

Highland Lakes History

In the Beginning ...

Highland Lakes was established in the unincorporated area of Palm Harbor in Pinellas County in 1978 to great promise. Twice it was named the Number One Senior Development in the State of Florida. This didn't happen by magic. It happened because of the dream of the builder and documents that were formulated and refined over the years. They ensure that the promises that were made to those who bought homes here were kept.

It also had everything to do with the people who came here and were willing to give their time and energy to a community they loved. We have, of course, had our ups and downs. But we have also had a lot of good people who kept their heads and put the community ahead of their egos. It started with "The Greatest Generation" and it has proceeded through the "Baby Boomers" and beyond.

Highland Lakes sits on land that was originally a citrus grove, but the winter of 1972 wiped out a large portion of the citrus crop. What we now call Alternate 19 was the main road in the area. Alderman and US Highway 19 were both referred to as "grove roads" for the workers to gain access to the orange groves. Pinellas County maintained a fish hatchery on Lake Tarpon which enabled the lake to be regularly restocked. The hatchery was closed, and our Boat and RV lot now occupies that space.

Developing ...

U.S. Home Corporation was formed by a combination of Rutenberg Homes, Brown Homes and Imperial Homes, which developed Highland Lakes as an equity community under the name of Imperial Land Company, and it's Pinellas Division of U.S. Homes of Florida. Construction started in 1972 on what now is Highland Boulevard. The first sales office plus the first model condos, later converted back into condos, were 1611 and 1619 Whithorn. Single family homes were erected across the street, and now bear the numbers 1614, 1618 and 1622 Whithorn.

Development moved west from the office for condos and east for single homes. North Whitebridge, followed by Berwick Court, constituted Phase One of the condos. Private home building filled the area east of Dorchester and north to the boundary fence and spilled over to a new street called Queen Anne Boulevard. Queen Anne and Dundee had been laid out and a sales office was set up in one of the model homes called "The Affordables."

Condos ...

In 1976 Phase Six and Seven were started on the west side of Queen Anne. These buildings, all two-bedroom condos, had a new feature – a screened in patio. Owners here bought their land with the condos and became members of both the original club and the Tarpon Club, on the south end of Lake Tarpon, the original clubhouse for the homeowners. In 1977 the first four buildings of Condo Eight were started. The area from Phase One to Phase Eight was now called Andover Village to distinguish it from the Tier Condos identified as Mission Groves.

In 1977, U.S. Homes made available to Phase Two and Four the land under the condos. In both phases residents approved the purchasing of the land unanimously and retired it from leasehold status. This offer was not made to Phases One and Three, since their leases had already been sold to investors. Andover is the only community within Highland Lakes that has its own clubhouse and complete activities calendar outside of what we call “The Big Club.”

Waterfront Properties ...

In 1987 two new tracts were under construction by U.S. Homes. They were Pristine Point, the last single-family tract, which had some lots fronting on Lake Tarpon and would contain 74 units, and Camelot, a tract which would include duplex and triplex units on the east side of the Red Course and would contain 36 units.

U.S. Homes submitted preliminary plans to the county for construction in Tract 280 on Lake Pointe Road with 42 villa condo units anticipated. Plans for the completion of Tract 17 in the Highland Club Lane area included 22 additional units. By 1991 all construction in Highland Lakes was complete and U.S. Homes terminated their sales office and construction operations.

Somewhere along the way The Landings, apartments off Nebraska Avenue, were built and offered optional membership in the Association. Currently there are 2,457 member-units in the Association with 201 units within the designated area of Highland Lakes and The Landings that are not members of the Association.

The Clubhouse ...

On November 18, 1978 The Highland Club was dedicated to the Homeowners Association and was officially opened. It consisted of a woodworking shop; lapidary; ceramics, painting and sewing studios; meeting rooms; library; women’s clubroom; billiard room; Olympic size

swimming pool; whirlpool spa; shuffleboard and tennis courts; kitchen; and an auditorium which seated 400 people theater style (the room we now call the Great Room). Since 1980 the pavilion structure at the clubhouse pool, the Annex housing ceramics, sewing, crafts, computers and woodworking facilities, additional tennis courts, board room, employee lounge, a golf building, a chemical storage building and fuel storage facilities at golf maintenance and the RV/Boat storage lot have been added to accommodate the residents using the facilities.

Management ...

The first Board of Directors was formed in 1987. The Board is responsible for maintaining common facilities and grounds, enforcing deed restrictions, providing recreational facilities and protecting property values for the Association and the residents.

The Association Manager has the responsibility and authority to conduct and direct the day-to-day business of the Association, and reports to the Board of Directors.

Volunteer Committees ...

Highland Lakes has six STANDING COMMITTEES which were established to do the work in the community and then bring recommendations back to the Board for action. They are: Activities, Architectural Review, Boating, Facilities, Finance and Golf.

Activities Committee – Originally called Activities Council, oversees all activities including clubs, sponsored interest groups, interest groups, neighborhoods, classes and events, except those sponsored by the Association. **need date started**

Architectural Review Committee – Established in 1992, the ARC reviews all external projects by members and approve or disapproval applications to maintain the architectural integrity and the harmonious visual perspectives in the community.

Boating Association – Initially set up in 1979 as part of the Yacht Club, a decision was made to separate them since the Yacht Club is a social organization and the Boating Association is a service organization that provides an amenity to all homeowners and guests. The Boating Association has responsibility for the maintenance and operation of our pontoon boats on Lake Tarpon.

Facilities Committee – Established in 1996 as the Maintenance Audit Committee (MAC), the Facilities Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the Board concerning the Association's physical property including maintenance and improvement of all facilities.

Finance Committee – Set up 1984, the Finance Committee provides financial oversight and makes recommendations to the Board.

Golf Committee – Since 1979, the Golf Committee watches over our golf courses, works with the course superintendent and informs him of concerns that the members might have. They are the liaison between the course superintendent and the Board of Directors.

These are augmented by seven SERVICE COMMITTEES which function and serve at the direction of the Board of Directors. They are **Bingo** (1979), **Boat/RV Lot (???)**, **Highlander** (1978), **Library** (1978), **Neighborhood Watch (???)**, **Woodshop** (1978) and **Technology Committee** (2013).

In addition, we have three AD HOC COMMITTEES which were formed for distinctive purposes: **Election Committee**, which oversees the election of candidates to the Board of Directors; **Beautification Committee**, which promotes the enjoyment of gardening, the principles of “Florida-Friendly” landscaping and the creation of wildlife habitats; and **Health & Wellness Committee**, which ——

Highland Lakes is rich with various and diverse clubs and interest groups.

The above article was gleaned from many sources, including “History of Highland Lakes” written by Linda Brown, and the HOA Policies, Rules and Procedures Manual.