residents is dominated by wealthy Baby Boomer retirees but includes young families and entrepreneurial millennials. Overall, the county's population has grown by 16% since 2010.

Fueling all the growth is the area's wealth, a healthy economy and a high quality of life. The county's barrier island beaches rank among the finest in the world. Sarasota's arts and cultural scene tops that of many cities three times its size. It has top-rated hospitals, and its public schools rank among the state's best. It's home to a campus of Florida State University's medical school, the highly regarded Ringling College of Art and Design and New College, the honors college of the State University System.

MoneyRates.com named the Sarasota MSA the nation's best for young entrepreneurs. WalletHub ranked Sarasota the No. 1 Florida city for jobs in 2018.

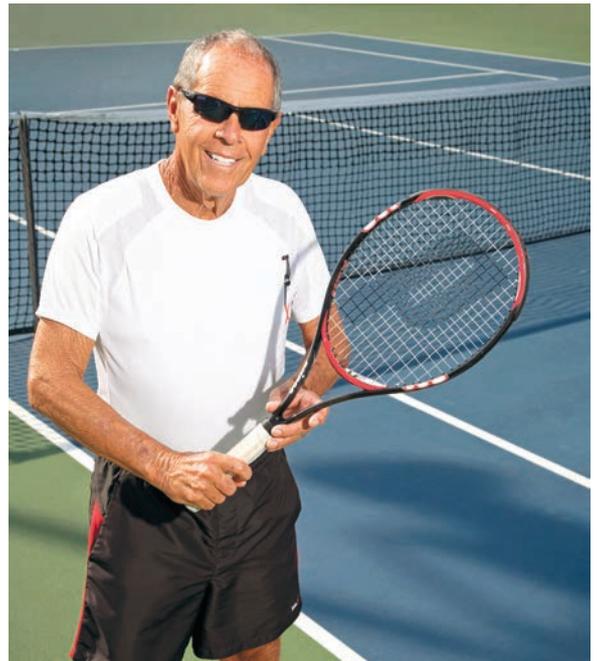
Seven Things to Know About Sarasota

Sarasota has been a circus town since John and Charles Ringling made it the winter home of their circus in 1927. Though Ringling Brothers has dissolved, a museum and a small but vibrant community of artists, including the Flying Wallendas, and the Circus Arts Conservatory maintain the circus's legacy in the area.



With more than 20,000 plants, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens is the world's only botanical garden dedicated to the display and study of epiphytes — plants that derive moisture and nutrients from the air, including orchids, bromeliads and ferns. Located in the heart of Sarasota on the bay, the property was once home to Texaco oil tycoon William Selby and his wife, Marie, who donated the land to the city. Open to the public, the gardens are also a popular setting for society events and weddings.

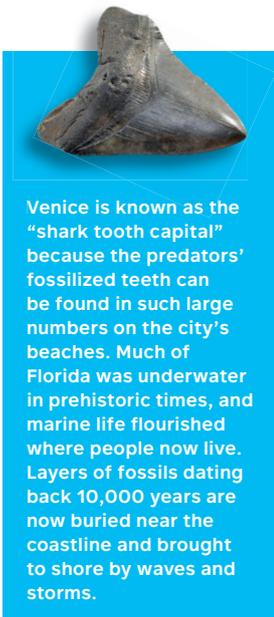
In addition to an impressive list of current and former CEOs who call Sarasota County home, several celebrities also live here at least part of the year, including author Stephen King, Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry, sportscaster Dick Vitale, actress Jane Lynch, AC/DC lead singer Brian Johnson, talk show host Jerry Springer and tennis coach Nick Bollettieri (right).



The TNT series “Claws,” a dark comedy built around manicurists who work at a Manatee County salon, is filmed partly in Sarasota. The show’s creator told the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* that he got the idea for the show after a visit to Sarasota.



Sarasota is noted for a style of mid-century modern architecture, adapted and customized to fit Florida’s climate. Many of the architects of the Sarasota Modern style later became world-renowned, including Paul Rudolph, who chaired the Yale School of Architecture.



Venice is known as the “shark tooth capital” because the predators’ fossilized teeth can be found in such large numbers on the city’s beaches. Much of Florida was underwater in prehistoric times, and marine life flourished where people now live. Layers of fossils dating back 10,000 years are now buried near the coastline and brought to shore by waves and storms.



Warm Mineral Springs in North Port is Florida’s only warm mineral spring and the world’s largest. It’s also one of the nation’s most significant archeological sites. Divers plumbing its 250-foot depths have discovered evidence of man dating back 10,000 years.

Vital Statistics

Sarasota County

Size: 555.9 square miles

Population: 419,119

White Non-Hispanic: 83.2%

Hispanic or Latino: 8.9%

Black/African-American: 4.2%

Other: 3.7%

Notable: Sarasota County includes four incorporated municipalities along with unincorporated communities, farmland and protected lands. More than 60% of its residents live in the county’s unincorporated areas. Many residents are seasonal; the population grows by around 25% in the winter. Based on U.S. Census records, the county’s median age of 55.7 skews higher than the national average of 38.2. But the overall metro area, which includes Bradenton to the north in Manatee County, was the eighth-fastest growing U.S. metro area for millennials between 2010 and 2015, according to the Brookings Institute.

Sarasota (city)

Size: 14.7 square miles

Population: 56,994

White: 64.1%

Hispanic or Latino: 18.2%

Black/African-American: 14.8%

Other: 2.9%

Notable: Sarasota, including Lido and Bird Keys, is the county seat, financial center and shopping, entertainment and cultural heart of the area. The vibrancy of downtown and the city’s hospitality industry is reflected by the fact that revenue generated by dining and lodging in the city accounts for more than 40% of all revenue generated by the county’s hospitality industry.

