



A Laurel Park Neighborhood Association Newsletter

February 2025

Save The Date!

**Laurel Park Neighborhood Association
(LPNA)**

Annual Meeting

Monday Feb 24th

Lite Bites: 5:15pm

Member Meeting Begins: 6 pm

Tamiami Tap

711 S. Osprey Ave

**Open to both Property Owners and
Residents**

Hold the Date!

Music in the Park

Saturday, March 29 from 6-9 pm

At Laurel Park

Featured Band: Big Night Out

Is Laurel Park Your Home? Learn the Membership Benefits of the LPNA

Annette Liggett
LPNA Board Member/Memberships

Did you know that the Laurel Park Neighborhood Association (LPNA) is over 30 years old and one of the most active and effective associations in the City? Such longevity and effectiveness comes from our residents' enthusiasm for the historical district and their strong interest in making Laurel Park such a great place to live.

The LPNA mission is to:

- **protect residential & historic integrity**
- **work with governmental agencies**
- **promote communication**
- **encourage safety & beautification**

The association sponsors various special events like Music in the Park and membership meetings.

Continued on page 2

Like the information you see in this newsletter?
Join LPNA and their email list for regular updates.

LPNA membership

cont. from pg 1

Each provides great opportunities to meet new neighbors, visit with long-time friends, and keep up to date on the city's latest projects.

And let's face it — numbers count. The more members, the more effectively the association can advocate Laurel Park's positions to our local policymakers.

LPNA membership is available to anyone who lives or owns property within the City's defined boundaries of Laurel Park. While there is no fee to register, donations help pay for events, the website, newsletter, liability insurance, mailing costs and our ever-popular holiday lights along South Osprey Ave.

If you are a neighboring resident or business owner, you can still become involved by registering as a Friend of Laurel Park. 'Friends' have all the membership benefits except voting.

Annual Memberships are now due. Whether you are renewing or joining for the first time—it's simple! Scan the QR code below or use the membership form on the back of this newsletter. Then complete and return the form to LPNA. And please, also consider making a donation.

Thanks for joining (or renewing) LPNA in 2025!



Use this QR code for web access for the LPNA membership form

About LPNA & This Newsletter

This newsletter is distributed by the non-profit Laurel Park Neighborhood Association to the neighborhood's property owners and residents.

The LPNA is coordinated by a Board of Directors that is elected every two years by membership. The current board members include:

Matt Arcari-President
Steve Fantauzzo-Vice President
Stimson Schantz-Treasurer
Ron Watts-Secretary
Annette Liggett-Membership
Ron Kashden-Communications, CCNA Rep.
Marc Epstein
Helen Habbert
Juliette Reynolds

Thanks to the LPNA's communications committee for preparing this issue: Laura Charron, Stim Schantz, Emilia Sullivan, and Ron Watts.

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Oak Street Branch Project for Hudson Bayou Moving Forward

The City of Sarasota is in the early stage of requesting bids to improve the condition of the Oak Street branch of the Hudson Bayou, which will connect our neighborhood's kayak launch at the end of Ohio Place to the larger Hudson Bayou.

The waterway currently is all but impassable due to sediment buildup and vegetation overgrowth. The project's goal is to begin to improve the water quality and make the section of waterway available once again to users.

Much has been written over the years about the need to improve the situation. You can find a Master Plan online from 30 years ago that talks about the buildup of over six feet of sediment in some parts and decreased water quality. Not much has changed through the years. There are also concerns about the ongoing wastewater management practices in this waterway after recent storms.

The current project has been budgeted to receive \$1 million spread over two fiscal year budgets (\$188k in the current budget, and the remainder in next year's budget). The hope is to finish the plan in 2025 and the actual work in 2026.

Funding comes from the County's "Penny Tax" revenues that were renewed by voters in 2022. LPNA members have been working to support the city's efforts for a matching grant that may double the city's funding toward the planned efforts to improve this section of the waterway.

This project will give us a wonderful opportunity to improve the health and water quality of the Oak Street branch of the Hudson Bayou. We are pleased to be partnering with the city of Sarasota to use funds as efficiently as possible to get the greatest possible improvement for Laurel Park.

LPNA has formed a "Hudson Bayou" volunteer committee to work with the city staff on this project and is planning a vegetation 'clean-up' day later this spring to help keep the project's planning costs down. Watch for email updates as time and place get established in a month or two.



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Laurel Park: A Bright Spot in Sarasota’s Residential Market

By Kelly Mooney & Betsy Sublette
The Sarasota Real Estate Company &
Members of LPNA

Sarasota’s residential market demonstrated resilience in 2024 despite shifting conditions. While higher interest rates and rising insurance costs tempered buyer activity, Sarasota’s appeal as a sought-after destination continued to drive steady demand. Looking ahead to 2025, we anticipate a balanced market where realistic pricing and high-quality listings continue to move inventory.

