

New, dynamic downtown New Port Richey is West Pasco's new 'it' place

The downtown area is attracting homebuyers to historic little city.



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There was a time, not that long ago, when not even the affordability of New Port Richey homes was enough to draw homebuyers away from Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, where there was more shopping, restaurants, recreation and nightlife.

That was then and this is now.

Over the past decade, downtown New Port Richey has been transformed into a legitimate destination for dining, live music, boutique

shopping and nightlife. It's one of the driving forces making the city a much more attractive place to live, and it just keeps getting better.

The Cotee River winds its way through downtown New Port Richey. Sidewalks along its east side make it a popular place for a stroll or jog.

NPR from 1H

addition to plays and musical acts. Sims Park is a beautiful place to walk along the river or scenic Orange Lake. Kids enjoy the park's splash pad, and adults enjoy top-name acts performing in the park's band shell. The West Pasco Historical Society Museum is in the park, housed in a historic schoolhouse.

On either side of Main Street are a variety of interesting stops, including Cotee River Creamery & Desserts, Mountaineer Coffee, the Little Coronas Cigar Lounge, Infusion Brewing Company and Dented Keg Ale Works.

Downtown also is a foodie's delight. There's Delicias Latinas for Cuban, the Thai Bistro, a Beef O'Brady's on the Cotee River and upscale dining at Sasha's on the Park. For something more casual, there are the amazing grilled cheese offerings at Melt'd and subs at Heros Downtown Subs & Salads, as well as Fitzgerald's Irish Tavern. For global fare, there's The Social. There's a lot of seafood on the menu at Bourbon on Main. These two restaurants also have live bands in the evenings. You can also stop in the Axe Hole and hone your ax-throwing skills.

There are many more dining options and listings of specialty shops online at www.greaterpasco.com. Visit www.nprmainstreet.com to track the many downtown events coming.

Downtown is open to golf carts and for those who drive, there is a new multi-level parking garage with a shuttle at the corner of Main Street and U.S. 19. Electric scooter rental is



Photo by Nick Stubbs

This home is on the west side of the Cotee River near downtown New Port Richey. Homebuyers will pay more for homes on the river, but compared to prices in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, New Port Richey is a bargain.

Downtown got yet another boost with the recent re-opening of the historic Hacienda Hotel, a restaurant and bar on the Cotee River that has been lovingly restored to

its 1927 glory. Downtown also has the historic Richey Suncoast Theatre, which now has stand-up comedy nights in

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"There's a lot of confidence in the area and they see a bright future for it," Bogdanowitz said. "It's great to see that."

One thing lacking, and Pasco's longtime lament, inventory levels remain

the better, it's just so nice to live here." Many of the homes in the downtown area were built in the 1950s and before, but Bogdanowitz said there are some opportunities for new homes on an infill basis. He has listings for a couple of building lots close to downtown, including one overlooking a bayou just off Main Street, west of U.S. 19. It's 7,200 square feet and priced at \$74,900. One can take a golf cart into downtown from the location.

Inventory levels remain

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Photo by Nick Stubbs

The newly renovated 1927 Hacienda Hotel is open for business and adds yet more charm to the historic downtown New Port Richey experience.

NPR from 3H

low in New Port Richey, where typically the single-family homes are older, smaller bungalows. Within walking distance of downtown and on the market earlier this week were a 3/2 built in 1948 with 1,246 square feet of living space for \$310,000. Another was a 2/1 with 968 square feet built in the 1950s for \$225,000. There was a 4/2 two-story home with 1,976 square feet and a detached one-bedroom unit built in 1930 listed at \$280,000.

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commute because they can buy more of a house at a better price," Brown said. But the price advantage alone isn't enough, he said. People want shopping, dining and entertainment options. Over recent years, these have come.

"Downtown (New Port Richey), new planned developments (and) more shopping and restaurants are making the difference," Brown said, adding that as recently as a few years ago homebuyers were a little fearful of moving to a "no man's land."

Brown said the New Port Richey area also makes waterfront living, be it on a Gulf-access canal or along the Cotee River, a dream more easily achieved.

"West Pasco is the last best-kept secret for waterfront that's under \$1 million," said Brown, who said that the same waterfront canal home in Dunedin or Clearwater might cost 50 to 60 percent more than in Pasco.

A good example is homes in Gulf Harbors on New Port Richey's southern border. Brown said homes on its wide, deep-water canals can cost half what they would in pricier Dunedin. In Pasco, a Gulf view for \$1 million is still achievable, he added.

But buyers may want to hurry, said Bogdanowitz, as New Port Richey's star is still rising, and prices will go with it.

"In just the last couple of years, the prices for the older bungalows around downtown have gone up a lot," he said. "With the way downtown has changed for

has been the lack of a beach to compete with its neighbors to the south. Most of Pasco's coastline is undeveloped, though there are several waterfront parks with small beaches. Among those with a beach within five minutes of New Port Richey are Robert K. Rees Park and Brasher Park, both on the Gulf. Port Richey Waterfront Park is on nearby Millers Bayou, where Wimslow and Oel-sner parks also are found. Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park is in Port Richey and offers kayaking trails leading to the Gulf.

The cluster of restaurants and bars just over the Cotee River in neighboring Port Richey also is a perk just minutes away for New Port Richey residents. There is waterfront dining at Whiskey Joe's, Hooters and Gill Dawg Tiki Bar and Grill. The latter has a large outdoor covered pavilion and stage that frequently hosts nationally recognized bands. There are charter fishing boats and a casino cruise boat, as well as little Nicks Park, which has picnic tables and a boat ramp.