



# Fort Pierce, FL

(Population: 41,590)

Among the oldest communities on the east coast of Florida, Fort Pierce is an historic, waterfront community and an undiscovered jewel. Its rich history began in 1837 when Lt. Benjamin K. Pierce built the fort that was the headquarters for the U.S. Army during the Seminole Indian War. Later its accessible waterways and Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway gave rise to commerce that would make the city the economic hub of the region. As time passed and suburban malls arrived, the downtown suffered only to be revitalized and recognized nationally with the Great American Main Street Award in 2011. It has taken bold steps toward revitalization, and planned urban development while maintaining its "Old Florida" seaside village appeal. The downtown has numerous historic buildings that have been renovated, such as the Sunrise Theater, the P.P. Cobb building (constructed in 1882), the United States Post Office and old City Hall. Numerous homes exhibit its early Mediterranean and Florida "Cracker-style" architecture.

It is a vibrant community that treasures its diversity and a community that has turned that diversity into a genuine asset. It has also worked hard to preserve its natural assets so that they are available to the public. It has, for example, 2.3 miles of public beach. The community has a home town feel. It is close knit and better yet, the people are friendly and cordial. It is common for complete strangers to say hello to you on the street. Fort Pierce is in many ways a small town with small town values and morals. It is home, for example, to over 150 churches.

While wonderful as Fort Pierce is now, it also has incredible potential and one day could be the east coast of Florida's version of Sarasota. It has a gorgeous marina that is currently being rebuilt and improved. Its current 137 slips will grow to 275 by January 2013 and it will continue to serve as a quiet, clean gateway to the Bahamas. If you like to fish, charters will help you find the sailfish, dolphin, marlin, tuna, grouper, snapper, and wahoo that await your line and bait



just off shore. Of course, other water activities such as kayaking and diving are also readily available. Then the roaring tides of the Atlantic Ocean provide some of the best competitive surfing on the eastern seaboard. Horseback riding on the beach is just one of the many exceptional highlights of recreational delights available. Naturalists will appreciate the extraordinary ecological diversity of the adjacent Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie River.

While much of the downtown has been renovated, many opportunities remain. The Redevelopment Agency has actively sought to assemble parcels to prepare the way. The City is also home to Florida's smallest port and 87 acres of undeveloped land sit immediately adjacent to the downtown and port. Its location and its transportation network (including the Florida Turnpike, Interstate 95, the St. Lucie County International Airport and the Port of Fort Pierce) will make it an attractive place to be once the recession fades into history. In a sense, everything comes together in Fort Pierce.

If you like culture, the 1200 seat Sunrise Theater for the Performing Arts is downtown, and the venues of Orlando and Palm Beach are within a reasonable drive. The historic Lincoln Park Theater offers other opportunities. The City also hosts weekly downtown events such as the farmers' market, jazz market, monthly events such as antique shows ("Treasures in the Trunk"), , Friday Fest (with live music), Bike Night, Classic Car Cruz In, and regular jazz concerts along Moore's Creek Linear Park in Lincoln Park (the City's historic and traditional African-American neighborhood). If you want to venture beyond this wonderful, tropical, peaceful community, the major metropolitan areas of Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Orlando are a fun day-trip. The Florida Keys and Tampa are just a bit further away.

Fort Pierce is also a wonderful place to live. A wide variety of housing is available and very reasonably priced. If you have children, the Lincoln Park Academy (6th through 12th grade) has been recognized as one of the top 100 high schools in the country by both Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report. Parks



abound and the crime rate has decreased by 50% in the past few years.

## History

The area was originally inhabited by the Ais tribe, a hunter-gatherer culture whose territory extended from south of the St. John’s river to the St. Lucie Inlet. Spanish explorers frequently encountered the fierce tribe. In 1715 the fabled Spanish treasure fleet sank off the coast leading to the regional naming of the area as the Treasure Coast.

During the early 19th century, the Spanish government issued several land grants in the area and in the mid-1800s, Seminoles and runaway slaves sought refuge in the virtually uninhabited area. When in 1837 the Second Seminole war had broken out in Florida, a group of soldiers under the command of Lt. Colonel Benjamin K. Pierce sailed down the Indian River and established a fort, naming it after their commander. Today the county seat of St. Lucie County is still known as Fort Pierce.

From this point on the area became gradually more populated as settlers ventured down for health and economic reasons. The Flagler railroad reached the area in the 1890s. Major industries at the end of the 19th century in the area included pineapple, fishing and seafood canning and cattle. Citrus would not become a major crop until the early 1900s. The city of Fort Pierce was incorporated in 1901.

The 1920s saw increased land speculation and planned developments such as Indrio and San Lucie that never came to fruition due to the bust in 1929. During World War II the United States Naval Amphibious Training Base was established in Fort Pierce on North and South Hutchinson Island. During its operation over 140,000 troops were processed through the base. It was the birth place and training ground for the Navy SEALs and the National SEAL Museum is here.

