

# Welcome to the City of Port St. Lucie, FL

City Attorney Position Open - Apply by April 22, 2016



*Estimated 2015 Population: 174,132*

Welcome to Port St. Lucie, Florida's ninth largest city by population and third largest in land area. Located in the heart of Florida's Treasure Coast, Port St. Lucie is situated in the southern part of St. Lucie County. The breathtaking beaches of Hutchinson Island lay just to the east, Fort Pierce just to the northeast and the major metropolitan areas of Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Orlando are all relatively close. Both Interstate-95 and Florida's Turnpike are easily accessible to the city, and five major airports and four major cruise ports lie within a few hours.

Port St. Lucie is a city on the rise. People are moving to Port St. Lucie in droves. The streets are bustling again. Employment is higher. In its 2015 Best-Performing Cities study, the Milken Institute found it to be the country's biggest gainer in its job

growth ranking among large MSAs. Property values are climbing. And it has been noticed. In the last year, WalletHub.com ranked it the 7th Best Place to Retire in the US. Investor's Business Daily named it the 2nd hottest housing market in the US. Bloomberg Business selected it as one of the top cities for economic growth. Forbes.com named Port St. Lucie as one of the top ten cities in the US for job growth. Expedia.com ranked it the 14th most comfortable place for a hotel stay. FlipKey called the city a Top Trending Vacation Rental Destination. And, just last week, the city learned that 24/7 Wall Street, after studying 550 US cities with a population of 65,000 or more, concluded that Port St. Lucie was one of America's 50 Best cities to Live In. According to SmartAsset, a New York financial technology company, Port St. Lucie has the highest millennial homeownership rate in the country which makes its future even brighter.

The reasons for the recent acclaim are many. First, the area perfectly pairs the excitement of a major city with an assortment of cultural and recreational/leisure activities nearby. There is literally something here or nearby for everyone! Stroll through commercial areas while admiring exclusive artwork or attend a play at the Pineapple Playhouse (home to the St. Lucie County Community Theater). Enjoy a concert, musical or comedy show at the historic Sunrise Theatre in neighboring Fort Pierce, which first opened its doors in 1923. Discover the only museum dedicated to the US Navy SEALs (located on the same grounds where they first trained as "frogmen" during WWII) and ancient Indian mounds predating Columbus by several hundred years.

Golf enthusiasts will find award-winning golf courses, including the one-of-a-kind PGA Village, which includes a Historical Center, that documents golf's history. In all, the county has more than 300 holes of championship golf. Baseball fans will be delighted to enjoy America's favorite pastime at Tradition Field—



spring training home of the New York Mets and summer home of the minor league St. Lucie Mets.

You'll marvel at and enjoy the raw nature of the area, which St. Lucie's city and county governments and citizens are dedicated to protecting. Take a nap on the area's nearly 21 miles of unspoiled beaches, dive among shipwrecks, paddle through lush rivers, or head offshore to snag trophy sized sailfish, tuna, swordfish, and wahoo.

Savannas Preserve State Park offers opportunities for nature observation and recreation, such as swimming, kayaking, riding horses, bird watching, launching your own boat, picnicking and camping. The Park's environmental educational center offers opportunities to study the large number of exotic birds, and local wildlife (such as reptiles, dolphins, manatees, and other marine life). You'll discover abundant marine life in the Indian River Lagoon, home to over 4,000 species of plants and animals and a breeding ground for game fish. It is the most biologically diverse estuary in the country! The area also boasts Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens and the Heathcote Botanical Gardens in Fort Pierce, which exhibits the largest public display of tropical bonsai trees in the United States.

Port St. Lucie is a great place to raise a family. It is and has historically been a very safe city. NeighborhoodScout.com states the city's crime rate to be one of the lowest in the nation for cities with a similar population. While housing prices have increased 19% from December 2014 to December 2015, buyers can still get excellent value for their money. Schools are very strong and the city is home to one of the best combination of public education, higher education consortiums and research centers in the southeast region of the United States. St. Lucie County has 24 distinguished five-star schools and 34 golden schools -- awards given for community involvement. The schools also have been named as among the Top 100 wired schools for outstanding technology and among the best in the nation by Newsweek. In, or near the city, you will find the highly regarded Indian River State College, the Smithsonian Marine Station, the Manatee Observation and Education Center, and the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution of Florida Atlantic University. Best of all, the City has great neighborhoods. The people are friendly and neighbors help their neighbor. In spite of its size, many residents brag

about its small town feel and they want to protect it.

