

Location



Located on the southeast coast, Palm Beach County is the largest of Florida's 67 counties. As part of Florida's Gold Coast, Palm Beach County is bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean with 47 miles of shoreline. It is located north of Fort Lauderdale and Miami, and south of Orlando. The County's 2,385 square miles include 1,977 square miles of land and 408 square miles of surface water, making it one of the largest counties east of the Mississippi River. The surface water areas include the Intracoastal Waterway and approximately one-third of Lake Okeechobee, which is the largest freshwater lake in the state and the largest in the United States except for the Great Lake.

Palm Beach County's climate has enhanced its image as a location that provides a high quality of life to its residents. The average temperature is 89 degrees in the summer and 74 degrees in the winter. The wet season extends from June through October, with an average annual rainfall of 62 inches.

There are 39 municipalities within the County encompassing a total of 337 square miles, or approximately 17% of the County's land area. As of FY 2024, an estimated 57% of the County's population resides within the municipalities. The change in population since the FY 2023 reporting reflects an increase of 14,566 with a municipal growth of 9,519 and a concurrent increase of approximately 5,047 in the unincorporated area.

West Palm Beach remains the largest city in population with approximately 122,157 residents within 53.81 square miles. Palm Beach Gardens is the largest city in land area with approximately 61,517 residents within 56.72 miles. Cloud Lake and Briny Breezes are the smallest in land area, with approximately 140 and 500 people respectively, living within about 0.05 and 0.06 square miles each. In addition, 14 municipalities are less than one square mile each.

Population estimates for each of the 39 municipalities, as well as, the mailing addresses for each Town/City Hall can be found at the following link:

Municipal Members (palmbeachcountyleagueofcities.com) 

Sources used: Palm Beach County - PZB, Planning Division, County Profile; Palm Beach County Interesting Facts and Figures; Business Development Board of Palm Beach county; University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research

History



The first settlers, in what is now Palm Beach County, were Indian tribes such as the Tequesta, Jeaga, Caloosa, and later the Seminoles. The next settlers arrived in 1860 when the Jupiter Lighthouse was built to aid sailors navigating the Atlantic Ocean. Homesteading began in the late 1800's with the majority of the settlers coming to the area to farm. Early farmers found the soil to be highly productive and earned most of their income by growing vegetables for the northern winter market.

The late 1800's also marked the beginning of the tourism industry. Transportation improvements, particularly to the railroad system, provided easier access to the area. Hotels to serve tourists and the first winter homes for seasonal residents were constructed. In 1892, Henry Flagler visited Palm Beach and decided to build a large resort hotel, the Royal Poinciana, and extend the Florida East Coast Railroad to West Palm Beach from Jacksonville. These developments made Palm Beach the nation's premier winter resort. Flagler considered the mainland area a perfect satellite location to service his resort and a good place for his workers to live. This area was incorporated as West Palm Beach in 1894.

Other cities, such as Linton and Boynton Beach, were established soon after West Palm Beach. Linton was founded in 1894 by William S. Linton, the postmaster of Saginaw, Michigan. He and a friend purchased 160 acres of land and sold it in five-acre tracts through ads in Michigan newspapers. In 1901, they renamed the town Delray Beach, after a Detroit suburb. Boynton Beach was founded in 1895 when Civil War officer Major Nathan S. Boynton built a 50-room resort hotel on the beach. One year later, the railroad came through on its way to Miami.

The State Legislature established Palm Beach County as Florida's 47th County on July 1, 1909. Prior to that time, the area was part of Dade County. Palm Beach County originally encompassed Lake Okeechobee and the areas that became Broward County in 1915, Okeechobee County in 1917, and Martin County in 1925. In 1963, the State of Florida partitioned Lake Okeechobee among all of the counties that border it.

The first County Commission meeting was held on July 6, 1909 and West Palm Beach was designated as the County Seat. By 1910, the County's population had grown to more than 5,500 residents. The entire County experienced tremendous growth and development following World War I. The building and population increase produced a great land boom in the early 1920's. Contributing to the land boom was the climate, as well as an increase in the use of the automobile along with a growing network of roads. The State encouraged the influx of new residents during this period by promising never to pass state income or inheritance taxes. The 1926 Florida Land Bust, the 1926 and 1928 hurricanes, and the 1929 stock market crash drastically affected the local economy, but these events did not stop growth entirely due to the prior establishment of major transportation facilities.

