

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PRELIMINARY SITE INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

### FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE - CORD BYRD - SECRETARY OF STATE

This questionnaire is intended only to provide preliminary information about the property to the Bureau of Historic Preservation.

#### Name and Location of Property

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Name and Address of Owner

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

I support this effort to list or seek a determination of eligibility for listing my property on the National Register of Historic Places:

☐ Yes ☐ No Owner Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Property Information

Significant Dates (construction, events, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Has it been moved? ☐ Yes ☐ No Year moved: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Property Type

☐ Archeological or Historic Site ☐ Residential Building ☐ Commercial Building ☐ Industrial Building ☐ Public Building ☐ Other (describe)

Original use: \_\_\_\_\_ Current use: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Property Description:

Describe the design, construction, and general condition of the building. Indicate any architecturally significant features, unique materials, and alterations to the building. (If space below is insufficient, attach additional sheets of paper)

#### Why is the property significant?

Provide a basic history of the property. Indicate significant events, people, or architectural styles associated with the property. (If space below is insufficient, attach additional sheets of paper)

#### Required Enclosures:

- ☐ Current photos (exterior and interior)  
☐ Historic photos (if available, photocopies acceptable)  
☐ Location map (and site plan for large properties)  
☐ Sketch floor plan  
☐ Proof of ownership (property appraiser record or notarized letter)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Submitter's Name and Address

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: Lisa Joaquin

Originally submitted August 15 2025; revised October 2025 for final review.



Bureau of Historic Preservation  
R.A. Gray Building  
500 Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

August 15, 2025

Resubmitted with supplemental documentation October 17, 2025

Dear Review Committee,

The Islander isn't just a building—it's a tradition, a gathering place, and a piece of living history that's woven into the fabric of North Redington Beach. Built in 1948 as *The Dolphin Apartments*, it was part of Florida's post-World War II beach resort boom. Over the decades, it became *Sun Ray Condominiums* and eventually *The Islander*, but through it all, it has kept its original charm—simple two-story design, courtyard layout, and the breezy, welcoming feel of Old Florida.

For my family, The Islander has been a homecoming every single year for more than three decades. My mother purchased our week when my children were babies. Even before then, we came to visit. It became the one week we knew—no matter what else was happening in life—we would all be together. We've celebrated birthdays and anniversaries, watched kids take their first steps in the sand, and built friendships that have lasted generations. Those babies I once brought here now bring their own children.

And my family's story isn't unique. Many owners have held their weeks for 20, 30, even 40 years. They travel from across the world to return to this very spot, to reconnect with people they've known for decades, and to pass on the experience to their children and grandchildren. Walking into The Islander feels like walking into a family reunion—warm hellos, shared meals, and sunset traditions on the same stretch of beach year after year.

When Hurricane Helene & Milton struck in 2024, it didn't just damage a building—it disrupted a community and threatened to erase a way of life that's vanishing along our coast. We are determined to preserve what's left, not just for us, but for the generations yet to come.

If The Islander is lost, it will almost certainly be replaced by high-density, modern development—another piece of Florida’s mid-century history gone. But if we can preserve it, we keep more than architecture; we keep the living spirit of a time when the beach was about connection, simplicity, and community.

For those of us who return year after year, The Islander isn’t just where we stay—it’s where we belong. We ask for your help in protecting it, so that fifty years from now, families can still gather here, just as we do today.

Due to FEMA’s 50% rule, every possible avenue to repair the property has been exhausted. Two independent appraisals confirmed that, because The Islander’s buildings were never substantially upgraded over the decades, their depreciated value is low despite being carefully maintained to preserve their original Old Florida charm. While this simplicity is part of its unique character, it now works against us—any necessary repairs exceed the 50% threshold, leaving rebuilding as the only legal option. Rebuilding would erase the architectural blueprint and relaxed coastal atmosphere that so many owners cherish. Time is of the essence: nearly a year has passed since the last hurricane, and the lengthy processes with the city, state, and FEMA have strained owners’ patience. This designation could mean the difference between losing The Islander to history or preserving it for generations to come.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Joaquin*

Lisa Joaquin, Owner

On behalf of The Islander Condominium Association, Inc.



# THE ISLANDER

## Property Description

The Islander is a two-story, courtyard-style beachfront property located directly on the Gulf of Mexico in North Redington Beach, Florida. Built in 1948 as The Dolphin Apartments, it reflects the post–World War II boom in Florida tourism, with an emphasis on small-scale, community-oriented accommodations. The U-shaped building surrounds a central courtyard and pool, offering direct beach access just steps away.

Constructed in masonry with a stucco finish, the design incorporates simple lines, pastel tones, and minimal ornamentation, characteristic of mid-century coastal architecture. The open-air breezeways and balconies foster neighborly interaction, while mature palm trees and original low-scale landscaping frame the property.

Over the decades, updates have been modest — repainting, pool area refreshes, and routine maintenance — all done with sensitivity to the original design. The footprint, scale, and courtyard layout remain unchanged. Even after sustaining damage from Hurricane Helene (09/26/24) then Hurricane Milton (10/9/24), the structural form and defining architectural features remain intact, making restoration both feasible and historically valuable.

## Significant Dates

- 1948 – Constructed as The Dolphin Apartments, a two-story beachfront complex built during Florida’s post-World War II tourism boom.
- Late 1970s – Renamed Sun Ray Condominiums; exterior updated with fresh paint while preserving the original footprint and courtyard layout.
- 1983 – Established as The Islander Condominium Association, Inc., adopting a timeshare ownership model.
- 1980s–2020s – Multi-generational ownership patterns solidified, with many families holding the same weeks for decades.
- Pre-2024 – Remained one of the last few low-rise, mid-century properties along the Gulf Coast retaining original Old Florida charm.
- 2024 – Sustained significant damage from Hurricane Helene & Milton, but the original footprint and core architectural features remain intact.



## Statement of Significance

*The Islander*, originally constructed as *The Dolphin Apartments* in 1948, is significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **Community Planning and Development** for its association with the postwar evolution of Florida's barrier islands, and under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture** as a well-preserved example of the mid-century coastal resort typology that characterized the Gulf Beaches corridor from the 1940s through the 1970s.