If you want more, Port St. Lucie is within a 2 hour drive of South and Central Florida and within a 3.5 hour drive of all of Florida's greatest population centers. West Palm Beach is 45 minutes south with Fort Lauderdale being 45 minutes further. Miami lies two hours south and Tampa 2.5 hours west. Both Interstate-95 and Florida's Turnpike serve as gateways. Daytona Beach and Jacksonville are just over 2 and 3 hours north respectively.

Port St. Lucie is seeking an experienced City Attorney to lead and mentor a relatively inexperienced staff, someone who wants to live the good life. Come delight in the combination of rich history, nearby natural beauty and the excitement of a city truly on the move!

## HISTORY

In 1715, a Spanish galleon fleet, full of treasure sank in a hurricane off the east coast of Florida. Since that time, the region has been known as the Treasure Coast, and the area has become an underwater archeological preserve. St. Lucie County was created in 1844 and as late as the 1950s what was to become Port St. Lucie was a largely uninhabited tract of land composed of a fishing camp, a few farms and some businesses.

In 1958, with a budget of \$50 million, the General Development Corporation (GDC) purchased over 40,000 acres along the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. Its plan here and in several other Florida communities was to purchase huge tracts of land, subdivide the land into lots and sell the lots, primarily to northerners excited about retiring to Florida.

In 1960 GDC became involved in a dispute over road construction with the County and convinced the state legislature to incorporate the area into the City of Port St. Lucie. By 1970, the City's population was 330. In 1980, the population was 14,690 and the City's incredible growth was underway.

In the mid-1980s, the Thomas J. White Development Company acquired and began planning what would become St. Lucie West. Originally, the area was to have

contained about 14,000 homes over a 20-year period on 7 square miles. After realizing the community's strategic position along I-95 and the Florida Turnpike, the developer then added business sectors and places of entertainment. In 1990 the population was a little over 56,000 and by 2000, the population had jumped to 88,769.

In the next ten years growth accelerated even faster. In 2006, the Tradition development was started and was to be built around a commercial area, with room for over 18,000 residences. Tradition is the largest fully entitled residential development area from the tip of Interstate 95 to the Canadian border, and is modeled after a 1950's-era town. Tradition Square, the town center of the community, holds festivities year-round. It was also chosen as the site of HGTV's Green Home 2009, and one of America's best 100 communities.

In 2007, the housing market began to collapse and unemployment started to rise. In February 2009, unemployment was at 10½ percent and in 2008, nearly 11,000 homes went into foreclosure.

In 2008, Tradition and Core Communities welcomed the Florida Center of Innovation, a research laboratory and campus. The key components were to be two biotech and life science companies, the Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies and the Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute. The hope was they would bring, along with the companies that followed, more than 30,000 jobs. Unfortunately not all went well, and while Torrey Pines is still operational, VGTI is bankrupt and has left the City with a large debt. The City had a similar, unfortunate experience with Digital Domain, a movie making company with much promise but limited results.

In 2010, the City's population was 164,603 and build-out population is expected to be approximately 400,000.



Table 1: Port St. Lucie Demographics

2015 Estimated Population: 174,132			
Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
Caucasian	76.4%	0 to 18	24%
African American	14.8%	18 to 24	6%
Asian	1.9%	25 to 44	28%
Some Other Race	4.2%	45 to 64	23%
Two or More Races	2.8%	65 and Older	19%

Ethnicity		Median Age	
Hispanic-All Races	30.8%	Port St. Lucie	40.2
All Other Races	69.2%	U.S.	37.4

Educational Achievement (over age 25)	
High School or Higher	87.8%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	19.0%

Income	
Median Household Income	\$48,898
Mean Household Income	\$68,152
Percent Below Poverty Level	5.5%

Source: City of Port St. Lucie and the U.S. Census

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The current population of Port St. Lucie is 174,132. It composes 60% of the population of St. Lucie County and 30% of the population of the Treasure Coast. Table I provides specific demographic data for the city.