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Longboat Key

Size: 4.1 square miles
Population: 7,292
White: 95.9%
Non-White Hispanic: 1.8%
Other: 2.3%

Notable: Longboat Key is divided between Sarasota and Manatee counties. It's retiree-heavy, with a median age of 71, less than 2% of residents under 18 and more than 68% over 65. Residents are also on average wealthier (per capita income of \$97,221 in 2016) and more highly educated (63.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher.)

North Port

Size: 103 square miles
Population: 66,300
White: 80.8%
Non-White Hispanic: 6.5%
Black/African American: 7.7%
Other: 5.0%

Notable: North Port is the fastest-growing city in Sarasota County and one of Florida's largest cities by land mass. It grew 15.7% between 2010 and 2017 and surpassed Sarasota as the most populated municipality in the county. Its residents are also younger, with a median age of 45.9. Hous-

ing is more affordable than in the northern part of the county, with a median home value of just over \$200,000, according to Zillow.

Venice

Size: 15.3 square miles
Population: 23,020
White: 94.6%
Non-White Hispanic: 2.3%
Black/African-American: 1.0%
Other: 2.1%

Notable: Venice's population leans toward retirement age, with 58.8% of residents 65 or older, though residents on average are less affluent than in Longboat Key, the only municipality with a higher percentage of retirees; per capita income in 2016 was \$32,450.

Unincorporated Communities

Communities: Nokomis, Siesta Key, Casey Key, Manasota Key, Osprey, Englewood and Lakewood Ranch

Notable: Communities along the Gulf swell during winter season. Englewood and Lakewood Ranch are special tax districts. Until recently, Lakewood Ranch's footprint in Sarasota County was limited to commercial development.

Per-capita income of Longboat Key residents is more than \$97,000.

More than half of Venice's residents are 65 or older.

Growth Rate Estimates 2010-17

- North Port:** 15.6%
- Venice:** 11.0%
- Sarasota County:** 10.5%
- Sarasota:** 9.5%
- Longboat Key:** 5.9%

Top 10 Employers

Employer	Local Employees
Sarasota Memorial Health	4,563
PGT Innovations	2,000
Publix	1,733
Venice Regional Medical Center	812
Sun Hydraulics	632
Tervis	570
Shared Services Center	455
FCCI Insurance	426
Doctors Hospital	415
Jackson Hewitt	337

Politics

Sarasota County is strongly Republican, though traditionally more fiscally conservative than socially conservative. Republicans make up 42.5% of registered voters, with 30.3% registered as Democrats and 27.1% registered as no party affiliation.

The city of Sarasota has a commission-manager form of government. The five-member elected commission appoints the city manager, who acts as the chief city administrative officer. The commission also annually elects a mayor among them. The mayor serves a ceremonial role.



SARASOTA COUNTY

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SARASOTA - BRADENTON
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(US NEWS & WORLD REPORT)

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Plans for 52 acres of public space on the bayfront include a pier and an amphitheater.

Key Economic Sectors

Development

More than 13,000 people worked in the county's construction industry in 2017, a 4% increase over 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. While most construction has been residential, major developments in the works include hotels, multi-million-dollar attractions and a sports venue.

The city of Sarasota leads in mixed-use and high-rise development, clustered in and around downtown. In the past three years, the city has gained 4,000 residential units, primarily around downtown. Twenty-eight projects are under construction, and another 46 are planned.

▶ **The Quay** on the downtown waterfront is the largest private development in downtown Sarasota. Jacksonville-based GreenPoint Communities broke ground in May on the \$1-billion mixed-use project that will include condo towers, apartments, restaurants, retail and possibly a hotel. Build-out is expected to take seven years.

▶ Adjacent to the Quay, the city

plans to redevelop 52 acres of public land along Sarasota Bay that currently includes arts facilities, an auditorium and a public boat launch. The preliminary design for **The Bay project** includes space for a new performing arts center, renovation of existing historic buildings, underground parking, a large public park, an amphitheater, an iconic pier and a redesigned boat launch. The project is expected to cost up to \$150

Lakewood Ranch is expanding its residential footprint into Sarasota County.



million, not including the cost of the performing arts center. It is anticipated to take up to 25 years to complete.

▶ **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens** is raising funds for a \$67-million redesign and expects to break ground within a year. Mote Marine Laboratory plans to build a \$130-million aquarium and education center along I-75 with construction to begin in 2019, contingent on fundraising efforts.

▶ **Lakewood Ranch**, the second-fastest growing planned community in the United States in mid-2018, plans to build 5,000 homes in Sarasota County, which until now has only housed commercial pieces of the development.

▶ To the south in North Port and unincorporated Sarasota County, the **West Villages** ranks as the fifth-fastest growing master-planned community in the nation for the second year in a row. Matamy Homes and Vanguard Land partnered in the 15,000-acre development that has been approved for 33,000 units. About 4,000 homes have been sold and roughly 1,000 more are under construction. Prices range from the low \$200,000s to \$600,000. The project will also include a town center and a \$100-million Atlanta Braves spring training complex, which is scheduled to be completed by 2020.



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Sarasota Memorial Hospital is one of the 10 largest public hospitals in the country.

Health Care and Life Science

▶ The **Sarasota Memorial Healthcare System** is the county's largest employer. Sarasota Memorial Hospital has received the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' top rating for four consecutive ratings periods. It has more than 800 hospital beds and plans to build a 90-bed hospital in Venice starting next April.

▶ **Doctors Hospital of Sarasota**, also top-rated by the CMS, opened an emergency center in Lakewood Ranch. "We saw a need for high quality emergency care in this area," says Robert Meade, CEO of Doctors Hospital of Sarasota.

▶ **Venice Regional Bayfront Health** is replacing its existing hospital with a 210-bed facility.