Within the broader historic context of *Barrier Island Development and Resort Culture on Florida's Gulf Coast (1940s–1970s)*, *The Islander* reflects the transformation of the Pinellas County shoreline from scattered fishing cottages into a cohesive series of small-scale, family-oriented resorts. Its low-rise masonry construction, U-shaped courtyard plan, and breezeblock detailing embody the functional adaptation and informal modernism that defined postwar Florida architecture.

Equally important is the property's social continuity. *The Islander's* design facilitated enduring community interaction—a defining characteristic of mid-century beach life. Its transition to cooperative timeshare ownership represents a natural extension of those patterns, formalizing the tradition of returning families who have occupied the same units for generations.

Despite widespread redevelopment along Gulf Boulevard, *The Islander* retains exceptional integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling. It stands as one of the last tangible examples of the modest, human-scaled resort form that once dominated Florida's barrier islands. Through its physical preservation and ongoing community stewardship, *The Islander* continues to express the architectural, cultural, and social values that shaped the region's postwar identity and contribute to its historic character today.

While much of the surrounding coastline has been redeveloped into high-rise condominiums and large resorts, *The Islander* has preserved its original two-story courtyard form for over 75 years. Its modest updates and careful maintenance have allowed it to remain a time capsule of Old Florida beach culture. The property holds deep social significance. Many owners have maintained their weeks for decades, returning year after year from across the country. Families have celebrated milestones, built lifelong friendships, and passed traditions down through multiple generations. *The Islander* functions not just as lodging, but as a community gathering place — a living link to the way Florida's beaches once felt before large-scale development.



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**\*Full source links available in the digital submission version.\***

Additional unnumbered illustrations titled **“A Visual Timeline”** (pages 19–20 & XX) provide a photographic overview of The Islander from the 1980s through the 2020s, including community memories, hurricane impacts, and ongoing preservation efforts.

# THE ISLANDER

Hurricane Helene in September 2024 and Hurricane Milton in October 2024 caused significant damage, but the building's defining layout and form remain. Preservation would safeguard not only a rare example of mid-century Gulf Coast architecture, but also a cultural legacy rooted in connection, tradition, and the enduring charm of Old Florida.

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 1949 PAGE SEVENTY-THREE

## NEWS OF THE GULF BEACHES

TIMES BEACH OFFICE: 12821 GULF BEACH BLVD., JOHN'S PASS, PHONE 9-7306 ANN GUNN, REPRESENTATIVE, LORNA CARROLL, BEACH EDITOR

**BOOMING BEACH**—This aerial view is of North Redington Beach where five major apartment developments have been completed since September. Left to right, Sandpiper, El Sabalo, Sea Horse, Kathleen and Dolphin Apartments. Two more are set for early starts. Newest of the above building, to open next week is the Dolphin (see story below). (Photo by Charles J. Belden.)

**Dolphin Project Opens This Week**

The 19-unit Dolphin Apartments are set to open this week at North Redington Beach. This \$150,000 project is the fifth major apartment building to be completed at the North Redington development since September.

Designed by Marsh and Saralby of Jacksonville, the Dolphin is composed of three buildings, all masonry construction. Two are of twin design, two-floor in size, and house eight one-bedroom apartments each. The third houses two efficiency apartments and an apartment-office.

The apartments are composed of large rooms and have been furnished in a bright and attractive manner by Friday O'Neal of Tampa. Living room divans convert to beds, increasing unit capacity to four.

Kitchens are all electric with tile drains. Baths are full tile. Building features include central hot water heating, landscaped patio — by Johnstone Floral Co., St. Petersburg — hardwood oak floors on upper levels and tile below, and concrete sundeck extending to the seawall.

Emerson and Sons Co. has recently completed the \$2,500,000 (200-unit) Yacht Basin Apartments at Clearwater Beach and is currently building a 200-unit Negro housing project at Clearwater.

The company also built the 59-unit Gulf View project at Madeira Beach which is currently in the process of sale. Company officials include John C. Emerson, president; Don Emerson, vice president; and John C. Emerson, secretary.

Don Emerson, who directed construction of the Dolphin, said his company had great faith in the future of the Gulf Beaches.

But they are only beginning. With the existing school at Pass-a-Grille and the site near Blind Pass, what they want now is a third point in the area of Madeira Beach or a shade to the north. Thus the islands would be set from an educational point of view from 172 Avenue all the way south to the tip of Pass-a-Grille.

Mrs. Levesque is currently seeking some kindly gentleman in this northern sector who will

1,027 kids of school age in the area. They found that all but 169, who were tourists, were permanent residents or returned to the area each winter.

They found how many preschool age kids lived in the area and when they would be of school age. They learned how many rode the busses and how many didn't.

They found out when these kids got up in the morning, then they went to school and when they returned home. They even checked on how early arrivals at the school yard amused them.

**Figure 1.** "Dolphin Project Opens This Week," Source: [Tampa Bay Times St. Petersburg, Florida • Sun, Jan 23, 1949 Page 73](#)

Article notes the \$150,000 construction cost and identifies the project's designers, confirming *The Islander's* origin as the Dolphin Apartments.



# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

### 1948 – The Dolphin Apartments

Opened in 1948 as *The Dolphin Apartments*, this two-story beachfront complex reflected the postwar boom in Florida tourism.



**Figure 2.** The Dolphin Apartments, 1948 — Front Elevation.

Early photo showing the newly completed façade as viewed from Gulf Boulevard, illustrating the low-rise massing and modern coastal design.

**Figure 3.** Advertisement for “The Dolphin Apartments,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 6 1949 — newspaper ad announcing the newly completed beachfront apartments at 17006 Gulf Boulevard, confirming address and early operation.

February 6, 1949 (Page 72 of 90)

St. Petersburg Times (1901-); St. Petersburg, 06 Feb 1949: 72.

has a Redington Beach Circle with Mrs. Angus Smith as chairman, and a Sunset Beach Circle with Dr. May Wharton as chairman. Other circles will take in from Welch Causeway to Johns Pass, Johns Pass to Sunset Beach and the St. Petersburg Beach area to the north side of Don Ce-Sar Place. Mrs. H. Club, a layman's or-

line church is sponsoring Boy Scout Troop 54 under Alec Williams, and Cub Scout Pack 54 with Jimmy Franklin, cubmaster. Mrs. William Buckingham and Mrs. Henry Thomas are design mothers.

