

Downtown WPB: A Coastal Escape

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Whether you love the stately Atlantic Ocean or the urban city vibes, or a bit of both, you've probably rediscovered the lure of Downtown West Palm Beach. This sun-drenched urban oasis, boasting breathtaking waterfront views and water-based recreation, is full of local coastal culture, great food, live and play opportunities, and gorgeous beaches just minutes away.

But the waterfront... well, now, that's become our city's front porch. An irresistible coastal getaway for the winter-weary of the north, and for locals seeking a unique blend of nature, laid-back ambiance, entertainment, luxury, and our community's favorite gathering spot.

"In the early 2000s, the city invited Urban Land Institute to do a study," explained Tiffany Faublas, Director of Marketing and Communications, Downtown Development Authority [DDA]. "Through that, they encouraged the city to open up the waterfront. In 2007, then Mayor Lois Frankel

unplugged or uncorked [as she preferred to call it] the waterfront, changing the experience of our downtown."

Today, Downtown WPB is no longer a place where people come to simply shop and work. It's the pulse of the city—a place where we come to stay more and play even more. That movement attracted developers to build residential and commercial buildings with an urban appeal. It led individuals seeking big-city delights, as well as mental and physical well-being, to choose downtown as their ideal location. Reportedly, more than 10,000 people live in our downtown area, and developers are making sure there's room for more. Turn a corner, and you're bound to face an under-construction or men-at-work sign, with cranes reaching out to the sky.

Vistas, Lifestyles, & Dining

Living near the water is often associated with a higher quality of life, as it provides a sense of tranquility. It fosters a connection with the natural

environment that enhances both personal and financial prosperity. Drive up and down our downtown waterfront, and you will find serene and captivating vistas, lifestyles, and dining options too hard to resist. And, anyone, frankly, who sought their ticket to paradise landed here.

But is too much of a good thing a bad thing? Could our laid-back coastal appeal be lost to high-rising buildings? Some may wonder.

"No, we are not losing our coastal appeal," affirmed Faublas. "And yes, our skyline has changed, the look and feel will continue to change, but the essence of our downtown and waterfront will always remain."

It's been said that West Palm's waterfront is a Florida postcard. With the sparkling Palm Beach Island and Atlantic Ocean in the background, Flagler Drive is an open canvas full of possibilities for many activities and events, such as weekend festivals, waterfront yoga, and sunset markets. Businesses are taking advantage of



Tiffany Faublas, Director of Marketing and Communications for the Downtown Development Authority, stands at the heart of WPB's creative pulse—where coastal charm meets cultural innovation.



(Left) Tiffany Faublas in her office downtown West Palm Beach. **(Right) A couple competes at Que Bacano.**

—Que Bacano is a monthly dancing competition and a celebration curated by the DDA to foster connection, rhythm, and the spirit of downtown West Palm Beach (photo courtesy of the DDA).

this prime spot by holding pop-ups. Local artists showcase their talents by offering concerts, painting, or writing workshops on Sunday afternoons, making the waterfront a charming and idyllic spot for the community to gather and experience the good life.

For those interested in water sports, Visit Palm Beach's kiosk is centrally located on Flagler Drive, offering paddleboarding rentals, boating, fishing, catamaran rides, and guided canoe and kayak tours, including the "Mangroves & Mansions" tour. All of the above depart from West Palm Beach's waterfront, offering an eco-journey through the Lake Worth Lagoon and a glimpse of local mega-mansions. Perhaps one of the best attractions is the guided Peanut Island Kayak Tour with optional snorkeling. This 80-acre man-made tropical island, located at the mouth of the Lake Worth Inlet, attracts explorers from near and far.

"The Sunset Catamaran is my favorite thing to do," said Faublas. "It's a great experience, especially for people who have not been to West Palm Beach before. If you're bringing family or friends in town, that's a great activity to let them see what Downtown West Palm Beach has to offer."



Rooftop Views, Fine Dining & Dancing Under the Stars

There's no need to tap the brakes if you want to spend a few quiet nights in downtown. Try having dinner at The Ben, sitting up on the rooftop at Spruzo. Or, going to Capri Bar overlooking the waterfront and having a cocktail with your significant other or friends.

If you're looking for a faster pace, the Tiki Bar at E.R. Bradley's is just around the corner, offering delicious small plates, refreshing cocktails, and live

music. "Oh, and you can't forget the fine dining at Milos on Flagler Drive or the great music vibe at Que Bacano. You can't beat that!" Faublas said.

Que Bacano [ke ba' ka.no] is a dancing workshop led by Dance with Julie, held on the first Friday of the month at the City Hall Courtyard on 407 Clematis Street from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Since it started a few years ago, it has become one of the most Latin dance-forward spots. Each month brings a new dancing style to learn, from



energetic salsa and merengue to sultry bachata.