▶ **Lakewood Ranch Medical Center**, a 120-bed hospital, is undergoing a \$20-million expansion.

▶ The **Roskamp Institute** seeks cures for neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders and addictions.

▶ **Shared Services Center** pro-

vides office support like billing, call-center customer service and data entry.

▶ **CAE Healthcare** manufactures medical patient simulators.

▶ **RPS**, a biotech firm, makes point-of-care tests for rapid diagnosis of infectious diseases.

▶ **Dattoli Cancer Center & Brachytherapy Research Institute** specializes in non-surgical prostate cancer treatment.

PGT, with 2,000 employees, continues to expand in Sarasota.



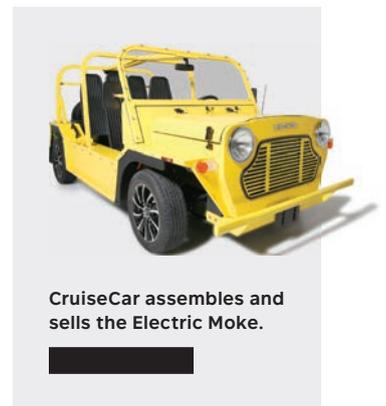
Manufacturing

The percentage of Sarasota's economy constituted by manufacturing is slightly larger than the state average. Nearly 8,400 people worked in manufacturing in 2017, a 1.2% growth over the prior year. Combined with neighboring Manatee County, the area has an estimated 600 manufacturers and related businesses, according to the Sarasota-Manatee Manufacturers Association.

▶ Many manufacturers are small to medium sized, such as RND Automation and Engineering, a custom machine builder. Others are among the county's largest employers, including publicly traded PGT Innovations, a window and door manufacturer in Venice. In March, PGT opened a 7,500-sq.-ft. child-care center for its 2,000 employees.

▶ **ASO**, which has a division headquarters in Sarasota, is a major producer of adhesive bandages.

▶ **L-3 Communications** makes flight "black box" recorders.



CruiseCar assembles and sells the Electric Moke.

▶ **CruiseCar**, a manufacturer of low-speed vehicles, now also assembles and sells the European Electric Moke at its home base in Sarasota.

▶ **Sun Hydraulics**, a manufacturer of screw-in hydraulic cartridge valves, continues to grow, recently acquiring the Italian Faster Group, a global manufacturer of quick-release hydraulic couplings.



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Retail and dining attract visitors to St. Armands Circle.

Tourism

Tourism's economic impact last year was just under \$2 billion. Visit Sarasota County estimates that 24,700 people work in tourism-related jobs, the equivalent of 13% of the county's employed workforce.

More than 1.2 million people stayed at lodging places in Sarasota County in 2017, a 4.2% increase over the year before. In the first six months of fiscal 2018, visits were up 2.8% over the same period last year.

On the horizon are a new Atlanta Braves spring training complex and a new Mote Marine Aquarium and renovated Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. Another 1,100 hotel rooms will be added to the market this year.

Professional Services

Professional and business services companies employ more than



"With the new hotel offerings, there will be more opportunity for visitors to experience the destination while providing substantial economic benefit to our community," says Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County.

25,000 people in Sarasota County.

► Several area **law firms** are nationally ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, including Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick; Adams and Reese; and Williams Parker.

► **FCCI Insurance** provides property and casualty insurance and has \$2.4 billion in assets.

► **S-One Holdings** is parent to eight brands and companies that offer everything from a crafters social network to inkjet printing.

► **Sylint Group** secures cyber networks and does data forensics for Fortune 500 companies.

► **CSI Networks** designs, installs and maintains computer networks.

► The area has a wealth of innovative **digital marketing firms** that are growing, including atLarge, Clickbooth, Dealers United, AdRizer and Floorforce. On Ideas, which handles traditional and digital marketing, recently landed Fresh Market as a client. Patricia Courtois, On Ideas' chief client officer, says, "It's

time to grow young creative talent with vibrant high-paying jobs in our organization."

Financial Services

The area's wealth has made the financial services sector a strong part of the economy, and the sector has rebounded strongly since the recession: More than 9,000 people work in financial services in the county today.

► The county is home to community banks (Sabal Palm Bank, 1st Manatee Bank, Englewood Bank & Trust, Charlotte State Bank) along with regional (Bank of Tampa) and a plethora of national banks (PNC Bank, BB&T, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, SunTrust and others).

► Global Financial Private Capital, one of the largest investment funds in the Tampa Bay region, is based in Sarasota with \$5.7 billion in assets under management and 166 employees.



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▶ **Offrs** provides predictive analytics to generate home sale leads for real estate brokers. Started in 2015 by a real estate agent and mathematician, Offrs had a 200% compound annual growth rate between 2015 and 2017 without taking on outside capital. The Sarasota-based firm, with 40 employees, has served more than 5,000 brokers nationwide.

▶ **AdRizer** was chosen as one of 50 Florida companies to watch in 2017 by GrowFL, an economic development program focused on assisting second-stage companies.

▶ **Clickbooth**, a digital marketing firm, specializes in connecting advertisers to potential customers. It has

already grown through one acquisition in 2017.

▶ **RevContent**, a digital marketing firm, applies analytics and targeted content to increase website visits. It started with 28 employees in 2013 and now has 138, with plans to grow.

▶ **Voalte**, a medical communication software company, raised \$15 million for expansion in early 2018.

▶ **RPS** manufactures rapid testing devices that allow medical staff to quickly diagnose infectious diseases.

▶ **Big Top Brewing** has been growing rapidly since it be-



AdRizer makes software designed to boost traffic to a customer's website.