Madeira Beach. The building is of concrete block and stucco construction, and has 3,500 square feet of floor space for display. Ultra modern in design, it will have

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• PAY YOUR PHONE, WATER  
BILLS  
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• STORAGE VAULTS  
• LOANS, MORTGAGES, AUTO  
AND HOUSEHOLD FINANCING  
• NO MINIMUM BALANCE  
REQUIRED  
• MAIL DEPOSIT SERVICE  
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Photo by "FLORIDA SPEAKS"  
**The Dolphin Apartments**  
★ Just Completed on the Gulf of Mexico  
• Private Beach  
• New And Modern  
• Completely Furnished  
• One Bedroom Units  
The Gulf Beaches Newest!  
17006 Gulf Blvd., Redington Beach, Phone 9-7506



**Figure 4.** The Dolphin Apartments, 1948 — Courtyard View Facing Beach. View through the interior courtyard toward the Gulf, revealing the U-shaped layout and breezblock detailing.



# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

### 1960s–1970s – Early Vacation Years

*The Dolphin Apartments promoted a relaxed, family-friendly retreat — the kind of small-scale lodging that defined mid-century Gulf Coast vacations.*

G-38  
REDINGTON BEACH, FLORIDA, ON THE GULF OF MEXICO  
Air view looking southward over the magnificent beach and the new, divided "Gulf Boulevard." Many nationally famous motels are clearly visible in this scene.  
(Color photo by Ward Beckett)

Post Card

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

**Figure 5.** Aerial Postcards of Redington Beach featuring The Tides Bath Club (ca. 1950s–1970s). Composite of two overlapping postcards looking south along Gulf Boulevard. The iconic red-roofed Tides Bath Club—once a celebrity-favored resort demolished in 1995—is visible near the center, along with numerous low-rise motels that defined the Gulf Beaches' mid-century skyline. This view situates The Islander within the original resort corridor that flourished during Florida's post-war tourism boom



October 2, 1956 (Page 124 of 210)  
St. Petersburg Times (1901); St. Petersburg. 02 Oct 1956: 124.

<p><b>BAY PLAZA HOTEL</b> 135 - 1ST AVE. NO. 100% <b>AIR - CONDITIONED</b> EUROPEAN PLAN Season Rates upon Request Reservations - Phone 7-8117 C. A. WARNER</p>	<p><b>NOTICE</b> Ritz Hotel, 701 3 Ave. S. Official Opening October 1st Now accepting season reservations for year, week or month. Reasonable rates. Planned recreation, close to dining, cafeteria &amp; fun shop. Rates on req. 7-8088 or write Box 1388.</p> <p><b>BEACHES</b> <b>GULF FRONT</b> REDINGTON SHORES 3 bedrooms, 2 baths Walking distance, sun, water 1000 GUNNEY BLVD. REDINGTON BEACH, FLORIDA</p>	<p><b>The Brightwater</b> On The Gulf PRIVATE BEACH KING SIZE SWIMMING POOL (Furniture Controlled) 18 HOLE PUTTING GREEN FISHING PIER Luxurious ground floor villa type hotel rooms and apartments. Electrically heated and air conditioned. FOR BROCHURE AND RATES R. R. VIA, Manager</p>	<p>FLORIDA VACATIONING AT ITS BEST at <b>The Dolphin Apartment Motel</b> Directly On The Gulf Swimming . Fishing Boating . Sun Bathing 17 Unit Apt. Motel COMPLETELY REMODELED Bedroom and Efficiency Apartments Modern Kitchens Maid Service Air-Conditioned Television-Telephone Tropical Patio Sun Terrace</p>
<p>MAYFAIR HOTEL 212-2nd St. No. Ph. 80-0011 GAYFAIR HOTEL 403-2nd St. No. Ph. 7-5329</p> <p>Near Million Dollar Pier &amp; bathing beach. Beautiful, new rooms all for rates. Private, clean bath &amp; refrigerator. S.V. Also Cottage picnic.</p> <p><b>EFFICIENCIES</b> MONTHLY RATES TV IN LOUNGE Write for Reservations <b>TOSA MOTEL</b> 585-4th St. No. St. Petersburg Ph. 72-8084</p> <p><b>COMMODORE HOTEL</b> 718 CENTRAL AVE.</p>	<p><b>CAMEO APTS.</b> <b>ON THE GULF</b> Large Or Small Parties Long Or Short Stayers PLANNED RECREATION AIR CONDITIONING OPTIONAL TELEVISION LOUNGE PING PONG SHUFFLEBOARD DAILY MAID SERVICE NO CHARGE FOR MEETING TRAINS OR PLANES</p>	<p><b>The Brightwater</b> 5400 Gulf Blvd. St. Pete 6 PHONE 22-1911 <b>BRAND NEW</b> Right On Gulf of Mexico Private Bathing Beach <b>GULF VIEW</b> ADTC</p>	<p>UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT Mr. &amp; Mrs. L. McColgin (Owners) Manager Mr. &amp; Mrs. E. Lambert, Jr. (Owners) FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION REGARDING RATES AND ACCOMMODATIONS - WRITE: <b>The Dolphin Apartment Motel</b> 1700S Gulf Blvd. No. Redington Beach Florida</p>

**Figure 6.** Advertisement for "The Dolphin Apartment Motel," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 2, 1956.

Newspaper advertisement noting the property's remodeling and new management, confirming the Dolphin Apartments' continued operation and maintenance within its original mid-century design.

# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

### Late 1970s – Sun Ray Condominiums

In the late 1970s, the property transitioned to Sun Ray Condominiums, retaining the same intimate layout and Old Florida charm.

November 22, 1979 (Page 66 of 273)

St. Petersburg Times (1901-); St. Petersburg, 22 Nov 1979: 66.

Figure 7. "Grand Opening – Sun Ray Condominiums," advertisement published November 22, 1979, in the *St. Petersburg Times* (p. 66).

Grand opening announcement of the Sun Ray Condominiums offering both rental options and ownership opportunities with financing available starting at \$68,000 — a reflection of late-1970s Gulf-front development trends.