World War II brought many changes to the County, including air bases and new jobs. After the war, Grace Morrison Field was expanded and became Palm Beach International Airport. During the same time period, small specialized businesses, many electronic-oriented, joined industrial giants like Pratt-Whitney and IBM in establishing plants in Palm Beach County.

The County remained largely undeveloped through the 1950's, as evidenced by a 1960 population of less than 250,000. Although some citizens felt that it had lost its natural, unspoiled quality, many leaders welcomed urbanization and actively promoted growth and development.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, large numbers of middle and upper income retirees began to move to Florida, prompting developers to build new subdivisions and cities. During this same period, the advent of air conditioning greatly enhanced the living and working environment, further increasing the pace of development.

Throughout the 1980's, the economy and the construction industry thrived as the population grew by approximately 5% per year. The national recession that occurred in the early 1990's reduced the County's growth rate to an average of approximately 3.1% annually. The County's FY 2024 population is estimated to be 1,532,718, a 1.0% increase from FY 2023.

Sources used include: Business Development Board of Palm Beach County; University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research

Form of Government

As a result of the November 6, 1984 general election, Palm Beach County became a Home Rule Charter County on January 1, 1985. This "Home Rule" allows residents, through their elected commissioners, greater independence in determining how their County government will function and what services it will provide. Major advantages resulting from changing to this form of government include:

- allowing the County to pass its own ordinances and laws as long as they do not conflict with state and federal laws;
- providing initiative procedures that allow voters to create, modify and amend local laws;
- providing a process to modify or amend the Charter;
- and providing voters with a process to recall County Commissioners for cause.

The Board of County Commissioners (BCC), which is the legislative branch of County government, adopts ordinances and resolutions to establish programs that protect and maintain the health, safety, and welfare of County residents. In 1990, the BCC changed from five at-large Commissioners to seven, each representing a single-member district. Each Commissioner is elected to a four-year term by voters in the district in which they reside. Commissioners elect a Mayor to preside over meetings and serve as the ceremonial head of the County. A Vice Mayor is also selected to assume these duties in the absence of the Mayor.

The BCC considers major problems facing County government and guides the growth and development of the County consistent with the public interest. Major areas of public interest under the control of the Board include:

- provision of fire protection and disaster relief services;
- construction and maintenance of County buildings, roads, and bridges;
- provision of programs of housing, community development, slum clearance, conservation, flood and beach erosion control, and air pollution control;
- adoption and enforcement of building and housing codes and regulations;
- preservation of natural resources;
- preparation, review, and periodic amendment of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the development of the unincorporated portion of the County;
- and provision of cultural and recreational facilities and programs.

Additionally, the BCC may enter into agreements with other governmental agencies for the joint performance of duties.

The Commission appoints the Chief Executive Officer, i.e., the County Administrator, who implements BCC- approved programs and manages the day-to-day operations of County government. With BCC approval, the County Administrator appoints Assistant County Administrators and Department Directors.

The County's Departments under the County Administrator are organized into two groups: General Operations Departments, which provide direct services to residents, and Central Services Departments.



General Operations Departments Include	
Airports	Medical Examiner
Community Services	Palm Tran
County Cooperative Extension Services	Parks and Recreation
County Library	Planning, Zoning, and Building
Engineering and Public Works	Public Safety
Environmental Resources Management	Water Utilities
Fire Rescue	Youth Services
Housing and Economic Development	

Central Services Departments Include	
County Administration	Information Systems Services
Facilities Development and Operations	Public Affairs
Financial Management and Budget	Purchasing
Human Resources	Risk Management

There are also eight separate Offices that are under the authority of the County Administrator. These are: Criminal Justice Commission, Legislative Affairs, Office of Community Revitalization, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Office of Equal Business Opportunity, Office of Equal Opportunity, Office of Resilience, and Tourist Development Council. The County Attorney and Internal Auditor are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.