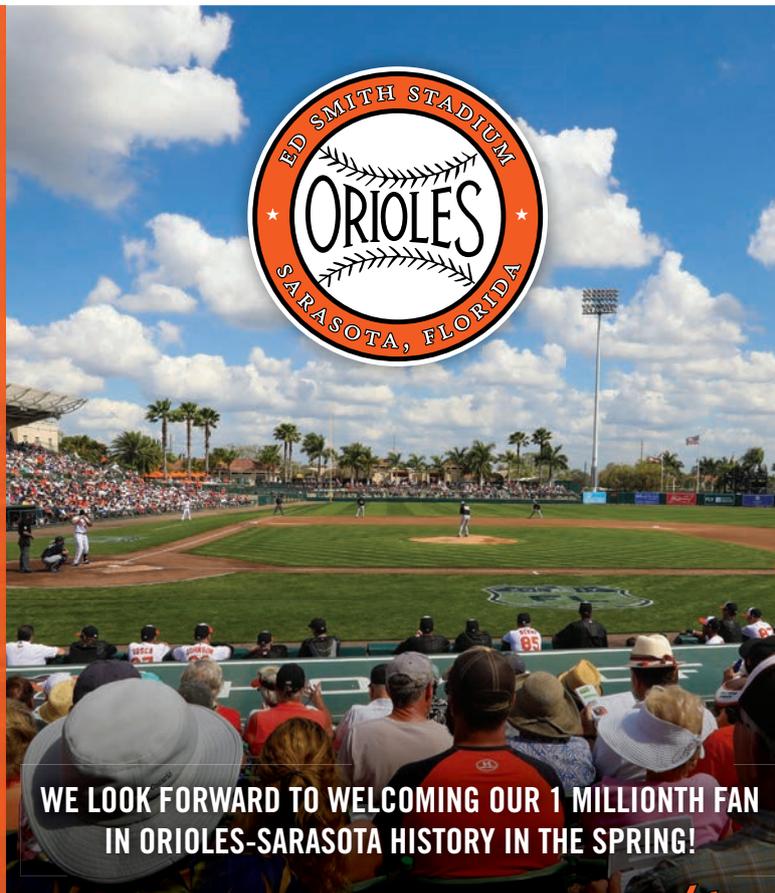
gan in 2013.

▶ **Enzymedica**, based in Venice, leads in enzyme supplements. Economic developers believe it is primed for growth through acquisitions.

▶ **PropLogix**, a lien search and survey service company, started in 2010 with one employee. It now has nearly 100.

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Workforce

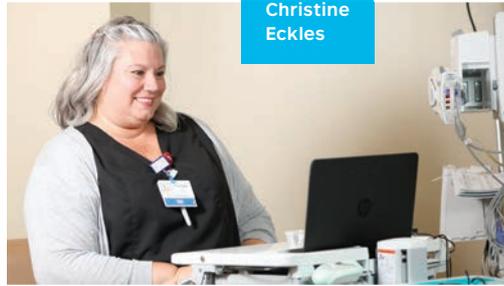
Job Growth

The county has roughly 4,500 more workers this year than it did a year earlier. Fiscal 2017 statistics show growth driven by the construction, health care/education and leisure/hospitality sectors.

The Face of Labor

When Christine Eckles' children left the nest in Sharon, Pa., she and her husband did, too, at least during the winter. A registered nurse, Eckles became a traveling nurse and worked on both coasts of Florida for a couple of winters before she and her husband decided to make a permanent move. They chose Sarasota County.

"We fell in love with the area. We



Christine Eckles

are definitely beach people, and we like having a city close, but also being in a small community," Eckles says. "My first assignment was in Delray Beach, and it felt like a big city. Everything was rushed. We came over here to Doctors Hospital, and I just loved it."

Eckles, 46, got a permanent nursing job at Doctors Hospital in Sarasota. She and her husband rent in nearby Bradenton, while they search for an affordable home near her job.

The annual mean average salary for registered nurses in the Sarasota-Manatee County MSA is \$65,160.

"The wages down here are better," Eckles says. "I make significantly more, but the houses are crazy expensive. Up there for \$300,000 you can get a nice five-bedroom, two-bath house. Here you might be able to get a small two-one for that."

Annual Job Gains

(private employers, fiscal 2017)

Sector	% Job Gains	New Jobs
Construction	4.0%	500
Education/Health Services	3.7%	1,170
Leisure/Hospitality	3.5%	813
Manufacturing	1.2%	102
Professional/Business Services	0.7%	191
Financial	-0.3%	-26
Total	1.9%	2,906

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program

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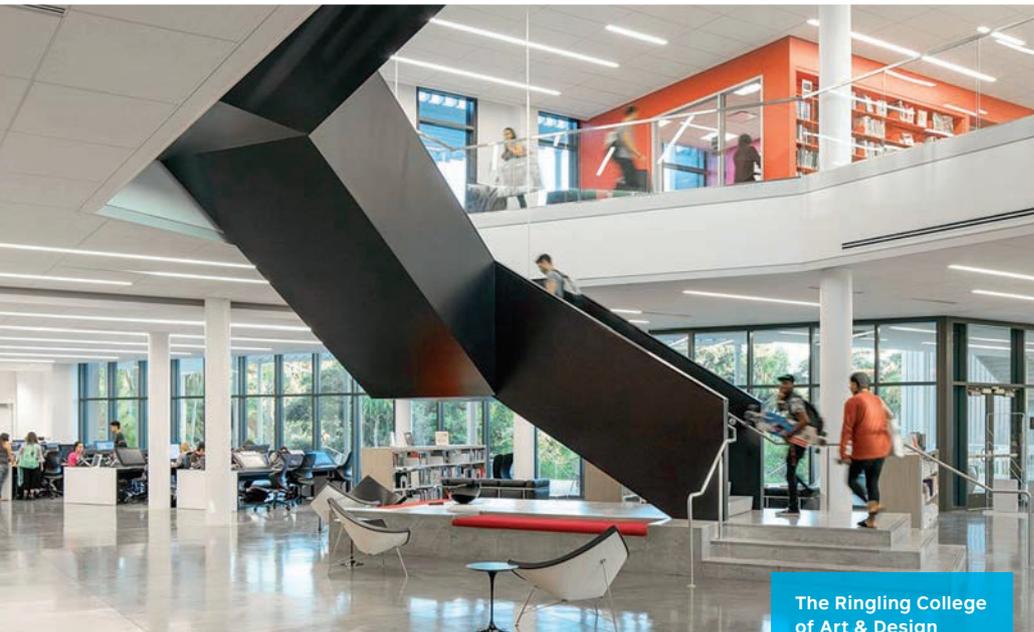
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The Ringling College of Art & Design opened a new state-of-the-art library in January 2017.