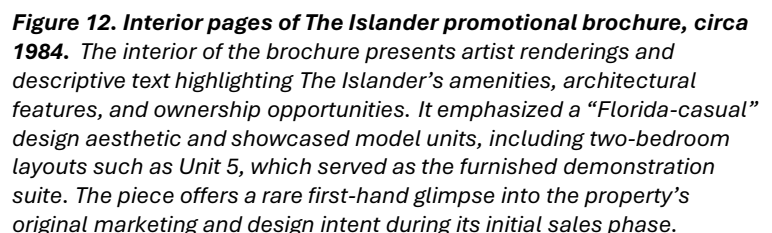


Figure 8. View of The Islander (formerly Sun Ray Condominiums), circa late 1970s–early 1980s, looking east from the Gulf side.

This photograph shows the Gulf-front elevation of the property at 17006 Gulf Boulevard during its transition from Sun Ray Condominiums to The Islander. The structure's form, scale, and orientation are consistent with its current appearance, reflecting a high degree of historic integrity.

Figure 9. Business briefs column, *St. Petersburg Times*, December 13, 1979, p. 36. Reports that **Sun Ray Motel** has been converted to condominiums with units priced between \$49,900 and \$83,500. Reflecting the late-1970s trend of motel-to-condominium conversions along Gulf Boulevard.





# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

### 1980s–2020s – Generations Return

*Many owners held their weeks for decades, returning each year to reconnect with friends and watch children grow up on the same stretch of sand.*

Most relevant ▾



Helen Murray Buckley

We stayed there when it was The Dolphin pre-time share

1w Love Reply Hide

2



Top fan

Sandy Sea

It was a motel right before it was the islander. The gentleman who was developer still lives in the area.

1w Love Reply Hide

1



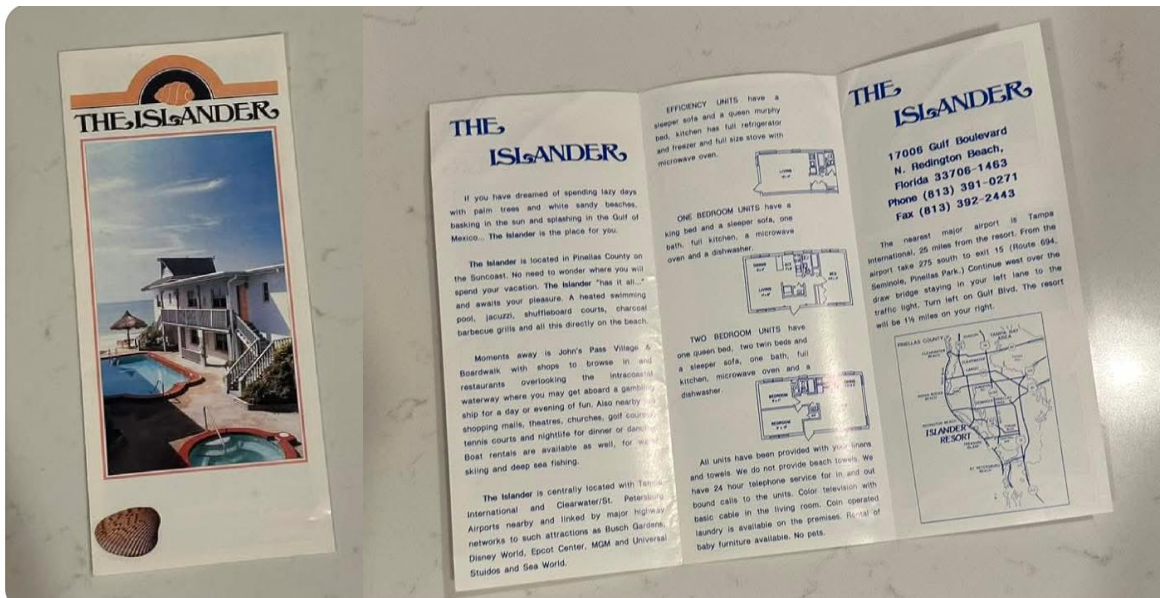
The Islander Resort

Nov 18, 2024 · 🌐

Everybody shares their stories of family "growing up" at The Islander so here's one of mine - a pic from 1992 - my sister and her family by the pool - note double wooden staircases, landscape and deck differences! I'm at the side hugging my niece who was 4. This week they should have been in unit 6 but came to visit anyway - my niece is 36 now- that's her by the pool with Boomer (no dogs allowed)! 32 years of Islander sunsets and moon rising.



**Figure 13. The Islander promotional brochure, late 1980s–early 1990s.** This color brochure represents the second and most enduring marketing piece produced for **The Islander**. It was distributed from the late 1980s through the early 2010s and became the resort's signature promotional material. Featuring photographs of the Gulf-front pool and building façade, floor plans, and a location map, the brochure reflects The Islander's established image as a relaxed, family-oriented timeshare destination on Florida's Gulf Coast. Although minor updates were made over the years, this same design remained in circulation for decades—continuing to define the property's public identity until the transition to digital marketing and the launch of The Islander's website in the early 2010s.





