



40 Things to Know About Corolla Light's First 40 Years

- 1) The first deeds recorded for CLCA were in June 1985 -- Lots 702, 711 and 714.
- 2) The developer of Corolla Light was Richard "Dick" Brindley, who brought cable TV to the OBX and had several developments in Duck before bringing his talents and vision to Corolla. His pioneering work is featured in **Outer Bank Visionaries**, a must-read history of the region by Clark Twiddy of individuals in government and business who have played pivotal roles in changes to the Outer Banks over the past 75 years. Buy the book at the CLCA Sports Center!
- 3) Two of the initial sales staff for Corolla Light remain active leaders in the area – Doug Brindley and Ron Barrett. Several early owners remember these two manning a table and under an umbrella calling out to those passing by what is now the intersection of NC 12 and Austin Street!
- 4) The first occupancy permit for a home in Corolla Light was in October 1985.
- 5) Our well-known owners have included U.S. House of Representatives Majority Leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri and U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, and events at Corolla Light have attracted numerous Members of Congress, senior federal officials and prominent business executives.
- 6) A U.S. President slept here: U.S. President George H.W. Bush spent several nights on Payson Court in Corolla Light. He was the guest of a trusted staffer who still owns the home and has pictures and many stories from this visit.
- 7) Corolla Light has been recognized multiple times as Resort of the Year in North Carolina – enough times so that we were disqualified from applying at one point!
- 8) The Corolla Light Sports Center, named to honor resort developer Richard Brindley, was officially opened on March 30, 1991, and was renovated and improved in 2024. At 36,000 covered sf, it is the second largest fitness and sports complex on the Outer Banks and one of the rare OBX geothermal heated structures.
- 9) Corolla Light is approximately 240 acres, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Currituck Sound, and was one of the first Planned Urban Developments (PUD) on the Northern Outer Banks.

- 10) Corolla Light, at 240 acres, is big enough to hold a 5K entirely within our community!
- 11) In its early days, Corolla Light residents and guests enjoyed delivery of flowers and other decorative items via a high wheel bike ridden by Ed Case, who along with his wife Ruby ran the Corolla Light Flower Shop.
- 12) Based on Zillow data, the estimated valuation of the 460 residential units in Corolla Light exceeds \$500,000,000.
- 13) One essential item for Corolla Light owners early in the resort's history was a snow shovel to deal with our wild Corolla horses, who loved our carports as a respite from wind. The Corolla Wild Horse sanctuary was completed in 1997 and all horses in the Duck to Corolla area were herded to the 4x4 area north of a new fence. But despite the best efforts, horses still evade the fences and return multiple times each year to favorite feeding places in Corolla Light.
- 14) Corolla Light boasts 2 Indoor Har-Tru clay courts, 4 outdoor Har-Tru clay courts, 2 outdoor hard courts, and 4 pickleball hard courts.
- 15) Corolla Light was developed with its own community water and wastewater systems, including fire hydrants – rare in the Outer Banks. Water was drawn from wells located between the beach and Corolla Light's oceanfront homes. Those wells continue to be used today as a supplementary source of raw water by the Southern Outer Banks Water Authority, which took over Corolla Light's system in 2005.
- 16) Dick Brindley was a fan of the Walt Disney Company and put in place several ideas of that company, including use of collegiate interns during the summer for guest services and use of trolleys to take owners and guests to various resort locations – Disney's TAAA (*Transportation As An Attraction*) concept.
- 17) Corolla Light celebrates the 4th of July each year with a parade that involves fire trucks, sheriff's deputies and hundreds of kids on decorated bikes, scooters and wagons. The first parade was in 1998.
- 18) Corolla Light's restaurant by the oceanfront pools was opened in 1986 and the current Oceanfront Grille remains the only full-serve oceanfront restaurant on the Northern Outer Banks. Restaurant operators included Dick Brindley and family, a partnership which included the owner/operator of Duck Deli, Eric and Kari and the current partnership of Niki and Brian.
- 19) Corolla Light's oceanfront pools were the first in the Northern Outer Banks.
- 20) From the inception of Corolla Light, placing beach towels on deck railings has been prohibited.
- 21) For many Corolla Light owners and guests, summer nights at the pool were made memorable by performer Toucan Jam, who played two trumpets

simultaneously, led Conga lines around the pool and enlisted kids to perform with him.