## CLIMATE

Port St. Lucie features a warm humid subtropical climate, falling just short of having a true tropical climate. Summers are usually hot, with the high temperatures averaging in the low 90s and the average low temperature being in the

low 70s. Winters are usually mild to warm, with average high temperatures being in the mid-70s and the lows averaging in the low 50s. The average yearly precipitation is around 53.5 inches.

The hurricane season is between June 1 and November 30 with major hurricanes most likely in September and October. Although Hurricanes Francis and Jeanne struck Port St. Lucie directly in 2004, tropical storms are not a regular occurrence and very few result in serious injury although property damage can be significant.

## GEOGRAPHY

Port St. Lucie is located on the east coast of Florida about 120 miles southeast of Orlando and about 115 miles north of Miami. The city covers 120.4 square miles. The elevation is 20 feet above sea level and the terrain is flat. The population density is 2,264 people per square mile. Port St. Lucie forms part of a metropolitan area called the Port St. Lucie, Florida Metropolitan Statistical Area that in 2013 was estimated to have 438,095 residents.

## COMMERCE

St. Lucie County is home to some cutting edge technology and economic growth. It has a number of banks, law firms and medical facilities. Table II on page 6 provides some additional information.

From December 2014 to December 2015, single family home sales prices increased by 19%, and unemployment is down approximately 1% to 5.1%

## THE GOVERNMENT

The city is led by a five-member elected Council and operates under the Council-Manager form of government. Each Council Member, including the Mayor, has one vote so legislative authority is spread equally among all five members. The Mayor is elected at-large and while the City Council Members must live in the geographic district they represent, every registered voter in the city is eligible to vote for them. There are no term limits for any City Council seat. The next election is in November when three seats will be voted on – Districts 2 and 4 as well as District 1 where

Table 2: Principal Employers

Employer	Function	Employees
St. Lucie School Board	Education	5,273
Walmart Retail and Distribution	Retail	2,253
Lawnwood/HCA Medical	Healthcare	2,189
Indian River State College	Education	1,996
St. Lucie County	Government	1,671
Publix	Grocery	1,466
City of Port St. Lucie	Government	988
Convey Health Solutions	Healthcare	950
Liberty Healthcare Group, Inc.	Healthcare	920

Source: Port St. Lucie 2015 CAFR

the member is running for the County Commission. The District 2 Council Member is not planning to run and the District 4 Council Member has not declared his intentions. Thus, the Council will have at least two new members.

The role of the Mayor and Council are to set policy and determine the long-term vision for the city. They are united in achieving a shared vision for the City they all love. They may disagree on individual issues but their hearts are all set on doing what is best for their community. Their Vision for 2030 is to be “the Safe; Beautiful; and Friendly City for All Ages.” It will become even more desirable by enhancing its great neighborhoods; providing top quality educational opportunities for lifelong learning; having a diverse economy and job base; providing convenient mobility options; and wonderful leisure opportunities for an active lifestyle. And they have a strategic plan to make it happen.

To support the Council and ensure the smooth functioning of the government, it appoints a City Manager to handle the city’s day-to-day business affairs and a City Attorney to provide legal advice.

### THE CITY ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

The City Attorney’s Office is composed of the City Attorney, two Assistant City Attorneys (ACA) and three Staff Attorneys. It also has three Legal Secretaries and

an Office Assistant as support staff. Presently one of the Assistant City Attorney positions is vacant and the former ACA, who is now with a firm, is acting as the City Attorney. Overall, the staff is capable but compared to most City Attorney’s Offices, relatively inexperienced. The Office’s expenditure budget is approximately \$1.8 million.

### OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Port St. Lucie went from being a small town to being a big city essentially overnight. At the same time, it remained a great place to raise a family. One of the challenges that came with quick growth is that the City Attorney’s Office staff has raw talent but is not well seasoned. The next City Attorney will need to provide guidance and mentoring while putting the staff in places where they can succeed. The new City Attorney will also need to find a second in command. The city is looking for someone who will work to rebuild the legal department, as it also faces the challenges that many cities in Florida face – growth and development, code enforcement, tort litigation, and matters relating to constitutional law - as well as some unique issues.