The post-war years saw a major population boom in the area, some of which were returning sailors and their families that had undergone training at the Navy

base. Beginning in the 1960s, age and urban sprawl began to give way to a lethargic malaise as shopping centers and big box retailers opened to the west. The downtown area hit bottom in the early 1980s after two recessions and the close of the Sunrise Theater. In 1988, Main Street Fort Pierce was formed. Little by little, Main Street, working in conjunction with the City, began to chip away at the deterioration. Buildings were redone and public investment helped spark private investment. Residential development followed, the flagship being the five story Renaissance mixed use development. The Sunrise Theater has reopened and only the recent recession has slowed the downtown’s dramatic rebirth.

## Demographics

The 2010 Census found the City’s population to be 41,590 with approximately 21,400 housing units and 15,200 households. The racial makeup of the City was 52% White, 43% African American and other races or those of two or more races composed the remainder. Hispanics of any race composed 22% of

Table III: Population by Age

Age Group	Percent
Under 5	8%
5 to 15	14%
15 to 25	15%
25 to 35	13%
35 to 45	12%
45 to 55	13%
55 to 65	10%
65 to 75	8%
75 to 85	6%
85 and over	2%

Median Age	35
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Source: 2010 Census

Table II: Principal Employers

Rank	Employer	Employees	Percent of City Total
1	St. Lucie County School Board	4,946	9.5%
2	Lawnwood Regional Medical	1,500	2.88%
3	Indian River State College	1,037	1.99%
4	Wal-Mart Distribution Center	650	1.25%
5	City of Fort Pierce	357	0.69%
6	United States Postal Office	350	0.67%
7	Tropicana Products Inc.	340	0.65%
8	New Horizons / Treasure Coast	300	0.58%
9	Fort Pierce Utilities Authorities	286	0.55%
10	Drawdy Brothers Construction	200	0.38%

Total	9,966	19.14%
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Total Employees in the Fort Pierce Area	52,051
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Source: 2011 Miami Springs CAFR from the Beacon Council

the population. Homes where a language other than English was spoken at home composed 25% of the total. The median household income was \$31,600 (the state average was \$47,700) and almost 30% of the City's population lived below the poverty line.

As can be seen from Table I, (on page 3), the population spread reasonably evenly over the spectrum with those under 25 being the largest group.

The City had almost 11,000 residents enrolled in school and 55% of those over 25 have a high school but no college degree. 9% have a Bachelor and an additional 4% have an advanced degree. 32% have less than a high school diploma.

## Commerce

Most of the area's employment is in the government and service industries. Table II lists the Fort Pierce area's

principal employers.

## Geography

Fort Pierce covers 29 square miles and is located on Florida's east coast 130 miles north of Miami, 120 miles southeast of Orlando, 150 miles southeast of Tampa and 225 miles south of Jacksonville.

## Climate

Fort Pierce features a warm tropical savanna climate. Summers are usually hot, with temperatures averaging low 90s. Winters are usually mild to warm, with average temperatures around 70s°F. The average yearly precipitation is around 53.5 inches. (See Table III on page 6 for yearly average climate data).

Tropical storms affect the area from time to time and direct hits by hurricanes are generally quite rare





in this part of Florida. Having said that, the area experienced direct hits from Hurricane Frances (a Category 2) and Hurricane Jeanne (a Category 3) in September 2004.

## Government

The City of Fort Pierce's choice of government is the Commission/Manager form. The five (5) member Commission consists of a Mayor and four (4) Commissioners. The City is divided into two districts, each with two Commissioners. Mayor is elected at large. All the elected officials serve staggered four year terms. The Commission is charged with the responsibility of establishing policies and enacting ordinances and resolutions. In November 2012, the seats of the Mayor and two Commissioners will be up for election. The current Mayor is retiring and six candidates have already declared they are running for his seat. The incumbents are both running for re-election. Theoretically, three new members could be serving on the Commission in 2013. The change resulting from the election is not anticipated to be nearly that dramatic.



Historically the elected officials have gotten along reasonably well although emotions are on display from time to time. A City Manager is appointed by the Commission, and is charged with the responsibility of administering daily operations and implementing Commission directives. Although not always recognized in the public arena, the staff is considered to be of very high quality and very dedicated.



Fort Pierce has all the services normally associated with a municipality and then some. These include police, county fire district, parks maintenance, streets, engineering, sanitation, stormwater, community redevelopment, code enforcement, planning and zoning, and general administration. The City also operates a marina, golf course and the Sunrise Theater. Gas, electric, water and

Table III: Climate data for Fort Pierce, Florida

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Average High °F	74	75	79	82	86	90	92	91	90	86	81	76	83
Average Low °F	51	52	56	61	67	71	72	72	72	67	60	54	63
Rainfall Inches	2.7	2.9	3.3	2.8	4.4	5.8	5.8	6.4	7.8	5.8	3.5	2.3	53.5

Source: Weather Channel

wastewater treatment are provided through the Fort Pierce Utility Authority. It is governed by a separate board which is appointed by the City Commission.