Business Assets

K-12

Sarasota’s public schools consistently rank among the best in Florida and the nation. The county has 33 private schools, two-thirds of which are religiously affiliated.

The Sarasota County School District is one of only two in Florida to maintain an “A” rating every year since the state started the grading system in 2004.

Sarasota County residents value public education even though many may not have school-age children. Last year, a referendum to renew an additional 1 mill property tax for schools — the maximum the state allows — passed with 79% of the vote. The extra tax generates about \$56 million annually and allows for higher-than-state-average teacher pay, longer school days and broader curriculums.

The school district is one of only six in the nation that participates in Kennedy Center’s Any Given Child program, which strives to provide access to arts education to every K-8 student. The National School Boards Association and the John F. Kennedy

Center for the Performing Arts have recognized the district for its success.

In addition to traditional schools, the Sarasota County School District has magnet schools. *U.S. News & World Report* rated Pine View High School for the Gifted the No. 1 high school in Florida and 19th in the nation. Suncoast Polytechnical High School has a career and technology-driven curriculum. The district also allows high school students dual enrollment in Suncoast Technical College.

Higher Education

Higher education in Sarasota County ranges from satellite campuses of Florida’s larger universities to small colleges to technical school. In 2017, the Cross College Alliance was formed to expand learning opportunities and allow a seamless educational experience among five major area institutes, including the University of South Florida-Sarasota/Manatee, New College of Florida, the Ringling College of Art, the State College of Sarasota/Manatee and the Ringling College of Art and Design.

▶ **USF-Sarasota/Manatee** has



The arts loom large and are integrated into math, science and other classes. Every public school in grades K-12 has at least one arts and one music teacher.

roughly 2,000 students and offers more than 40 bachelor’s and master’s degrees and professional certificate programs from a nationally ranked research university. The USF campus also takes advantage of its location by partnering with Mote Marine Laboratory, which provides classroom space and opportunities to intern with world-renowned marine scientists.

▶ **New College of Florida** is a top-ranked public liberal arts university with just under 1,000 students. New College has plans to double its enrollment by 2022.

▶ **State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota** works closely with the business community and offers a range of bachelor’s degrees, certificate programs and adult education courses, including a nursing program that ranks fourth in the state.

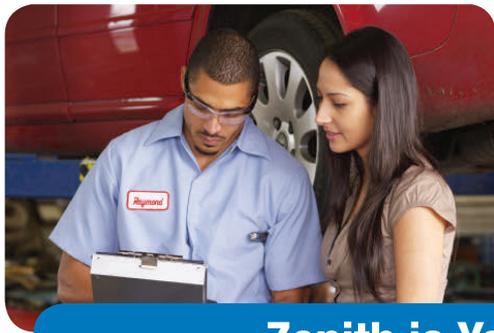
▶ The **Ringling College of Art and Design** is a private college offering degrees in fields ranging from advertising design to creative writing to graphic animation. Its students routinely win national Addy Awards, and its graduates are regularly listed in the credits of Oscar-nominated and award-winning films.

▶ **Florida State University** offers training for third- and fourth-year medical students at its regional College of Medicine campus and advanced study for performers at the Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training.

▶ **The University of Florida** has two footprints in the area: CityLab-Sarasota offers a master’s degree program in architecture; the UF Innovation Station Sarasota County is an extension of UF’s Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering.

▶ **Suncoast Technical College** provides a local workforce trained in computer technology, health, criminal justice, human services and industry trades.

▶ The Sarasota/Manatee County area is also home to campuses of **private regional and national colleges**, including the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Bradenton, Keiser University and Everglades College.



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Ca' d'Zan, the former winter home of John and Mable Ringling

Arts

In 2017, the non-profit arts sector contributed nearly \$3 billion to the local economy and employed 7,445, according to a national study by Americans for the Arts.

Sarasota's wealth of art traces back to circus magnate John Ringling, who in 1931 opened the **John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art** to house his personal collection. Today, the museum property, now owned by the state, is home to the **Circus Museum**; the **Asolo Repertory Theatre**, the largest professional non-profit theater south of Atlanta; and the **Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training**.

Downtown, the **Sarasota Opera** stages productions in a 1,100-seat historic theater. Meanwhile, the iconic purple seashell-shaped **Van Wezel performing arts center** hosts more than 100 events a year, including performances by the Sarasota Orchestra, Sarasota Ballet and international performers. The city-owned landmark, designed by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and Taliesin Associated Architects, entertains 265,000 visitors a year.

In a nod to Sarasota's past, the **Circus Arts Conservatory** and **Sail-**

or Circus Academy stage big-top performances throughout the year.

Community theaters, art galleries, history museums and cultural events abound throughout the county. Per capita, **Venice Theater** is the largest non-profit community theater in the nation. The red carpet rolls out for 10 days during Sarasota Film Festival. The Sarasota Festival of Arts brings about 250 arts vendors to downtown.