In terms of legal issues, Port St. Lucie has some challenges. Conservation groups are fighting the Crosstown Parkway. The City is concerned about sober homes. The Vaccine Gene Therapy Institute was poorly run and left the city with considerable debt and a legal effort to recover what it can in funding. The same is true of Digital Domain and the City Center public-private partnership.

Part of rebuilding the Office will be to review the policies and standard operating procedures for the office. It is anticipated that the new City Attorney will study what is currently being utilized and replace or modify as he/she deems appropriate. The City is also likely to approve a review of the Office in the next month. Ideally, the result will be a blue print for going forward.



The final challenge will be to develop relationships with the elected officials and staff. All are eager to work with the new Attorney and to assist with the transition.

## THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City Council is looking for an individual with strong values, who is hardworking and who is extremely energetic – this is not a retirement job! The environment is fast paced and the Council is active! The ideal candidate will be someone who will partner with the elected officials and staff to solve problems while also being a supporter and a trusted advisor. The City Attorney will give all members of the Council the same information and keep them all equally and well informed. The ideal candidate will work diligently to protect the legal interests and assets of the City. At the same time, he/she will find the most effective solution to the problem, even if it involves some risk. The individual will exhibit independent judgment as well as the highest level of professionalism, honesty, ethics, and dedication. Customer service will be extremely important to the new City Attorney. He/she will be responsive! Further he/she will believe strongly in transparency (to the maximum degree possible) and will promote the public's right to know.



The City Attorney will review issues with an open mind and, when applying the law, actively seek ways to “get the City where it wants to go.” The emphasis will be on being a facilitative attorney rather than a prescriptive attorney – on working with people to accomplish their ends (within the law) and on finding solutions. The City wants someone who will tell people how to get things done, not that they cannot be done. Simply stated, it will be important for the candidate to be an aggressive seeker of solutions.

The City Attorney will understand politics and know how to navigate them, but will not be involved in them. He/she will be strong but

diplomatic and able to speak truth to power. The ideal candidate will be responsive and well-studied, generally already knowing the answer to questions that are posed. When he/she does not know the answer, he/she will say so and, after appropriate research, provide the correct answer promptly.

The ideal candidate will be an exceptional manager, someone who is just as comfortable in the City Attorney role overseeing day-to-day operations as practicing the law. He/she will understand and have experience with budgets, staff management and setting priorities. The individual will ensure staff members have the resources needed to effectively perform their job duties.

The ideal candidate will also be an outstanding leader and understand how to select, motivate and manage staff. The individual will be a mentor and focus on developing staff. He/she will recognize the importance of teamwork, and build a strong, pro-active and dynamic team within the office. The individual will be fair and have a sense of humor.

Personally, the City Attorney will have outstanding communications and interpersonal skills. The City Attorney will interact with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds and need to communicate with individuals from all levels of the community in a variety of settings. He/she will be very open and approachable. Good listening skills are critical. It will be important that he/she be viewed as cooperative and be able to build consensus both inside and outside the government.

The position requires a Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree and licensure to practice law in Florida. Ten years of increasingly responsible experience in management and the practice of law (preferably in a municipal government) is expected.

## RESIDENCY

Residency within the city limits is not required.

## COMPENSATION

The salary range for the next City Attorney is \$150,000 to \$220,000. Benefits are excellent.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Under Florida law all applications are public record and subject to disclosure upon receipt. As a practical matter, a request must be made and most Florida newspapers tend to ignore these searches until the semi-finalists are named. Nonetheless, it is possible the newspaper could request the applications at any time and your name could be published.

## HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your cover letter and resume to [Recruit39@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit39@cb-asso.com) by April 22, 2016. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger of Colin Baenziger & Associates at (561) 707-3537 or David Collier at (772) 260-1858.

## THE PROCESS

Applicants will be screened between April 25th and May 20th. Finalist interviews are scheduled for May 31st. A selection of the City Attorney will be made shortly thereafter.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women and minorities to apply. A Veteran's preference will be awarded if applicable under Florida law. Other important information can be found at:

<http://www.cityofpsl.com/city-council/pdf/strategic-plan-2015-2020-2030.pdf>

<http://stluciechamber.org/community-links/our-history/>

[http://www.visitstluciefla.com/port\\_st\\_lucie.htm](http://www.visitstluciefla.com/port_st_lucie.htm)

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