The City's total budget for 2012 is \$66,209,500 (which does not include the Utility Authority) and the general fund component is \$32,215,962. The Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency's budget is approximately \$5.5 million. The City has 361 authorized full-time equivalent employees. 40 in general government, 142 in public safety, 51 in public services, parks and recreation, 27 in transportation and 93 in the enterprise funds (the golf course, Sunrise Theater, marina, solid waste and building). In 2002, the total taxable assessed value was 923,975,962. At the height of the recent boom in 2008, the appraised value had climbed to \$3,062,235,349 only to drop back to \$2,133,893,469 in 2011. Actual taxes levied rose from \$7,941,390 in 2002 to \$16,742,619 in 2008 and declined to \$11,661,547 in 2011. Over the past 10 years, the millage rate has fluctuated from a low of 5.4674 (2008 to present) to a high of 7.8305 in 2005.

## The Opportunities

Fort Pierce has many of the same challenges other, historic cities face but with some unique opportunities. As might be expected from the financial data presented, resources are very scarce. The City has gone beyond the point where it is doing more with less to the point where it is doing less with less. Alternative funding sources would be helpful. Second, while it treasures its diversity, that diversity also brings challenges. In many ways, Fort Pierce is a seamed city in terms of wealth and race. Making sure the various communities are treated fairly in terms of the distribution of

resources and projects is a balancing act. Third are development / redevelopment. The community has accomplished a great deal but more remains to be done and not everyone agrees on what comes next. The undeveloped land around the Port is a huge opportunity but some feel it should be a working cargo port while others feel a mixed use, boutique port targeted towards very high end and large yachts would be better. Developers have been exploring the opportunities but one significant obstacle is the owner of 67 of the 87 undeveloped acres does not seem to be interested in selling. Whatever happens with the Port, the community needs to attract more jobs. In many ways, very little opportunity exists for people with degrees to return to the community unless their degree is in education.

The final challenge is getting the outside world to recognize Fort Pierce for the amazing community that it is while also raising the community's own self-esteem. It can take a long time for perception to catch-up with reality. For example, some still think of the City as having a significant crime problem. The City does have crime as do all cities but the level is literally half of what it was just a few short years ago.

## The Ideal Candidate

The City is looking for an energetic, committed and exceptional manager and leader. It will be someone who will partner with the elected officials to create and implement a unified vision for the City and help it become the incredible community it will become. Team and consensus building skills are as critical as strength and character. The individual

will be strong enough and comfortable enough to tell the community's leaders – diplomatically and in the appropriate setting – what they need to hear not what they want to hear. The ideal candidate will have outstanding communications and people skills. In many ways, he/she will be a representative and cheerleader for the community, helping it overcome outdated stereotypes while helping to guide it into the future. An understanding of and ability to work with the press will help transform the City's image. The individual will be comfortable speaking to and able – indeed eager – to communicate with those from every level of the economic strata, whether it is the driver of the trash truck or the owner of an outlandishly expensive yacht who has come to town. Being able to build bridges between the elements of this very diverse community will be essential.

Skill in economic development will also be important. As noted, the City has incredible potential and a very strong economic development staff. Appreciating what incentives are needed and appropriate and how to close a deal are qualities the City is looking for. Given the current economic climate and the slide in the City's total appraised value, financial acumen and the ability to identify new / alternative revenue sources will be very important. The next manager will lead the staff. She/he will come early and stay late and help the management team translate the Mayor and Commissioners' priorities into game plans the staff will implement. The ideal candidate will set high standards and expect results. Accountability will be a priority. The manager will value transparency but also serve as a shield. There are appropriate times to criticize a staff members' performance but it not in a public setting or at a commission meeting.

The ideal candidate will have at least five years experience as a City Manager or an Assistant City Manager. The individual is expected to have at least a Bachelor degree in business administration, public administration, urban planning or a related field. Individuals with other particularly strong credentials will be considered.

## Residency

Residency in the community is anticipated but not required by ordinance or charter.

## Compensation

The starting salary range for the next City Manager is \$125,000 to \$150,000 and benefits are excellent.

## The Former City Manager

The most recent permanent City Manager accepted a position in another state.

## How to Apply

E-mail your resume to [Recruit24@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit24@cb-asso.com) by July 6th. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger of Colin Baenziger & Associates at (561) 707-3537 or Tom Andrews at (404) 735-2808.

## The Process

Applicants will be screened between July 7th and August 14th. Finalist interviews are scheduled for August 24th and 25th. A selection of the next manager is to be made on August 27th.

## Other Important Information

The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women and minorities to apply. Under the Florida Public Records Act, all applications are subject to disclosure upon receipt. Veteran's preference will be awarded under applicable Florida law.