Beaches

Sarasota County has six barrier islands, all with public beach areas. Longboat Key is lined with beachfront condo towers and miles of golf courses. Siesta Key contains more bungalow and low-rise structures.

Sarasota County has 40 miles of coastline.



Popular with families, Siesta Beach tops many national "best beaches" list. Lido Key beaches are near St. Armands Circle, a shopping and entertainment district.

Casey Key, with mansions nestled among mangroves, is a sleepy slice of island with a sprinkling of rentals and the oldest beach park in the county. Venice beaches are known as a good place to find fossilized shark teeth. Venice also has the only dog-friendly beach in the county. Nature lovers, fishermen and kayakers gravitate to Manasota Key, which has secluded beaches and mangrove-lined waterways.

Parks and Preserves

Sarasota County has thousands of acres of parks and nature preserves, including the 12.5-mile **Legacy Trail**, a former rail spur that runs from Sarasota to Venice. The county also has two state parks. At 37,000 acres, **Myakka River State Park** is one of the state's largest. **Oscar Scherer State Park** skirts the coast between Sarasota and Venice.

Transportation

I-75 is the major access point from Tampa Bay to the north and Naples to the south. Major local and state roadway expansions are in the works throughout the county, which has also adopted the Complete Streets program, with plans to make streets safer for pedestrian and cyclists.

Air Canada, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Elite Airways, Jet-Blue Airways, United Airlines and Allegiant offer flights to Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. Visitors can fly commercial non-stop to Sarasota from 14 U.S. and Canadian cities. Venice Municipal Airport offers private, corporate and charter flights.

The Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) has about 25 bus routes and an express bus service between North Port and Sarasota. The Siesta Key Beach Free Trolley runs seven days a week between Turtle Beach and Siesta Village.

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Sports

Sarasota's Ed Smith Stadium has been the spring training home for the **Baltimore Orioles** since 2010. It has an economic impact of \$97 million annually, according to a study commissioned by Sarasota County. The **Atlanta Braves** are expected to join the Orioles in 2020 as the team moves its spring training to North Port from Kissimmee. Construction is underway on the Braves' \$100-million sports complex in the West Villages planned community.

The county is also home to **Nathan Benderson Park**, a 400-acre public lake with a state-of-the-art rowing facility that hosted the World Rowing Championships last fall.

Fox Lea Farms in Venice is a national hot spot for horse shows and hosts more than 160 events a year. In addition, there is an equestrian arena and polo fields.



The Braves will move from Kissimmee to a \$100-million spring training complex in North Port in 2020.

Other Attractions

Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium on City Island in Sarasota is a popular tourist attraction in addition to being a world-renowned oceanic research facility. If a fundraising campaign succeeds, the non-profit plans to move its aquarium to Nathan Benderson Park in 2020.

More than 140,000 people a year visit **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens**, which features rare tropical plants as well as a research facility on the banks of Sarasota Bay in downtown Sarasota.

Sarasota **Jungle Gardens** is a taste of Old Florida tourism mixing tropical plants with more than 200 native and exotic animals.

Economic Development

Several chambers, associations and economic development groups in Sarasota County help economic development. Primary organizations include:

► **Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County** — The EDC is the business go-to for information on local incentives, development sites, financing and permitting. It is also a conduit to other



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local, state and national assistance organizations. Its economic gardening program provides existing companies with mentoring, strategic analysis and other assistance.

▶ **Argus Foundation** — The non-profit composed of top business leaders serves as a think tank and a government watchdog group that interacts with civic leaders and other business groups in contributing to public dialogue.

▶ **Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce** — The county's largest chamber of commerce offers networking opportunities, along with a Leadership Sarasota County program that helps identify and groom future business and civic leaders. It sponsors a Young Professionals Group and offers members access to Shumaker Chamber University educational events.

▶ **Other chambers** — Englewood Chamber of Commerce, Longboat Key Chamber of Commerce, Osprey Nokomis Florida Chamber of Commerce, North Port Area Chamber of Commerce, Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce and Venice Area Chamber of Commerce.

Challenges

Growth and prosperity don't come without challenges:

▶ **Affordable Housing:** The median list price of homes in Sarasota County was \$339,000 in June and median rent was \$2,200, according to Zillow. Many service workers choose to buy or rent in more affordable areas in the county's southern tier or in Manatee County to the north.

▶ **Transportation:** One in five jobs in the county is within a short distance of I-75. Commuting patterns, along with increased tourism and development, has increased traffic throughout the county.

▶ **Aging Population:** Sarasota's median age of 55.7 is substantially higher than the U.S. median age of 38.2. Despite an increase in millennials, the county is still growing older faster than it is growing younger. In 2009, the median age was 50.7, and those 65 and older made up 29.6% of the population, according to U.S. Census estimates. In 2017, those 65 and older made up

36.1% of the population.

▶ **Sea-Level Rise:** Located on the Gulf of Mexico, Sarasota County is susceptible to volatile weather and sea-level rise. The city of Sarasota ranks the second in the U.S. among cities most vulnerable to the economic impacts of rising seas, falling only behind Miami Beach, according to a 2018 re-

port by Four Twenty Seven, an advisory firm that studies the economic impacts of climate change. Sarasota Bay has risen 7 inches since 1947. To mitigate the impact, the city is also in the process of evaluating all public property and roads that may be at risk and developing a plan to move or alter as necessary.



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Impact Players

Tom Barwin

City Manager, Sarasota



Tom Barwin runs the city on a day-to-day basis, answering to the five-member city commission. Barwin oversees about 500 full-time and 200 part-time employees and a roughly \$200-million budget. He's also the only public official on the board of the Bay Proj-

ect, a signature project that is expected to define the city in the coming years.