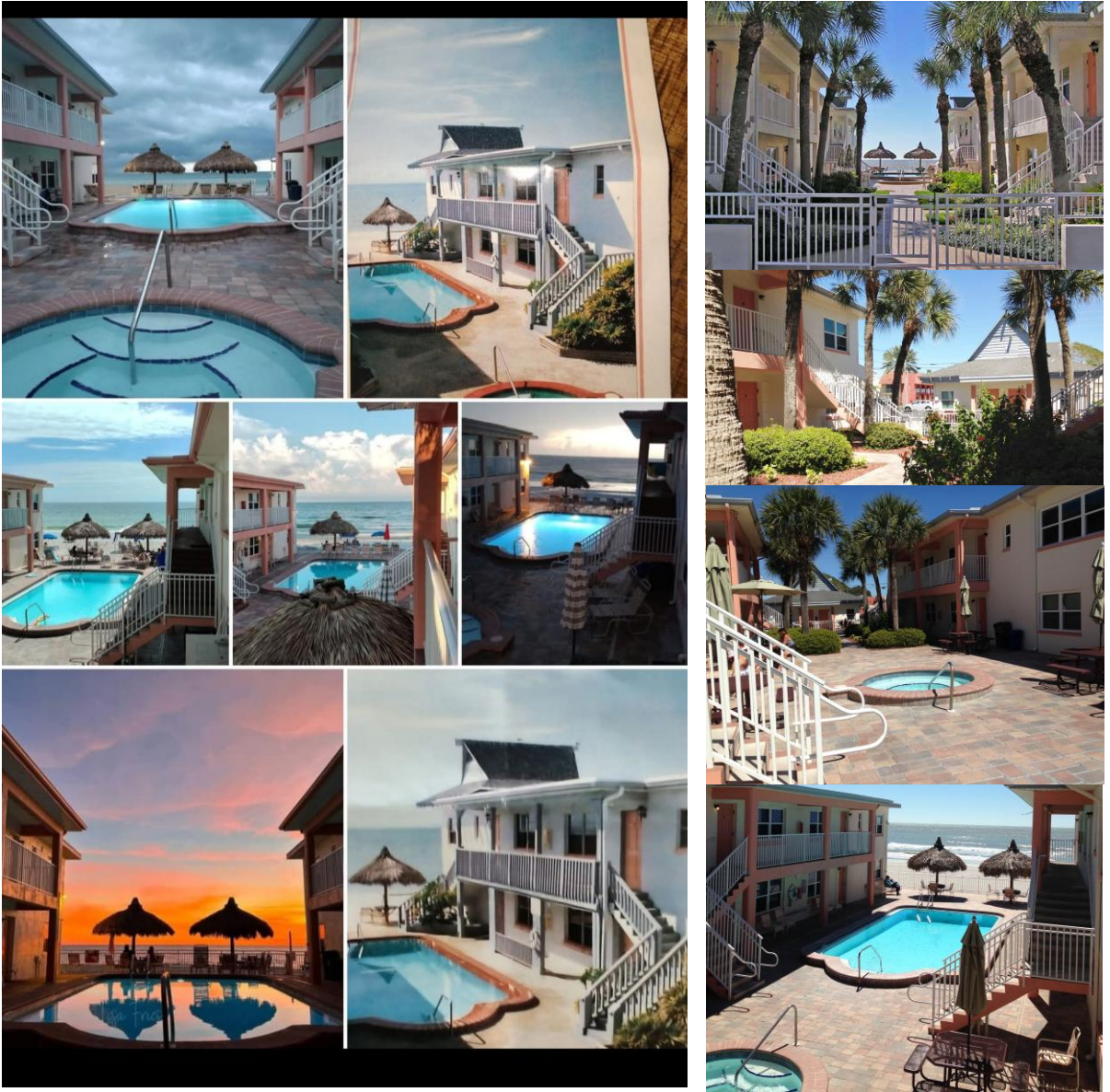


# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

### 1980s–2020s – Community & Memories, Pure Nostalgia

*The Islander isn't just a destination—it's the backdrop to countless summers, milestones, and memories woven into the fabric of North Redington Beach.*





# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

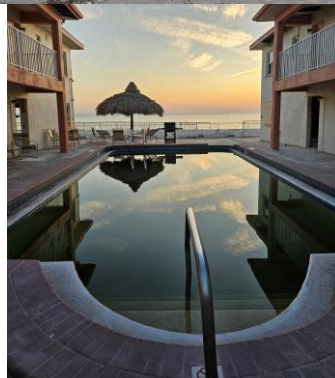
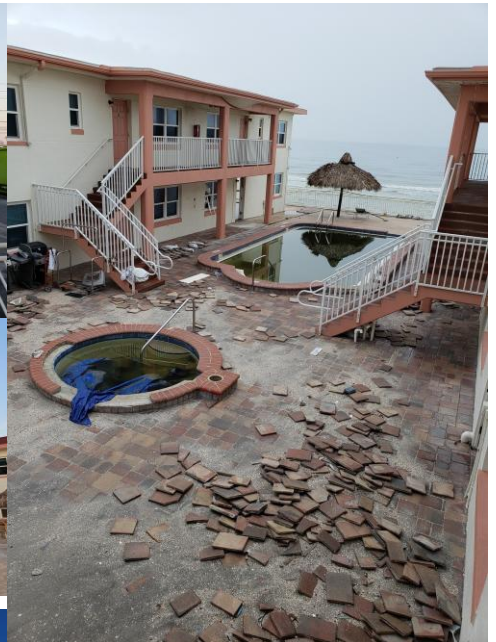
**2024 – Hurricane Helene (09/26/2024) Hurricane Milton (10/09/2024)**

*Hurricane Helene and Milton caused significant damage, putting The Islander's future in jeopardy. Long-term owners remain committed to restoring it.*



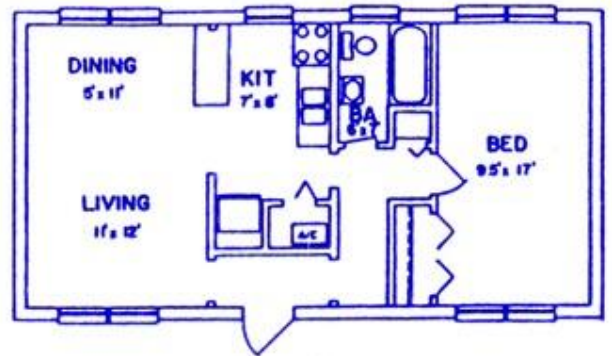
The Redingtons - Beach Life  
Join  
Alexa Hayes-Gary · 10h · 🌐

I couldn't comment with pictures for some reason so I edited this post. I have pics of The Islander Resort for those who have been anxiously looking for updates like I have. It is not good, and I am so sad and so sorry for all those who love this place as much as I do. My parents were down there this week in #2 but evacuated when it became mandatory and are safe in Lakeland.

