

Palm Coast Leadership and Development
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In its fifty-year history Palm Coast has known six (6) leaders. Admittedly, there were many people who led, many more that haven't received the recognition for their contributions, but only 6 people, 5 men and 1 woman, have the distinction of being the one person ultimately responsible for all that happened during their reign.

International Telegraph and Telephone Community Development Corporation (ITT CDC) had three presidents serve in Palm Coast. They were Dr. Norman Young (1969-1975), Alan Smolen (1975-1985) and James Gardner (1985-2000).

When Palm Coast voted to incorporate and become a City in 1999 a new era began, and citizens voted for their Mayor. To date, we have had three, Dr. James V. Canfield (2000-2007), Jon Netts (2007-2016), and Milissa Holland (2016-2021).

When ITT announced their Palm Coast project with the world, they shared what they thought a planned community should look like and how it should develop. It was 1969 and the vision, with an emphasis on community, environment, development, and the future, continued until the great conglomerate ended its reign and pulled out of Palm Coast in 1995.

The City of Palm Coast had a vision that aligned with ITT's masterplan. They also wanted a City that valued the environment and a sense of community, all with an eye on promoting development and a future that would sustain a quality of life for everyone.

Naturally, the biggest difference was finances. In 1972 ITT was a 17-billion-dollar global industry. Palm Coast was a minuscule line item on

the budget sheets. Nevertheless, the ITT leaders promoted Palm Coast with a passion for developing a great community to live and play. Their efforts were also fueled by land sales and profit. However, it is also true that the ITT leaders lived in Palm Coast and cared about it, its citizens, and the quality of life they were creating with ITT funding.

The City Mayor's worked within a different framework but had similar beliefs about the quality-of-life standards and the environment. Jim Canfield, our first Mayor, and his Council were tasked with developing a City from the ground up. It was a monumental accomplishment. One moment ITT was paying for bridges and donating land for the library, high school, and parks. The next moment funding revenues needed to be found via taxes or grants, and a vision for sustainability that leaders of ITT never had to address nor deal with had to be developed.

As we go through this series of researched articles on our government development and leaders, we will recognize other stakeholders and leaders who laid the foundation for our government today. Why do we have trees in our community? Why does A1A have a bike path? How did our fire department start? Who made these and other significant contributions to our City? Why and when was the civic organization started? Indeed, it does take a village to make a great City, but most importantly it takes a leader with a vision and a love for the City that values all citizens, addresses issues that are difficult but necessary, and can be trusted to act on behalf of all our best interests.

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