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It Takes A Village

Longboat Key has neighborhoods to suit most any lifestyle. It's a jewel with many facets. But when it comes to blending the historic charm of old coastal Florida with the up-tempo rhythms of modern-day life, it takes a village—Longboat Village, to be precise—to do it so seamlessly. On a gorgeous day's drive through the village, you'll experience a tableau of daily life that isn't that far removed from the seaside hamlet's earlier days. For as much as the key has grown in population and developed around it, Longboat Village has zealously nurtured its friendly small town ambiance, where neighbors talk over fences, enjoy pot-luck dinners and pitch in for the common good. When you visit you'll feel at once in the middle of everything, and away from it all.

The village occupies the northern tip of Longboat Key, just before it gives way to Anna Maria Island. Its main drag—Broadway—bisects the town from gulf to bay with the key's most spectacular beach plunked down at its westernmost end. Here beachcombers stroll and sun worshipers laze while fishermen cast net and families play at the water's edge. At Broadway's other end, steamships—like the legendary Mistletoe—used to tie up at the town dock to deposit tourists and fishing parties from Tampa before taking on vegetables at Corey's Landing and heading south to Sarasota. This was in the late 1800's before bridges linked the key to the mainland and Broadway was just a dirt road. Today you can sit on the dock and watch fishing boats leisurely trawl the pristine waters off the Sister Keys, a pair of tiny off-shore islands forever preserved as a wildlife sanctuary thanks to the diligent efforts of various groups of townspeople. Off to the north,

commercial fleets deliver the day's catch to the well-weathered docks of Cortez Village. To the south, the not-too-distant skyline of Sarasota reminds that you are only as far from city life as you want to be. Just behind you are Moore's Stone Crab Restaurant and the MarVista Pub, long the mainstays of casual village dining and night life.

People from around the world and every walk of life live alongside families who have called Longboat Village home for decades upon decades. So it's no surprise that the homes here are a serendipitous blend of many different periods, styles and sizes clustered together on quaint streets and quiet secluded bayous. Tidy Key West-style cottages sit comfortably next to imposing contemporaries, low-slung bungalows and homes with such lush surroundings they seem at one with the trees.

In the midst of it all sits the Longboat Key Center for the Arts. Since its founding in 1952 by a small group of local residents—which, back then, basically meant everyone on the Key—the center has compiled a rich history of fostering and supporting the visual arts in the community. Its 3-acre, 4-building campus offers a variety of activities including art classes for all ages and skill levels, three galleries of exhibition space, and a full schedule of concerts, lectures, and other special events.

Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of living in Longboat Village is that everything we've just mentioned is accessible by foot, bicycle, wheelchair, skateboard or however you prefer to travel minus a car. Sufficeth-to-say, to beat the ever-rising cost of gasoline, it takes a village.