South Venice Civic Association

1955-2016
Picture a logging camp deep in a pine woods with no roads, no stores. With minimum shelter and maximum mosquitos. A place where the anemic development stalled in the 1920’s after two destructive hurricanes and the Great Depression left residents homeless, living in tents and depending on hunting and fishing for survival.

That was South Venice from the late 19th century until the 1930’s
Now picture a vibrant community of nearly 20,000 people with every imaginable amenity nearby - schools, stores, churches, theatres. Add their own beach on the Gulf, a boat ramp, lakes for fishing, a number of small parks, a community house, and one of the finest public parks in the county with tennis courts, miles and miles of nature trails and an education center and nature classes.

This is South Venice today
The Woodmere Lumber Company
South Venice
early 1900’s
The South Venice subdivision was platted in 1952
The first models were quickly built and the local Chamber of Commerce began promoting the new development.
TO ACQUAINT MORE PEOPLE WITH THE GULF OF MEXICO SIDE OF Florida AND TO BRING MORE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS HERE

the Venice Area CHAMBER of Commerce IS MAKING THIS OFFER

BUILDING SITES AT SOUTH VENICE FOR THE FULL PRICE OF

$200

ONLY

For Each 40’ X 100’ Lot

NO LESS THAN 2 NO MORE THAN 5 TO A PURCHASER

STARTS YOU ON THE ROAD TO FLORIDA HOME OWNERSHIP

$25 DOWN $5 PER MONTH

ALL LOTS THE SAME PRICE

SOUTH VENICE’S WHITE SAND BEACH ON THE GULF OF MEXICO IS RESERVED FOR ITS RESIDENTS

Where else in the entire United States can you find a more delightful place to vacation and retire than in Fabulous Florida? The Venice Area has an exceptionally fine climate, cooled by Gulf breezes in the Summer and naturally warm in Winter. Prepare now to own your own home in this lush tropical setting. South Venice is only 6 miles from the center of Venice where you have a fine shopping center, schools, movie, bank, churches, rail and bus facilities.

LOCATION

South Venice is located between the Tamiami Trail (U. S. Route 41) and the Gulf of Mexico, 4 miles south of the center of Venice.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

VENICE AREA CHAMBER of COMMERCE VENICE, FLORIDA

Please send me the descriptive folder explaining this offer. It is understood that this is only an inquiry and does not obligate me in any way.

Name ____________________________________________
Address _________________________________________
City __________________________ Zone ______ State ____________

Print Name and Address Clearly
Within three years, the community had grown to hundreds of households with many hundreds more projected to arrive over the next three years.
In 1955, residents decided to create a community organization of some sort and possibly build a community house where they could gather socially, and meet to discuss issues that mattered to South Venice.
So, on the evening of November 12, 1955, those forward-thinking early South Venice residents held a meeting at a local motel.
The minutes of this meeting from 51 years ago begin:

**Meeting of S.V. residents interested in forming a Civic Assoc. called to order on Nov. 12, 1955 at the Sunset Motel**
## Living costs in South Venice in 1956

**Projected ANNUAL Expenses**

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Low Estimate</th>
<th>High Estimate</th>
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<td>Taxes</td>
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<td>Car gas and oil</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>1144.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>2021.00</strong></td>
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South Venice property owners shared ownership of 1600 feet of beach on the Gulf of Mexico, a unique asset.

In the coming years, the SVCA would play the central role in protecting that beach for South Venice.
Access to the beach was provided by two wooden footbridges that stretched across Lemon Bay.
After incorporating the South Venice Civic Association in 1956, residents soon began to work toward building a community hall.

Financed by the residents, and built partly with their own labor, the SVCA on Alligator Drive opened in December of 1959.
The Civic Association building opened its doors to the community in 1959.
South Venice’s volunteer firehouse on Alligator Drive served us until 1999
1960’s residents held a ‘sit-in’ on the north beach footbridge as the intracoastal dredgers approached Lemon Bay.
Riding to the beach on the new ferry after the dredging of the Intracoastal Waterway in Lemon Bay

Before the dredging, beachgoers could just walk across
The June 2001 issue of the South Venice News announced the incorporation of the South Venice Beach Endowment Trust by the South Venice Civic Association.

Founding Trustees were Bill Hentschel, Maureen Holland, Don Gecks, Ellen Hillstrom and Rick Curwood. Future appointments to the Trust would be made by the Board of Directors of the SVCA.
South Venice and south (of) Venice are not the same thing. Many local officials and the press incorrectly use the phrase South Venice to include areas outside our subdivision.

This map shows the borders of the South Venice subdivision; these borders haven’t changed since the development was subdivided and chartered in 1952.
SVCA over the years . . . .
The ALSTON COTTAGES on US41 in South Venice – 1950’s
Earl’s Trailer Sales on US41

A floral mock up of the South Venice Ferry in Venice’s Sun Fiesta Parade
In 1953, the only Publix was the one on the island.
South Venice Beach pavilion
The beach pavilion had a wooden floor, storage slats above and six long picnic tables.

Benches ran across the front of the pavilion.
The summer after volunteers installed a new tin roof on the pavilion, five storms hit southwest Florida. The Country and State ordered the damaged pavilion demolished. The Beach Trustees fought the ruling, advocating for repairing the structure. But in the end the verdict stood and the pavilion came down.
After standing up to the weather for 50 years, the beach pavilion faced the ‘year of the five storms’ in 2004. The old building survived four of them that year, but not the fifth, ‘Jeanne’.
In the 1990s at the Beach Committee yard sale
Held in the ferry field every year, the sale raised funds to support ferry and boat ramp and beach operations.
South Venice Civic Association
South Venice Beach Trust
Working together to improve our community
Working together to improve our community
Signing up for a neighborhood workday
Fun on the water

and at the community building
SVCA’s biggest annual fundraiser
South Venice Civic Association

Our community’s voice in Sarasota County for over 60 years

For a PowerPoint version of this presentation, please contact maureenholland@comcast.net