- 22) The road north between Duck and Corolla was unpaved until 1985 – and until 1984, access was restricted by a guard house! You can walk or bike along portions of the old road in the Donal C. O'Brien Sanctuary and Audubon Center at Pine Island.
- 23) Corolla Light included a historic structure – a replacement for the original Currituck Beach lifesaving station, also called the Jones Hill station. That structure was moved 6 miles north to a site adjacent to Penney's Hill for use as private home.
- 24) All Corolla Light owners are members of the Corolla Light Community Association (CLCA), which owns valuable real estate remarkable improvements, including an oceanfront complex with three pools, a restaurant and shops, basketball courts and sand volleyball site, shuffleboard, putting green and parking, the 36,000 sf Richard Brindley Sports Center, five ocean walkways, four soundfront piers for boating, crabbing and more, a trail system connecting the community for walkers, runners, bicyclists, skaters and more, and a trolley transportation system.
- 25) In its early days, Corolla Light had its own closed-circuit TV channel that helped inform owners and guests about activities and information.
- 26) All CLCA members are eligible for the “Lenny Discount” at the Oceanfront Grille, initiated over 20 years ago for long-time CLCA board member and officer Lenny Frieden and later expanded to be enjoyed by all band-wearing Corolla Light owners.
- 27) The current Inn at Corolla property on NC 12 was initially Corolla Light's Bell Tower Station and included dining and shopping opportunities, the CLCA member pool, windsurfing, a mini-golf facility and a pier for boating and crabbing.
- 28) In July 1994, Dennis Anderson drove his Monster Truck Gravedigger across Currituck Sound from Poplar Branch to Corolla a few hundred feet north of Corolla Light. His 7-hour, 7-mile journey included a mid-sound stop for major repairs!
<https://www.ncrabbithole.com/p/grave-digger-monster-truck-in-currituck-sound-nc>
- 29) Our early trolley drivers included Cecil Wright, a relative of aviation's famed Wright Brothers.
- 30) While visiting Corolla Light, former Navy Lieutenant and later US President George H.W. Bush asked about unexploded naval ordinance along our beaches. The President learned to fly the Grumman TBM Avenger torpedo bomber as an

18-year-old Navy pilot nearby, dropping bombs on Corolla before his many Pacific missions.

- 31) Corolla Light nearly added a very large additional neighborhood – what is now Historic Corolla Park. Of the few lots sold prior to purchase of the property by Currituck County, several are now part of Corolla Light.
- 32) For much of its first decade, the primary use of the land between the oceanfront pools and Franklyn Street was parking. Various potential uses of the land were resolved in the mid-1990s and a row of homes and a range of recreational amenities were constructed, reducing parking by more than half.
- 33) Corolla Light Community Association assumed responsibility for resort operations in 1989 under President Ralph Lazaro and General Manager Jim Stepp, as lot sales reached the threshold specified in the covenants for transfer of community asset to the association.
- 34) A marathon volunteer achievement: Lenny Frieden (with assistance of Jane) was the editor of Corolla Light's newsletter from 1990 to February 2025 – nearly 35 years!!
- 35) The initial owners' weekends at Corolla Light involved fine dining and dancing under a tent near the oceanfront pools – no casual attire allowed!
- 36) The three most recent graduating classes of the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University have chosen to celebrate their new MBA degrees in Corolla, including a evening party at Corolla Light's Sports Center.
- 37) Corolla Light was featured in a December 2024 story that explains much of its success: *This Outer Banks Resort Centered the Environment From the Start, and It Paid Off.*
https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2024/corolla-light-resort-outer-banks/815331?fbclid=IwY2xjawJXTgpleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHSz7Zk39cx4W4z94lsr89evs9JFYnQMqdolLx8n5aQ0pkl9jS5AW9d2rZQ_aem_Ytshh91dsu6w87dJ-hZowQ
- 38) A significant number of CLCA members and their families in 1990 are still homeowners in 2025 – 35 years later: **18!**
- 39) The beach at Corolla Light is guarded by Corolla Beach Rescue, paid for with a portion of the county tourism tax on rentals. In addition to nearly 200 rescues in a typical year, Corolla Beach Rescues offers young visitors fun-filled classes each week and competes in regional lifeguard competitions.
- 40) CLCA's Outreach Committee planned and hosted the first Corolla Cup competition in October 2023, drawing teams from many Corolla neighborhoods. The 2024 Corolla Cup raised about \$27,000 for a favorite of many Corolla Light residents: the Waters Edge Village School – WEVS, pronounced “waves” – and two local donors matched the contributions to generate \$80,000 for the school's new building!

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Bonus question: how were Corolla Lights' roads named? More on that soon!!