Barwin has an ambitious, progressive agenda for Sarasota. He wants it to lead Florida in environmental protection and achieve a zero-carbon footprint by 2040. Transportation is a priority as well: Barwin wants to make it easier to get around, whether by car, foot or bicycle, even as the city grows.

Before being hired in 2012, Barwin was city manager of Oak Park Village, Ill., an artsy suburb of Chicago where he led the city to become 95% powered by renewable energy.

"In my profession, what I enjoy is a city this size because it's about getting to know a lot of the people, and you can see the fruits of your labor," says Barwin.



Mark Pritchett

President/CEO, Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Mark Pritchett guides one of Florida's largest philanthropic foundations, which has more than \$330 million in assets. In addition to issuing grants, the foundation does catalytic philanthropy — seeking to make substantial change through research and leadership in areas from economic development to arts and education.

Such initiatives are what attracted Pritchett to the foundation in 2008 after 13 years in state public policy research. "It was a big career change for me," Pritchett says. "But I couldn't be happier."

Pritchett served as the founda-

tion's senior vice president leading community initiatives before accepting the job as president in 2015. He says he "cut his teeth" on big initiatives when he was appointed by then-Gov. Jeb Bush to lead the election reform task force following the 2000 election. He later mediated disputes between homeowners and insurers after the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005. "I love big challenges," Pritchett says.

Pritchett oversees a staff of 18. He also has served as vice president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Florida.

Michael Saunders

Founder/CEO, Michael Saunders & Co.

Michael Saunders started as a high school teacher, then became a juvenile court counselor. A single mom, she needed to earn more and got her real estate license. After four years as an agent, she borrowed \$5,000 and opened a real estate office in 1976 on St. Armands Circle back when St. Armands wasn't as bustling as it is now.

Today, her company is the largest real estate brokerage in Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties. It has 24 full-service real

estate offices with nearly 700 agents spanning Southwest Florida. In 2017, Saunders & Co.'s sales topped \$2.75 billion, ranking it the 67th-largest brokerage in dollar volume among the top 500 in the U.S.

Saunders has funded a slew of local charitable programs for children. She's an honorary board member of Mote Marine Laboratory, past chairman of the board of Marie Selby Gardens and has won numerous state and local awards, including Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year award.





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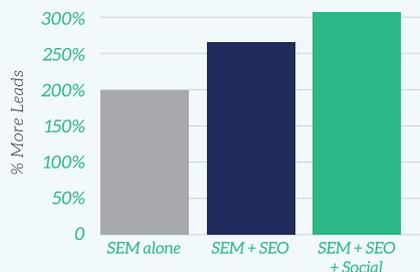
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Craig A. Johnson

Chairman, *President and CEO, FCCI Insurance Group*

As head of one of the state's largest commercial insurers, Craig Johnson works at fostering a culture that consistently puts FCCI on lists of best companies to work for while also growing the company's revenue. Johnson started as an accountant at Deloitte & Touche in Baltimore and worked for USF&G and American Skyline Insurance before becoming vice president and controller at FCCI in 2003. He says the offer came at the right time. His family was young, and it gave them a chance to settle in Sarasota. He became FCCI's executive

vice president/CFO/treasurer in 2006 and president/CEO in 2011.

In the past five years, FCCI has expanded to 19 states and the District of Columbia and increased its workforce from 724 to 830. Revenue has climbed from \$586 million to \$836 million.

"We've watched Sarasota grow and have grown with it. Our business started off in support of Florida businesses," Johnson says. "Today, we support businesses all over the country while keeping our roots in Sarasota and supporting the local economy."

Bayne Beecher

President, *Sarasota-Manatee Area Manufacturers Association; production control manager, PGT Industries*

Bayne Beecher is the voice of the area's manufacturing industry through the Sarasota-Manatee Area Manufacturers Association (SAMA). As a mechanical engineer for Sarasota County's largest manufacturer, PGT Industries, he's aware of the challenges manufacturers face in finding labor and has worked to educate area youth about the potential of manufacturing jobs.

"I love manufacturing, and I love what manufacturing does for an economy as a multiplier, so I'm not opposed to making personal sacrifices," Beecher says referring to the time he devotes speaking to high school students.

After graduating from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, Beecher and his wife, both natives of Jamaica, were drawn to Florida's climate. He worked for Eaton Corp., Delphi-Mechatronics and Stoneridge before joining PGT Industries in 2008. A certified Six Sigma Black Belt — a professional who can teach and explain the Six Sigma techniques used in improving manufacturing and other processes — he also holds an MBA from Webster University and serves on the board of FloridaMakes, Florida's NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership center.





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Newcomer Impressions



Michael Donahue

Web Developer, *AtLarge*

One recent winter in Boston, Michael Donahue, 35, says, "We had 10 feet of snow, and it had been coming down for seven days." He

came down to Sarasota on vacation, stayed with a friend — "and didn't go back."

Donahue had visited his friend for years and his grandparents before that. He had seen downtown Sarasota transform from a sleepy retirement enclave to a place where there was lots more to do and more people his age to do it with.

He now lives downtown just a block from his office. He says he rarely leaves the downtown area because he can walk to work, the supermarket and restaurants. He and his girlfriend share a car.

"I feel like here you can have more impact on the community because it's much smaller," he says. "It's growing fast, and there's lots of resources to help that growth along."



Destin Wells

Vice President,
Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County

Destin Wells was living in Orlando and had no desire to leave his job as director of aviation/aerospace/defense with Enterprise Florida when he got a call about a job in Sarasota late last year. "I had a great gig. I was traveling all over the world. My knee-jerk reaction was, no, not really, but thank you. I had my preconceived notions. Sarasota had a reputation of being complacent."