In addition to the County Administrator, the BCC appoints County residents to serve as volunteers on various citizens' boards, commissions, committees, and councils. These groups are established for advisory and/or regulatory purposes. State law creates some advisory boards, while others are formed by the BCC to meet special needs and to help solve challenging issues facing County government.

Constitutional Officers and Judiciary are County Officials, other than the BCC, who are elected for four-year terms by the voters in general elections. The officers include the Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections, Public Defender, State Attorney, and Tax Collector.

Palm Beach County is not a consolidated or "metro" form of government. The Palm Beach County School System is governed by a non-partisan elected School Board and operates under the direction of a School Board-Appointed Superintendent. The BCC has no jurisdiction over the School Board.

The South Florida Water Management District, Children's Services Council, Health Care District, Drainage Districts, Inlet Districts, and municipalities within the County are also not under the authority of the BCC.

Economic Trends

Palm Beach County is Florida's largest county in area and fourth in population. Growth predominantly from in-migration, has historically been a major influencing factor in the County. On average, population has increased 1.12% annually from 2011 to 2023 and is estimated to increase through FY 2024.

Current economic indicators for Palm Beach County point to an economy which is increasingly healthy over the past several years. Significant investments made to develop the Biotechnology Industry in the County has spurred growth in that sector, pushing it into a tie with Retail Trade as the second largest industry behind only Educational, Health Care, and Social Services.

Tourism, construction, and agriculture continue to play a prominent role in the County's economy.

Tourism - During FY 2023, Palm Beach County emerged as Florida's most sought-after tourist destination, thanks to breathtaking coastlines, vibrant cultures, and extensive array of attractions. With this much traveler demand, Palm Beach County is projecting to have 9.5 million visitors by year-end with the increase in hotel and non-hotel (Airbnb/ VRBO) bookings. Impressively, FY 2023 Bed Tax collections in Palm Beach County reached \$84 million, marking an 8% increase over last year's \$78 million and a substantial 55% surge compared to the 2019 record. This reflects the growing number of visitors and solidifies the County's status as a premier destination. The Sports Tourism industry played a pivotal role in the County's tourism sector by hosting various events that attracted sports enthusiasts. The Film and Television industry showcased Palm Beach County's picturesque landscapes, garnering attention for the area through their productions. The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County further enriched the tourism ecosystem, offering a diverse range of artistic and cultural experiences for visitors to enjoy. Evidence of our thriving tourism industry, the Leisure and Hospitality sector, supported 90,300 jobs during August 2023. The significant workforce engaged in this sector further strengthens Palm Beach County's appeal as a tourist hub. Business Travel has been instrumental in Palm Beach County's tourism landscape, drawing professionals for conferences, meetings, and conventions. The Tourism sector in Palm Beach County has achieved remarkable success in FY 2023, as indicated by the metrics. With its continued dedication to excellence and innovation, Palm Beach County is positioned for even greater accomplishments in the years ahead.

Construction - During FY 2023, the total number of permits issued decreased to 72,965, from 74,963 in FY 2022, or by 2.7%. Building Permit revenues also increased by 5.3% to \$27.5 million as compared to \$26.1 million in the prior year. In residential construction, 535 multi-family and 1886 single-family unit starts occurred in FY 2023, as compared to 1003 multi-family and 1600 single-family unit starts in FY 2022. The total value of new residential construction was almost 14% greater at just under \$850 million in FY 2023, as compared to \$748 million in FY 2022. However, the total value of all construction permitted increased by 11%, from just over \$2.25 billion in FY 2022 to just under \$2.5 billion in FY 2023.

Agriculture - The USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture documents Palm Beach County agriculture cropland at 438,911 acres. Market value revenue from agricultural sales are roughly \$1.4 billion. Palm Beach County continues to lead the state of Florida in agricultural proceeds, as well as all counties east of the Mississippi River for agricultural crop income. Palm Beach County leads the nation in sugarcane and fresh sweet corn production. The County is also Florida's top producer of sweet bell peppers, rice, lettuce, radishes, Chinese vegetables, specialty leafy crops, celery, eggplant, herbs, and sod.