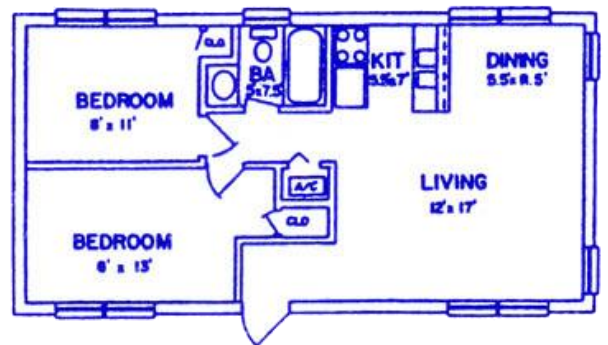


# THE ISLANDER

## Property Map & Floor Plans



1 Bedroom Floorplan



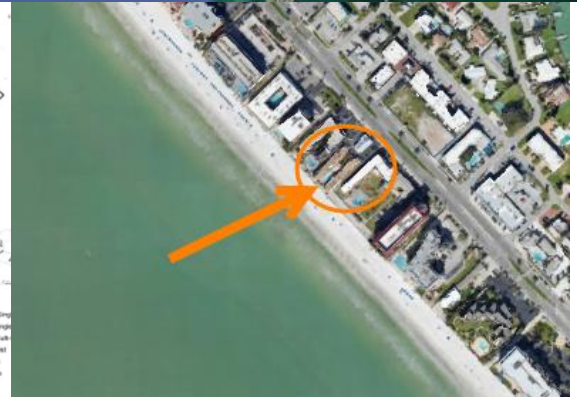
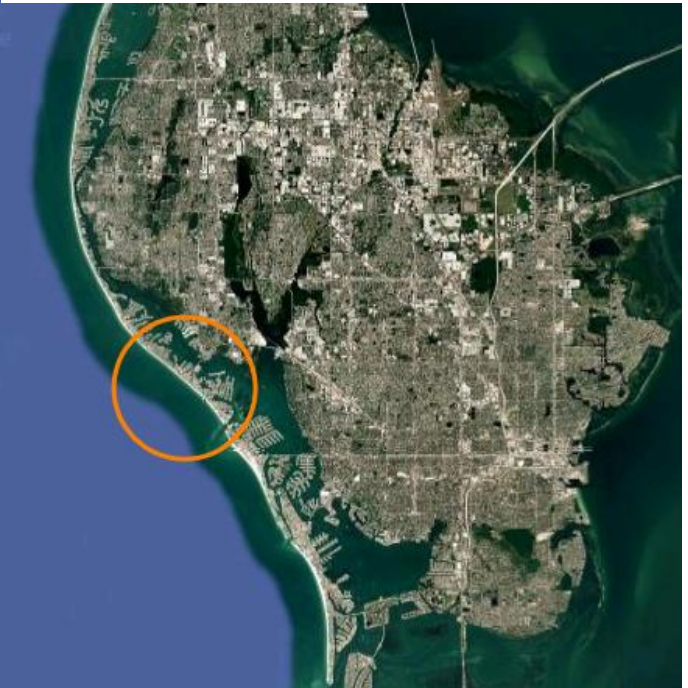
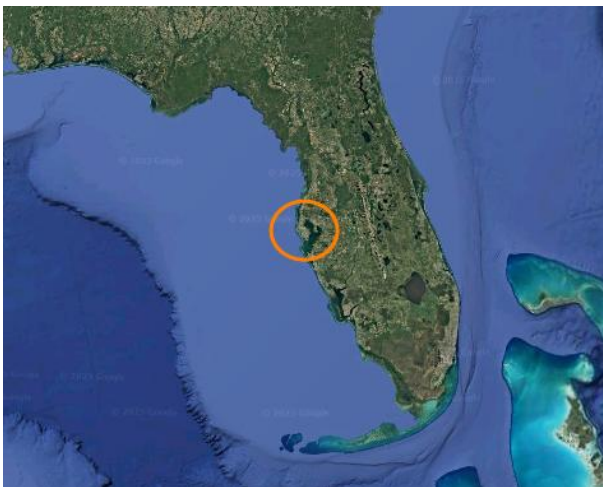
2 Bedroom Floorplan



# THE ISLANDER

## Location Map

The Islander is located in the heart of Pinellas County, along the pristine shoreline of **North Redington Beach, Florida**. Nestled between Clearwater Beach and St. Pete Beach, this charming Gulf-front community offers the perfect balance of relaxation and convenience. Owners enjoy direct access to the soft, white sand and turquoise waters of the Gulf of Mexico, while being just minutes from dining, shopping, and cultural attractions. Its central location makes it easy to explore the entire Tampa Bay area — yet it still feels like a peaceful retreat far from the crowds.



## **Barrier Island Development and Resort Culture on Florida's Gulf Coast (1940s–1970s)**

Florida's barrier islands have long reflected the evolving relationship between people and the coast—first as remote fishing outposts and seasonal retreats, and later as year-round communities defined by tourism, architecture, and a relaxed coastal lifestyle. Pinellas County's Gulf barrier islands, including North Redington Beach, developed rapidly after World War II as automobile travel, new bridge construction, and returning veterans seeking recreation and investment opportunities transformed the shoreline.

Early and property records show that, before the 1940s, much of the barrier-island chain consisted of aerial imagery narrow dunes and scattered wooden cottages reached by ferries or sand roads. With the completion of the Tom Stuart Causeway (1951) and other bridges linking the mainland to Gulf Boulevard, a wave of modest, family-run motels and apartment resorts appeared. These small, low-rise buildings - typically masonry or concrete-block with pastel stucco exteriors, breezeways, and central courtyards - embodied the "Old Florida" aesthetic of casual hospitality and direct access to the beach.

Between 1945 and 1965, Pinellas County became one of Florida's most densely developed stretches of coastline. The design vocabulary of this era blended functionality with the optimism of the postwar period: flat roofs, open corridors to catch sea breezes, decorative concrete block screens, and palm-framed courtyards around pools or shuffleboard courts. The Islander (originally The Dolphin Apartments, 1948) represents this formative period in local tourism history - a time when the barrier islands shifted from seasonal camps to established coastal neighborhoods catering to middle-class families discovering the freedom of the automobile vacation.

By the 1970s and 1980s, economic and regulatory changes encouraged larger condominium developments, replacing many small apartment resorts. Yet a handful of properties, including The Islander, retained their original two-story footprints, courtyard plans, and community-centered atmosphere. These surviving complexes illustrate the transition from privately owned mom-and-pop motels to organized ownership models such as cooperatives and timeshares, while preserving the architectural simplicity and social character of mid-century resort life.

