

"Where the freedom of the open road meets the luxury of the open beach"

By Kelly G. Robertson

Perdido Key? Hardly. Sorry, but Panama City Beach beat us to this slogan, and with 85 Public Beach Access points, they have more than earned the right to use it. If you haven't been to Panama City Beach lately, you haven't really seen the new Panama City Beach.

No four-lane interstate highway look-alike along the beach here, but boy look at what they do have. First, all those beach access points – between condos, between houses, along open areas, just about everywhere. Here is a Chamber of Commerce that knows what butters their bread! And a two, sometimes three lane street that has easily accessed crossovers from the north to the south (to those 85 public beach access points) along with a 35 mph speed limit that contributes to safety for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles alike.

If you've seen or heard of Pier Park, it is the equivalent of The Wharf in Orange Beach, sans the amphitheater. Extending from Highway 98 on the north end, to the beach road on the south, the "mall" has the anchor stores that The Wharf is missing, along with the trendy restaurants and small retail businesses that The Wharf has. How about Guy Harvey's second Florida panhandle restaurant location, and Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville to name just two. Add a Ron Jon Surf Shop, Dillard's, Penneys, Borders Books, a Target, and a 16 screen theater, and what else do you need. Plus, the immediate economic future of these stores looks pretty promising due to the number of true hotels and condos within easy walking distance, unlike The Wharf, where turnover of the boutiques is, unfortunately, all too common.

All of this is what makes Panama City Beach a fun place to visit. I don't, however, think I would want to face all that hustle and bustle on a daily basis, and therefore I chose to live elsewhere. Perdido Key. In fact, I'll bet most of us moved to Perdido Key just because it was not like Panama City Beach, or Destin, or Orange Beach.

I'm relatively certain that all of us had the choice. There is a lot to be said for the laid-back life style found here. So here is your wake up call, Chamber of Commerce – start smart marketing for this island. Here's an idea for your slogan: *Perdido Key... a great place to visit, a spectacular place to live!* Pretty catchy, and available too!

Now, let's get to work on making that slogan a reality. Let's make Perdido Key a **GREAT** place to **LIVE**.