

River Park gave birth to Port St. Lucie but has never been part of city

By Tyler Treadway

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As Port St. Lucie looks back on its first 50 years, it's ironic that the first part of the community to be developed isn't part of the city.

River Park, roughly bounded by U.S. 1 to the east, the North Fork of the St. Lucie River to the west, Prima Vista Boulevard to the south and Coconut Avenue to the north, was the first neighborhood to be developed in the Port St. Lucie area. However, its residents have steadfastly stayed outside the city limits.

Two streets were laid out: Entrada Avenue and East Arbor Avenue, both west of and running parallel to U.S. 1 just north of Prima Vista. According to "The Early Years of Port St. Lucie, Florida" by Strelsa Schreiber, Guy and Gladys Clark moved into a newly built house at 216 East Arbor on June 25, 1957, becoming the first family to live in the Port St. Lucie area, but not in Port St. Lucie proper.

Early on, the River Park area was known as North Port St. Lucie, and the area around the Port St. Lucie Country Club, later the Sandpiper neighborhood, was South Port St. Lucie.

But when the General Development Corp. incorporated Port St. Lucie on April 21, 1961, the developer intentionally left the River Park area out of the city because there were people already living there, and they would have to be allowed to vote on incorporation. Thus, Port St. Lucie became what was known at the time as a "paper city," an area where there were not yet residents but only a developer's big plans for some.

Years later, when the city proposed to annex River Park, residents there voted against it, unwilling to accept the higher taxes that would have come with being in the city.

