

LIVING IN

## West Palm Beach Moves Upmarket

The city is emerging from the shadow of Palm Beach, just across the water, with new condo and office towers.



360 Rosemary, one of West Palm Beach's new office buildings, has drawn major financial companies as tenants.

West Palm Beach is emerging from the shadow of its affluent world-famous neighbor, Palm Beach, with new luxury condo and office towers as well as a billionaire developer aiming to transform it into the Wall Street of the South.

In Palm Beach today, President Donald Trump occupies his Mar-a-Lago compound as the rich and famous continue to snap up multi-million-dollar mansions. But since the Covid-19 pandemic, West Palm Beach, too, has attracted wealthy newcomers and big-name financial firms, as well as world-class art, entertainment, and shopping.



By The New York Times

**Location:** Palm Beach County, 70 miles north of Miami and 45 miles north of Fort Lauderdale

**Population:** 127,744 (2024 U.S. Census Bureau estimate)

**Area:** 54 square miles

**Housing:** 50 percent homeownership rate

**The vibe:** A palm tree-lined, sun-drenched, laid-back city with a few high-rises and world-class amenities.

Henry Flagler, the oil magnate, founded Palm Beach during the Gilded Age, building an oceanfront resort on a barrier island. West Palm Beach, on the mainland, housed the workers who serviced the wealthy. “For decades, if you lived in West Palm Beach, people would say ‘Oh my God, you’re across the bridge,’” said Robert Kemp, a real estate broker with Douglas Elliman who’s worked and lived in West Palm Beach for over 30 years. “Then, West Palm became almost like a part of Palm Beach.”





New luxury condos are rising on the city's waterfront. The Bristol, completed in 2019, launched the trend. The 25-story condo tower has a private restaurant, a spa and a 75-foot lap pool. It lured Sydell L. Miller, the late beauty mogul, who traded in her large Palm Beach estate and moved in.

Other upscale waterfront developments include the [Olara](#), [South Flagler House](#), [Alba](#), [The Ritz-Carlton Residences](#), and [Forté on Flagler](#). Units in these developments, many of which are still under construction, typically start at over \$1 million.

The billionaire developer Stephen M. Ross is leading the makeover. Mr. Ross, who built much of Hudson Yards in New York and owns the N.F.L. Miami Dolphins team, opened [CityPlace](#), a mixed-use, outdoor mall, in 2000. He is now renovating and expanding the 72-acre property, adding two office complexes and attracting new retail offerings, such as the Eataly market and restaurant, as well as the fashion brands Alo and Reformation.

Ross's ambitions go beyond a simple mall. He's spending \$10 billion to turn West Palm Beach into a leading business hub and has already completed two top-tier office buildings, where Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan Chase are tenants. This year, he successfully lobbied Vanderbilt University to create a \$520 million graduate campus in the city.



“The city had not had any square footage of Class A office space built since 2008,” said Mayor Keith James of West Palm Beach. “We now have close to three million square feet of Class A office, either built or on the books.”

Despite the luxury big-business transformation, West Palm Beach retains some of its old, retro charm. Mediterranean revival, midcentury modern and Spanish mission-style homes and bungalows pepper residential neighborhoods like as El Cid, Southland Park, and Northwood.

But like much of South Florida, rising real estate prices represent the downside of moving to West Palm Beach. According to Zillow, the home prices have soared by about 60 percent since 2020.

## Going Out and About





- **Restaurants:** For dinner, enjoy American classics at the retro diner, [Howley's](#); sophisticated bites at [Oceano Kitchen](#) (in nearby Lake Worth); and Italian dishes with rooftop views at [Elisabetta's](#). For brunch and lunch try [Sour Seed Bagels](#), [Hive Bakery](#) or [Aioli Sourdough Bakery & Cafe](#).
- **Groceries:** [Bedner's Farm Fresh Market](#) and [Don Victorio's Market](#) offer fresh produce, some at great prices. From October to April a [sprawling farmer's market](#) takes over a downtown stretch of Clematis Street.
- **Culture:** Visit the world-class Norton Museum of Art, its new wing designed by the architect Norman Foster, includes traditional and contemporary art and photography, including works by Rubens and Picasso. On [Friday evenings](#) there are talks, guided tours and live music. [The Kravis Center](#) hosts theatrical productions and concerts.
- **Shopping:** Explore [Antique Row](#), along Dixie Highway, for antique furniture and vintage clothing boutiques like [Palm Beach Vintage](#) and [Dina C's Fab & Funky](#).



The Park is the city's new municipal golf course.



A flock of birds at the 18-hole course.

- **Recreation:** [The Park](#), a new municipal golf course designed by the architect Gil Hanse, has an 18-hole main course and a par-three course lit for nighttime play. For nature, kayak at the [Okeeheelee Park](#) or have a waterfront stroll along South Flagler Drive.

# Getting There, Getting Around





Within the city, public transportation is limited, so driving is most convenient.

- **Rail:** [Tri-Rail](#) and [Brightline](#) operate commuter rail services linking Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach and Orlando.
- **Air:** Palm Beach International Airport is within the city and nearby airports include Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and Miami International Airport.

## Neighborhoods



Like in many cities on the coast, the closer to the water, the more expensive real estate gets. West Palm Beach is no exception.

- **El Cid and Southland Park**, east of Dixie Highway, are some of the city's the most expensive neighborhoods, where single-family home prices can rival Palm Beach, easily breaching the \$1 million mark.
- **The Northwood areas** are also mostly single-family homes, including more affordable options.
- **Downtown Housing** offerings in the commercial heart of the city are mostly contained to condominiums and rental buildings.

## Housing



- **Inventory for sale:** 1,881
- **Median gross rent:** \$2,500 a month
- **Median list price:** \$464,333
- **More:** [Zillow](#) and the [U.S. Census Bureau](#)



## Schools

- **Public School:** [The School District of Palm Beach County](#) is the 10th largest in the country, with 182 schools and 171,261 students.
- **Private School:** The 45-acre campus of [Oxbridge Academy](#), Baron Trump's alma mater, skirts the border of West Palm Beach and costs up to \$45,000 a year.