Laurel Park, with its historic charm and walkable appeal, stands out as a particularly robust micro-market. While Sarasota’s overall sales volume has faced slight pressure, Laurel Park properties have maintained strong interest from buyers seeking character, convenience, and community. Smaller lot sizes, distinctive architecture, and proximity to downtown make Laurel Park unique, attracting a mix of primary residents and savvy investors.

As Sarasota continues to evolve, Laurel Park remains a jewel, embodying the city’s vibrant past and exciting future. We expect Laurel Park’s market in 2025 to outpace broader Sarasota trends, driven by limited inventory and sustained buyer enthusiasm for the neighborhood.

2024 Home Sales in Laurel Park

320 Ohio Pl	Feb.	\$1,040,000
1944 Morrill St	Apr	\$1,042,000
1810 Morrill St	Apr	\$ 830,000
1826 Hawkins Ct	Apr	\$ 950,000
612 Ohio Pl	Apr	\$1,600,000
659 Ohio Pl	Apr	\$ 720,000
1644 Dolphin Ln	Apr	\$2,050,000
1646 Devonshire	Apr	\$ 750,000
422 Julia Pl	May	\$1,435,000
543 Ohio Pl	May	\$ 877,500
1662 Devonshire	May	\$2,500,000
505 S Osprey Ave	Jun	\$2,400,000
651 Madison Ct	Jul	\$ 975,000
1840 Oak St	Aug	\$1,450,000
1691 Devonshire	Oct	\$1,825,000
517 Madison Ct	Dec	\$1,175,000
1680 Oak St	Dec	\$2,600,000

Data reported through Stellar MLS per Zillow.com

Local Roadway Project Updates

Oak Street-LPNA requested this project over two years ago, and the city expects that the delayed project from US 301 to Orange Ave will now take place from February through mid-April. The work will include base restoration, asphalt surfacing, and work on sidewalk curb ramps and any faulty sidewalks. Median work will follow.

Pine Street Roundabout-is one of many projects that was delayed by last Fall's storms. Final utility work is being completed, and the city hopes to see Ringling Boulevard reopen between Orange and Osprey by April.

Crosswalk at Laurel & Orange-LPNA has asked the city again about the installation of a crosswalk at this intersection; ideally before any construction might begin in the future on the large lot at that corner. We have not gotten much traction on the idea yet but will keep pressing.

Osprey Crosswalks-LPNA has been working with the city to try to improve the visibility of the crosswalks at Oak, Laurel, and Morrill. The first step hopefully will be to paint white lines on either side of the brick walkways to help drivers see the crosswalks.

South Osprey Sewer Work-be aware that the city will be installing a new force main along Osprey Ave. south of US 41 this coming summer. Expect some traffic delays in that area through the summer as the project moves forward.



The new roundabout located at Ringling & Pine with the County Admin Building on the left, and U.S. Post Office on the right. It is scheduled to open this spring.

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Neighbor Notes

Laura & Emmanuel Charron moved to Laurel Park after 10 years on Longboat Key (luckily, a few months before the hurricanes). They are currently living in an apartment on Laurel St. while renovating their house on Dolphin Ln.

After spending their entire professional lives as expats, they were very happy to retire to Florida's West Coast and live an outdoor life. Emmanuel (ex-finance) is a biker and a swimmer. Laura (ex-librarian) enjoys textile work and being able to eat outside.

Volunteers make the LPNA work. Two of the top stars at that are **Jolie and Brian McGinnis**. Some examples of their efforts from just the last year: obtaining a city grant and then organizing "Tunes in the Park" for us; serving on the LPNA nominating committee; and installing the holiday lights on the Osprey Ave. light poles. Long-time residents at Ohio Pl & Laurel St, they're a great example of folks making our neighborhood a better place to live!

LPNA welcomes newly formed Towles Court Neighborhood Association. It represents half of Morrill St and Adams Street from Links Ave to just short of the commercial area on US 301.

Interested in volunteering to serve on a city Board? **Steve Fantauzzo** (Osprey Ave) serves on the Independent Police Advisory Panel, and **Ron Watts** (Laurel St) serves on the Parks, Recreation & Environmental Protection Advisory Board. Visit the city's website for current openings to apply for.

Want to submit something about you to share with Laurel Park? Send it to us at members@laurelparksarasota.org



Some of the neighbors that helped with finishing the clean-up of Laurel Park and then installed the holiday decorations. Thanks to all!