Wells visited Sarasota for an interview. To his surprise, the EDC business center was filled with startup tech companies. He stayed for the weekend. "The quality of life was obvious. I started to think this might be a real opportunity."

He dug a little deeper. As a father, Wells was attracted to the quality of Sarasota's schools, and as an economic developer, he believed he'd found something he could work with. "All the puzzle pieces are here. Good public education, good higher education, incentive programs and the ability to put together good deals, a diverse industrial base," Wells says. "It feels like a market ready to explode. For an economic developer, you can't ask for more than that."

Maria Mandler

Retired



Maria Mandler, 65, and her husband, an attorney, have lived all over the world. They were living in Chicago when they decided to retire. The couple had vacationed at

the Colony on Longboat Key years before and came back to winter in Sarasota during retirement. Mandler's husband, a tennis buff, was drawn to the tennis community at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort and IMG Academy in nearby Bradenton.

"We also like the beaches and the cultural aspects. I enjoy dance of all kinds," says Mandler, who had been managing director of Global Transaction Services at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. After a couple of winters, they made the full leap and became year-around residents in downtown Sarasota. Being able to walk to restaurants while also having the beaches close by was important to them, she says.

In addition to adapting to retirement for the past two years, she's adjusting to not having an international hub airport close by.

Stefani Dueol

Television Producer/Novelist



As a freelance television producer and author, Stefani Dueol can live just about anywhere, but she landed near downtown Sarasota in 2016. "I had two requirements: It had to be within a reasonable drive of a major airport and it had to have Broadway show tours. I'm a New Yorker, and Broadway plays are my love."

When Dueol's partner, a nurse, decided to retire, they scouted locations in Florida. "We looked at Delray. We looked at Lauderdale, but nothing felt like home," Dueol says.

They considered St. Petersburg, but what sold them on Sarasota was a stay at Lido Key. "I got in the water, and said 'I'm home. I'm done.'"

They chose to live in Arlington Park, south of downtown and a short drive or bicycle ride to the beach. It took a year for an older home that was affordable and habitable to become available. Other than missing family and friends, Dueol says the only thing she longs for is regional public transit. "Why don't they have light rail from Sarasota to St. Pete and Tampa?"

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- ▶ **Marty Black:** Chairman, West Villages District
- ▶ **Todd Bowden:** Superintendent, Sarasota County Schools
- ▶ **Jeff Boyd:** Senior vice president/director of wealth management, PNC Financial Services
- ▶ **Kirk Boylston:** President, Lakewood Ranch Commercial Realty
- ▶ **Al Carlson:** Director, UF Innovation Station
- ▶ **Kevin Cooper:** President/CEO, Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ **Jeanne Corcoran:** Director, Sarasota Film & Entertainment Office

- ▶ **Patricia Courtois:** President/CEO, C Suite Communications; vice president/chief client officer, On Ideas
- ▶ **Fiona Crawford:** President/CEO, Roskamp Institute; COO, Archer Pharmaceuticals
- ▶ **Michael Crosby:** President/CEO, Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium
- ▶ **Wolfgang H. Dangel:** President/CEO, Sun Hydraulics
- ▶ **Michael Dattoli:** Founder, Dattoli Cancer Center
- ▶ **Nancy Detert:** Chair, Sarasota County Commission
- ▶ **Dominic DiMaio:** Division CEO, Synovus Bank
- ▶ **Rogan Donnelly:** President/CEO, Tervis



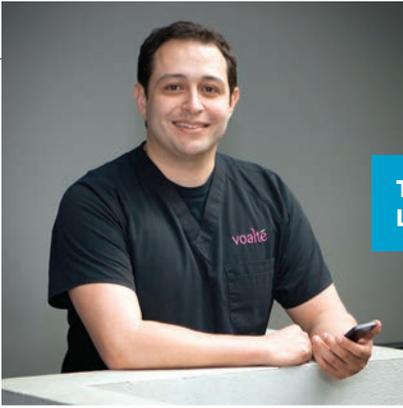
Liz Alpert



Jeanne Corcoran

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- ▶ **Rae Dowling:** Area manager, Florida Power & Light
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- ▶ **Thomas Harmer:** City manager, Longboat Key
- ▶ **Steven High:** Executive director, John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art
- ▶ **Karen Holbrook:** Regional chancellor, USF Sarasota-Manatee
- ▶ **John Holic:** Mayor, Venice
- ▶ **Paul Hudson:** Market Leader/Senior managing director, Northern Trust
- ▶ **Mark Huey:** President/CEO, Sarasota County Economic Development Corp.
- ▶ **Jeff Jackson:** President/CEO, PGT Industries
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- ▶ **Craig Johnson:** President/CEO, FCCI Insurance Group
- ▶ **Heather Kasten:** Executive director, Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance
- ▶ **Jim Kuhlman:** President/CEO, Premier Community Bank
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Trey Lauderdale

- ▶ **Trey Lauderdale:** Founder/CEO, Voalte
- ▶ **Peter Lear:** City manager, North Port
- ▶ **Kathy Lehner:** President/CEO, Venice Area Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ **Jonathan Lewis:** Sarasota County administrator
- ▶ **Gail Loefgren:** President, Longboat Key Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ **Jeff Maultsby:** Director/business & development, Sarasota County



Donal O'Shea

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- ▶ **David Sessions:** President/CEO, Willis A. Smith Construction
- ▶ **Bryon Shinn:** Partner-in-charge, Carr, Riggs & Ingram
- ▶ **Jim Shirley:** Executive director, Arts & Cultural Alliance of Sarasota
- ▶ **Rich Swier:** Entrepreneur/founder, Hub incubator
- ▶ **Larry Thompson:** President, Ringling College of Art and Design
- ▶ **David Verinder:** President/CEO, Sarasota Memorial Health Care System
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