Saturdays on the Green

In peak season, from October to May, the City of West Palm Beach hosts the GreenMarket at the waterfront. A piece of advice: Don't worry about the calories from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. during market hours. Convince yourself that you're just there for the breathtaking views, then enjoy the great deals, excellent citrus, delicious donuts, cheeses, spices, oils, breads, smoothies, and Cuban pastries... This is a free, no-guilt day. So, good.

"Our GreenMarket is just a flood

of goodness," agreed Faublas, who enjoys going to the market on Saturday mornings, walking along Flagler and then up Clematis Street. "I love watching people shopping, eating, buying jewelry, or checking the antiques and clothing displayed on the 300 to 400 block. But what I love the most is seeing people not necessarily shopping, but just getting together—from Dixie all the way to the waterfront."

The Boat Show and the Palm Beach Marathon are also two major annual events that take place on Flagler Drive, drawing thousands of people to the waterfront to experience what's good and beautiful. On any given day, people

More than 30 years of freshness -

Farm-fresh food vendors and other stalls line the waterfront on Saturdays from October to April.

walk or run down and up Flagler Drive, enjoying their workouts outdoors. For the DDA, that means a boom in walkability and connectivity happening in downtown.

"We are the most community-oriented downtown in Palm Beach County," Faublas said. "As developers and companies continue to move into our downtown area, the DDA meets with them and then relays the information to our downtown's residential community,

property owners, and managers, so they are informed.”

That’s great news for downtown residents and the neighboring communities. And “while a downtown can’t be the same for everyone, and changes may be hard for some,” said Faublas, “we also know that change is inevitable for growth to happen. The more attractions, dining, and things to do we have, especially during peak season days, the more our downtown can hum with the old and the new simultaneously, and the community can hold on to a timeless sensitivity. It’s the kind of orchestrated vibrancy that brings our waterfront life to the foreground.”

Clearly, it takes a special team to bring all this work together.

“It does take a lot of work,” admitted Faublas. “We don’t say, ‘Oh, let’s just do an event.’ We start by always looking at why an event should happen and why it should happen at a certain location, and who we are really marketing this event to.”

According to Faublas, the DDA team takes time to curate the best type of event for the best possible outcome. Their goal is to attract new residents, as even though they have a vast downtown population, they are not familiar with them or the various aspects of downtown where they can get involved.

“Our first goal is to attract new residents to our programs and amplify our area as a very vibrant downtown. Sometimes, a resident may not be aware of an upcoming event. And

worse, they don’t know that it’s free. Secondly, we’re always trying to support our economic development. So whenever we do a program, there is always an opportunity for a merchant to partner with us, or for us to partner with a merchant.”

The DDA is a well-oiled machine, and this can be attributed mainly to the Downtown Ambassadors, the team’s unsung heroes—people who are on the ground, helping to curate our downtown to be what it is. When people come to downtown, the first thing they’re going to look at is—is it clean? Is it safe? That’s it. The Downtown Ambassadors is a program offered by the DDA in partnership with Block by Block, which employs trained ambassadors who provide cleaning, pressure washing, safety, and hospitality services to enhance the downtown area for residents and visitors.

“Since the program started last year, hospitality has been up. People have come to us and thanked us for the switch in our ambassador program. They are getting positive reviews and on-spot cleaning. If someone has trash or needs pressure washing, they call the ambassadors, and they come straight to their business,” said Faublas.

Events Highlights

This fall, the DDA is launching an augmented experience by bringing various aspects of downtown to life. With the use of a smartphone, people can point at locations, such as a mural, and have the painting come alive, with the artist telling a story.

This year, DDA partnered with the City of West Palm Beach to produce Vintage Vibes on the waterfront. The event, which replaced SunFest, was a huge annual event for downtown, featuring ‘80s and ‘90s entertainment, a gaming lounge, arts and crafts, shopping vendors, and a roller-skating rink.

“It was so much fun,” said Faublas. “We’re really big on filling in the gaps when it’s needed, because we don’t want our businesses to suffer. With SunFest being cancelled, we wanted to make sure that there would be steady traffic coming into our downtown that weekend.”

As it turned out, Vintage Vibes was a fantastic event. People came dressed in their favorite ‘80s or ‘90s quirky outfits with bright colors and big hair! The Derby was also scheduled for that weekend, so downtown was piping hot, and it will be again in May 2026, when Vintage Vibes returns to our waterfront.

The Ben Hotel’s Winter Wonderland is scheduled to return for its second year, opening on November 1, 2025, and running through January 4, 2026. This year’s event will feature an even larger ice rink, a holiday tree forest with trees decorated by local non-profits, and free entry to the Winter Tree Forest and Holiday Market, with payment only required for additional activities.

“Be sure to be on Flagler Drive on New Year’s Eve,” Faublas added with a wink. Surely, a promise of a coastal great escape.

If you use that to write your Florida postcard, you wouldn’t be wrong.