Today, as much of the Gulf Coast is dominated by high-rise structures, The Islander stands as a tangible reminder of the barrier islands' postwar evolution—an era when the coast's allure lay in its open vistas, neighborly courtyards, and the easy rhythm of days spent between sand and sea. Within this broader historic context, The Islander exemplifies the pattern of small-scale, community-oriented beach development that shaped North Redington Beach and defined mid-century Florida tourism.

## **Postwar Tourism and the Rise of the Gulf Boulevard Resort Corridor (1945–1970)**

After World War II, Florida entered a period of explosive growth that reshaped nearly every coastal community. In Pinellas County, returning servicemen and their families joined a wave of new residents seeking sunshine, recreation, and opportunity. The completion of bridges such as the Tom Stuart Causeway and the expansion of Gulf Boulevard transformed the barrier islands from isolated stretches of sand into a continuous chain of thriving beach towns.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, dozens of small apartment-style motels and family-run resorts began lining the Gulf of Mexico. They offered an affordable escape for the middle class—simple two-story buildings with pastel stucco, breezeways, and palm-framed courtyards where guests could walk straight from their rooms onto the sand. These resorts captured the postwar optimism of an era defined by mobility, community, and open-air living.

Properties such as *The Dolphin Apartments* (now The Islander) were typical of this movement. Built in 1948, it reflected the trend toward modest, masonry-constructed beachfront accommodations that emphasized shared space over opulence. The open-courtyard plan encouraged neighborly interaction, while its low scale preserved views of the Gulf and complemented the surrounding dunes.

As the 1950s progressed, the Gulf Beaches corridor became known as *Florida's "Suncoast."* Tourism marketing highlighted family vacations, shuffleboard courts, and endless sunshine rather than nightlife or high-rise luxury. The Redington beaches, positioned between bustling Clearwater to the north and St. Pete Beach to the south, embodied that balance—quiet, safe, and community-centered.

Through the 1960s, the character of Gulf Boulevard remained distinctly small-scale. Many owners lived on-site and personally greeted returning guests. Vacationers formed lifelong friendships, often booking the same week each year. These traditions later evolved naturally into the timeshare model of ownership, which formalized what had long been a cultural rhythm of seasonal return.

By the early 1970s, however, development pressures began to change the coast. Larger hotels and condominium towers replaced many of the mid-century motels, altering both the skyline and the social fabric. Amid that transformation, The Islander survived as one of the few properties to maintain its original footprint, architectural integrity, and community-based spirit—a living reminder of the Gulf Coast's postwar resort heritage.



## **Architecture and Community Planning of the Mid-Century Florida Beach Resort**

The architectural character of Florida's mid-century beach resorts reflected both environmental adaptation and social intent. Builders on the Gulf Coast faced the challenge of creating affordable, durable structures suited to salt air, wind exposure, and the region's bright tropical light. The result was a distinctive form of coastal modernism—simple, low-rise masonry buildings with flat or slightly pitched roofs, open walkways, and shaded courtyards that encouraged outdoor living and community interaction.

These small apartment-style resorts, often called “beach courts” or “motel apartments,” were planned around central gathering spaces rather than enclosed hallways or lobbies. Concrete block construction replaced wood framing to reduce maintenance in the humid climate. Breezeblock screens, jalousie windows, and open corridors promoted cross-ventilation before the widespread use of air conditioning. The courtyard—usually containing a pool, shuffleboard area, or garden—served as the social heart of each property, where families mingled, friendships formed, and generations of guests returned year after year.

The Islander exemplifies this planning tradition. Its U-shaped footprint frames a landscaped courtyard that opens directly toward the Gulf, maintaining an uninterrupted view and sea breeze. The arrangement balances privacy with neighborly proximity, mirroring the era's emphasis on casual social connection. Decorative masonry, overhanging eaves, and pastel finishes were not only stylistic choices but functional responses to light and heat. The modest scale and rhythm of the façade harmonize with the low skyline typical of North Redington Beach's early postwar period.

In community terms, these resorts functioned as more than transient lodging—they were micro-neighborhoods. Owners often lived on-site, and guests frequently returned to the same units annually, creating patterns of semi-permanent residency that later evolved into formal timeshare ownership. This continuity fostered a sense of belonging and stewardship uncommon in larger, later developments.

As zoning and construction standards shifted in the 1970s, many of these intimate, human-scaled resorts disappeared under larger condominium towers. The Islander remains a rare survivor of this architectural and social pattern, retaining not only its physical integrity but also the cooperative spirit that defined the Gulf Boulevard corridor's mid-century identity.

## Cultural Significance and the Continuity of the Gulf Beach Lifestyle

Beyond its architectural form, *The Islander* embodies a way of life that once defined Florida's barrier islands—a lifestyle rooted in community, rhythm, and connection to the coast. During the mid-twentieth century, the Gulf beaches became synonymous with simplicity and ease: mornings spent fishing from the pier, afternoons around the shuffleboard court, and evenings watching the sunset from the same porch year after year. The continuity of these experiences built deep emotional bonds between residents, returning guests, and the landscape itself.

Unlike later high-rise resorts designed for short stays and anonymity, places like *The Islander* fostered genuine familiarity. The courtyard plan naturally brought people together—neighbors greeted one another on open walkways, children played safely within view, and long-term friendships were formed over shared vacation weeks. This sense of belonging transformed seasonal visitors into stewards of the place. When timeshare ownership later emerged in the 1970s, *The Islander's* cooperative model fit seamlessly into that tradition: the same families returning to the same units, now with a formalized stake in preserving them.

Culturally, *The Islander* represents the enduring spirit of Florida's "Old Coast"—the generation of modest, family-run beach properties that balanced tourism with livability. It reminds us that before the rise of luxury towers, the Gulf coast was a patchwork of small communities where the measure of value was not square footage, but familiarity: the same faces, the same breezes, the same view of the water.

Today, as much of the barrier-island landscape faces redevelopment, *The Islander* stands as a rare survivor of that legacy. Its continued use, physical integrity, and loyal ownership community preserve not just a building, but a living pattern of mid-century Florida life. The property tells the story of how ordinary people—veterans, retirees, families, and snowbirds—shaped the culture of the Gulf Coast through everyday experiences of neighborliness and coastal simplicity.