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Graham Capital Wealth Management is based on K St in Washington DC, 3 blocks from the White House. But the good news is that we have an Office right next to Laurel Park, at the corner of Washington and Ringling. Need a good second opinion? Schedule an appointment to see us. Our number is (941) 260-4470. This is how we invest for our clients:

Activist Investing

When a large shareholder believes a company is being mismanaged, has excessive costs or has another problem that must be addressed to add value, the shareholder may voice their dissatisfaction and request specific action. Eventually, shareholders will demand immediate change that will benefit their positions (a sale, for example).

Short-Term Debt

One of our overarching goals is the acquisition of short-term debt instruments - typically maturing within 36 months – in the form of senior bonds or exchange-traded debt. As short-term-maturity investments, they are less susceptible to the same interest rate variability as long-term debt instruments. These types of debt investments provide the bedrock of our clients' portfolios. We put energy into investing within this asset class to find underfollowed companies that represent great value to our bond investments. We do not invest in bond mutual funds as they tend to reduce returns.

Merger Arbitrage

Merger arbitrage is a market-neutral, event-driven investment strategy that we look to frequently when building our clients' portfolios. Merger arbitrage relies on the successful completion of mergers and acquisitions. Typically, when an acquisition is announced, the target company's stock will trade below the acquisition price due to uncertainty surrounding the deal. We can calculate those uncertainties to determine if there is value in the prospective position.

Special Situations

Special situation investing occurs when companies announce corporate actions or specific events that materially impact their value and share price. These are generally short-term-oriented investments (one to two months) that have clear catalysts for share price appreciation and are not dependent on a company's financials or market fundamentals. This type of investment generally comprises a small portion of a given client's account.

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Laurel Park Newcomer Tips

By Laura Charron

Welcome! You've found a home and your utilities are all hooked up. But you've also found a great neighborhood!

The Laurel Park neighborhood is about 100 years old. It is an established, diverse urban community with an eclectic mix of housing. That leads to a neighborhood with diverse residents: old and young, renter and homeowner, "snowbirds" and year-round locals, married or single.

Our neighborhood has terrific scores for walkability and biking. It's a neighborhood where people are friendly, engaged and social. So get out and meet your neighbors!

The Laurel Park Neighborhood Association (LPNA) is the official representation of our neighborhood with the City of Sarasota. LPNA is not a Homeowners Association. It doesn't have monthly dues. Membership in the LPNA is open to all residents and property owners in Laurel Park.

The association keeps residents informed via newsletters and emails, organizes social events, and works to promote quality of life in the neighborhood. For instance, throughout the post-Helene/Milton periods, the LPNA's emails to members provided valuable info from the City as to storm clean up and issues.

Have you checked out the LPNA website at laurelparksarasota.org? It is a treasure trove of information, both past and present.

Another source of neighborhood info is the bulletin board at Laurel Park at 1725 Laurel St.

We're open to new ideas. If there is enough interest from our residents, we'd love to make the website more interactive. Perhaps helping neighbors connect by creating special interest groups (for biking, needlework, mother/baby, and more), and/or offers of services (such as a dog sitter or handyman). Let us hear from you. Email us at members@laurelparksarasota.org.

Join us at LPNA, and make plans to attend the annual meeting Feb 24th at Tamiami Tap to meet folks. It's a great first step!

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Where Do Development Projects Near Laurel Park Stand?

There are a number of new residential and commercial developments currently being considered around our neighborhood. Here are some of the key projects we're watching currently:

Payne Park Townhomes-this is a planned mixed-use project highlighted by fifty 3 & 4 bedroom rental townhomes between Laurel St. and Oak St. along US 301. Status: the 2 +/- acres have been cleared of the previous buildings; the administrative plan has been approved by the city, and construction was initially scheduled to start by the end of 2024 before the storms came through. Completion is now projected for 2026.

Sarasota Players at Payne Park Auditorium-a lease has been signed by the City and Sarasota Players for the use of the auditorium in the park across from the tennis courts at the end of Laurel St. The plans are to only renovate the existing space. An earlier idea to expand the building's footprint in the park was rejected. First productions are expected in the renovated building in Fall 2026. (See related story on page 11).

Artist Court Residences-242 apartments are planned for this lot at US 301 and Adams Lane across from Towles Court. The lot has been cleared and the administrative plan has been approved by the city. This project too was delayed by the storms, and construction should begin this spring.

Caragiulo's Restaurant-This Italian restaurant will be moving from its Palm Ave location to a new building along Ringling Boulevard between Links and Osprey in 2026. Construction began in December.