In this context, *The Islander* is significant not only as architecture, but as memory. It bridges eras: from post-war optimism to present-day preservation, from transient vacationing to shared stewardship. It captures the human continuity of a vanishing Florida—the balance between leisure and loyalty that has always defined life on the Gulf.

# Barrier Island Development & Cultural Context Photos



Some "dry" sand areas dredged from Boca Ciega Bay became homesites between 161st and 164th avenues in 1942.  
Florida Aerial Photography, University of Florida

**Figure 14. Undeveloped Dunes 1935-1937** Source: Florida Aerial Photography Collection, University of Florida via [The Gabber, Florida's Oldest Independent Newspaper](#). View of undeveloped barrier-island dunes prior to large-scale construction, illustrating the natural coastal landscape that preceded postwar development

Redington opened a sales office in November 1937 at Gulf Boulevard and 157th Avenue. By then, only a few homes existed in his "Redington Beach Properties at North Madeira" development. Although a countywide ordinance had banned driving along Pinellas beaches in July 1935, people enjoyed the dry sands along these beaches without restrictions.



As Charles Redington's development took shape in 1942, beach access remained unobstructed.  
Florida Aerial Photography, University of Florida

**Figure 15. Redington's Development Taking Shape, 1942.** Source: Florida Aerial Photography Collection, University of Florida via [The Gabber, Florida's Oldest Independent Newspaper](#). Aerial view showing the early stages of Charles Redington's subdivision development. By this time, roads and lots had been laid out



**Figure 16. The 1926 Welch Causeway bridge,** looking toward Madeira Beach. Source: Gulf Beaches Public Library via [The Gabber, Florida's Oldest Independent Newspaper](#). This photo takes us back to the late 1960s, showing the old approach into Madeira Beach, at a time when the Island Garden Club proudly called the town a "People's Sanctuary."



The original Welch Causeway, shown here in the 1940s, was the first free bridge to the lower Pinellas beaches.  
Gulf Beaches Public Library

**Figure 17. 1940s photo of the original Welch Causeway** Source: Gulf Beaches Public Library via [The Gabber, Florida's Oldest Independent Newspaper](#). It was more than just a bridge — it was a symbol of possibility. As the first free bridge connecting the mainland to the lower Pinellas beaches, it opened the door for everyday families to reach the Gulf. Visionaries like Albert Bertram Archibald and David Sewall Welch saw potential where others saw only mangroves and sand. Their work forever changed the shoreline, laying the foundation for Madeira Beach, Treasure Island, and the Redingtons that we know today.

## Barrier Island Development & Cultural Context Photos



Jim Stokes, a photographer for the Florida Department of Commerce, took this 1961 image of a family enjoying dry sand in Redington Beach.

Image via Dept. of Commerce Collection, Florida Memory

**Figure 18. 1961 a family enjoying dry sand in Redington Beach** Source: Jim Stokes, a photographer for the Florida Department of Commerce, took this.

Image. Dept. of Commerce Collection, Florida Memory via [The Gabber, Florida's Oldest Independent Newspaper](#). Families relax on the pristine dunes of North Redington Beach in the 1960s, before large-scale development transformed the barrier islands. The scene captures the simplicity and openness of Florida's early coastal life — when beach days were defined by sea breezes, quiet sands, and timeless family moments.



The La Playa resort and its pier at the northern end of the town, October 1956.  
Courtesy of Graber Aerial Photographic Collection, USF Digital Collections

**Figure 20. 1956 La Playa Resort and Pier**

Source: Aerial Photographic Collection, USF Digital Collections via [The Gabber, Florida's Oldest Independent Newspaper](#). This 1956 aerial view shows the La Playa Resort and its private pier, located just south of where The Islander stands today. Before sidewalks and modern roadways were installed, residents and visitors often walked along the dry sands to travel between Madeira Beach, Redington Beach, and North Redington Beach. The image captures the informal coastal pathways and low-scale development that once characterized the Redington shoreline prior to large-scale urbanization. The pier remained a local landmark for decades but was ultimately destroyed in the 2024 hurricanes Helene and Milton.



**Figure 21. Redington Long Pier, c. 1960s.** Source: [Patch, A Long Pier with a Long Story](#). Image: Taken by [Daniel Fernandez](#)

Located just a short walk from The Islander the pier became a defining landmark for residents and visitors along the North Redington Beach shoreline. Built in 1962 and extending more than 1,200 feet into the Gulf of Mexico, it served as a popular fishing and sightseeing destination for nearly six decades before being destroyed by storm damage in 2020.



## Timeline of Community Development North Redington Beach, Florida



**Aerial view looking north along Gulf Boulevard, North Redington Beach, circa 1940s–1950s.** The photo shows the area's sparse early development before the mid-century resort boom.

Source: [Town of North Redington Beach archives](#)

North Redington Beach traces its beginnings to the vision of Charles Redington, who in 1935 constructed the first home on the barrier island and soon after established The Tides Hotel and Bath Club (1936).

This landmark became a magnet for visitors and catalyzed the transformation of the Gulf Coast from isolated dunes to a vibrant resort corridor. Through the 1940s and 1950s, modest motels and cottages began to line Gulf Boulevard as dredge and fill projects expanded the land base.

The town was formally incorporated in 1953, marking its emergence as an organized community. The widening of Gulf Boulevard in 1956—later dubbed the “Miracle Mile”—further accelerated tourism and real estate growth, solidifying North Redington Beach’s identity as a quintessential post-war Florida destination.

By the late 1940s, **properties like The Islander** were constructed as part of this broader development wave, reflecting the architectural style and community optimism of Florida’s mid-century beach era. Today, these surviving structures serve as tangible reminders of the town’s formative decades and enduring resort heritage.





# THE ISLANDER

## A Visual Timeline

### Today – Preservation at a Crossroads

*Preserving The Islander means saving one of the last mid-century beach properties that still feels like ‘Old Florida.’*



Owners cleaning up after a hurricane



Together, these images, advertisements, and brochures illustrate The Islander's full evolution—from its origins as the Dolphin Apartments through its conversion to Sun Ray condominiums and eventual establishment as The Islander, a long-standing Gulf-front timeshare resort. The continuity in design, layout, and marketing over several decades reflects the property's enduring role as a familiar and beloved fixture within the North Redington Beach community.