200 S Orange Project-This is one of two large projects at the edge of the neighborhood moving forward in pre-planning stages right now. This encompasses the former Willams and Parker law offices between Ringling, Pineapple, and Dolphin (along with several smaller buildings). No plans have been submitted to the city yet, though plenty of activity has taken place. The owners have received permission to take control of Cross Street from the city once construction begins (with the stated idea of turning it back into two-way traffic with wide sidewalks). They have also asked and received approval that a proposed 'condo hotel' project be considered under the city's commercial zoning rules. The idea floated was individually owned condos with average stays of one week or less that are managed by a

common association. These may be in four or five buildings with primary parking entrances from Cross Street.

County Admin Building-better known in the neighborhood as the "Benderson Project", the planned redevelopment of this land seems to have slowed. As background, Benderson Development bought the property along Ringling Boulevard (which includes a rear parking lot within the footprint of Laurel Park) from Sarasota County as part of a package of selling land near Lakewood Ranch for new county administrative offices. The current admin building is leased back to the County until June 2026 (when the new offices are scheduled to be finished). Hurricane Milton brought roof damage to the building, and the County's presence in the building has been reduced. Although plenty of conversations took place between Benderson's representatives and the residents of Laurel Park in the last 18 months, no firm plans for the space have been presented at this time.



The large parking lot at the County Administration Building falls within Laurel Park's zoning area. LPNA wants the existing zoning and density rules to apply to any new development on this piece of the project.

The neighborhood's primary concern (and standing with the city) is focused on the 2+/- acre parking lot that falls within the Laurel Park zoning district. LPNA wants the existing zoning and density rules to apply to any new development on this piece of the project. Our fear is that any zoning or density changes that might be granted this Developer in this specific piece of the property might then become a standard expected throughout the neighborhood by future property owners.

About the Laurel Park Neighborhood Association Board

Every two years the membership of the Laurel Park Neighborhood Association votes at its February general meeting on a slate of candidates developed by a nominating committee to serve as the Board of Directors for the group. The current board was elected last year. This past December, the Board appointed Ron Kashden back onto the Board to fill an open position due to the resignation of Robert Sichel.

The Board meets on a monthly basis, typically the third Monday of the month, at a member's home. The agenda is set by the President, and meeting minutes are posted on the association's website after they are approved at the following meeting. You can find them at laurelparksarasota.org/neighborhood-association.

In between meetings, Board members stay in touch with appropriate city staff and elected officials as well as others working on projects of interest to the community such as noise or permit issues. The group is an active participant in the City Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (CCNA). If an issue arises that impacts the neighborhood, the Board will discuss it at a meeting and then its leaders will follow up as needed.

The Board can create committees to focus on different areas of interest in the neighborhood. There are three active committees currently. The **Communications committee** has been working to keep the community informed of issues that might affect it. The **Hudson Bayou committee** is working with city staff to maximize the impact of the upcoming restoration project of the Oak Street branch of that waterway. The **Nominations committee** solicits individuals to serve on the Board prior to the scheduled elections every two years.

Board meetings are open to members. If you have a future interest in serving on the Board or one of its committees, let us know at members@laurelparksarasota.org.

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Sarasota Players Moving to Payne Park Home in 2026

By Ron Watts

With a 30-year lease signed with the city, the Sarasota Players community theatre group has about 18 months of work ahead of it before its first performance will be held in the Payne Park Auditorium in the Fall of 2026.

“We have already begun the planning process, and we project submitting this spring for permits,” wrote William Skaggs, CEO of The Sarasota Players. “The city is planning to turn over the facility to us in late summer, at which time we should have permits in hand and be ready to begin the renovation.”

The final agreement between the two parties calls for all renovation work to be focused on the existing building. There won’t be an expansion as was initially requested. “We plan to renovate the space to provide tiered seating for 200 people in multiple configurations”, said Skaggs. “In addition, the facility will have a new lobby and new expanded restrooms.”

The Sarasota Players was founded in 1929 and is the oldest performing arts group in Sarasota. It is a non-professional theatre, allowing community members to fulfill their dream of performing on stage. Productions are currently held at the Crossing at Siesta Key.

Though the idea of leasing the empty lot at Laurel St. and US 301 was brought up during the lease discussions with the City Commission, there are no current plans to pursue that idea. “Our current focus is solely on Payne Park Auditorium and bringing Sarasota’s Community Theatre back downtown,” said Skaggs. “We’ll explore further opportunities to collaborate with the city, but not until we have completed this important project.”

Once completed, Skaggs hopes that the facility will be used by other non-profit organizations as well as The Players. “By renovating the space, we hope it can service the community as another option to hold performances, meetings and events,” wrote

Skaggs. “As an example, we look forward to continuing our partnership with Sarasota Jewish Theatre.”



The Sarasota Players presented this prototype photo as an example of how the Payne Park Auditorium will look after exterior renovations are completed. First performances at the site are projected for Fall 2026.

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