Land under agriculture represents 35% of the total County land area. According to a 2016 UF/IFAS analysis of Florida's environmental horticulture industry, the Palm Beach County nursery industry ranked third in the state, employing roughly 2,600 people, while garnering \$375 million per year in economic activity from greenhouse, nursey, and floriculture businesses. Bagasse is the fibrous by-product that remains after sugarcane stalks have been milled to extract sugar. The sugarcane industry re-purposes this bagasse as a "green fuel" for water boilers that generate the electricity to power the mill machinery and adjacent office complex. Bagasse is also the agricultural raw material used in a "green manufacturing facility" that produces 100% compostable plates, bowls, and takeout containers. Bagasse, along with other plant-based products, serve as the fuel source for the largest agriculturally based biomass co-generation (electricity) plant in North America.

Equestrian acreage in Palm Beach County remains stable at roughly 8,800 acres, ranking as the second largest equine county in Florida, following Marion County. World-class equestrian competitions take place during the winter season, including international polo, dressage, and show jumping. A June 2023 analysis by the Palm Beach Sports Commission indicates that the 2023 Winter Equestrian Festival (a 12-week event in Wellington) contributed a \$352 million impact to the local County economy.

Manufacturing - Manufacturing plays an important role in the County's local economy. Medical and pharmaceutical goods, military and commercial aircraft, electronics, and other high-tech products are all manufactured in Palm Beach County. In 2022, the manufacturing industry employed 20,517 residents, with an average annual wage of \$84,581. Note that 2022 manufacturing wages increased by \$4,725 annually and overall jobs reported were up by 619, likely due to a



friendly regulatory and business environment that makes it easier to start and grow a business. Approximately 6,000 employees or 29% of all employees in manufacturing are employed by four companies (Florida Crystals Corporation, Pratt and Whitney, U.S. Sugar, and Cheney Brothers).

Life Science - Life Science industries incorporate various activities ranging from research and development to manufacturing of biotechnologies, and medical devices and pharmaceuticals to the environmental and biological sciences. 514 new jobs were created from 2021 to 2022 for a total of 4,351. The majority of the new jobs came from Pharmaceutical Preparation Manufacturing (108 jobs), Surgical and Medical Instrument Manufacturing (96 jobs), and Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (291 Jobs) industries. Dental Laboratories (895 jobs) and Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (1,080 jobs) were the top two employment industries within Life Science in 2022.

Financial and Professional Services - The County continues to be one of the wealthiest in the nation due to the prevalence of a number of high wage industries resulting from marketing efforts and increased migration of industries from high tax states. Several of the industries witnessed annual wage increases while others decreased from 2021 to 2022, including: Finance and Insurance \$187,120 (+\$3,499), Management of Companies and Enterprises \$182,912 (-\$17,244), Financial Activities \$142,651(+\$4,323), Utilities \$ 139,196 (+\$10,402), Information Services at \$105,317 (+\$2,194) and Wholesale Trade \$96,332(-\$ 4,524). Most of the annual average wages from the industries mentioned above are either higher or approximately the same amount as the State.

Workforce - The County's top industry groups (totaling approx. 100,000 jobs or more) are Trade/Transportation/Utilities with 127,600, Professional/Business Services with 126,200, Education/Health Services with 111,000, and Leisure/Hospitality with 98,700. Of the top four industry groups within the County, three experienced job growth, with Leisure/Hospitality growing the most with 9,200 new jobs from 2021 to 2022. Professional/Business Services is the only top industry with over 100,000 jobs to lose jobs, with a loss of 1,500 jobs during the same time frame. Jobs in two industry groups- Leisure/Hospitality, and Government grew faster in the County than statewide year over year. During the same time frame, there have been more job openings than unemployed people in Palm Beach County.

Sources used include: University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research; Palm Beach County, Tourist Development Council; Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; PBC Tax Collector; Electronic Planning, Zoning and Building (ePZB) permitting system; Palm Beach County, Cooperative Extension Service; Palm Beach County Sports Commission; USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service; Palm Beach County, Housing and Economic Development; Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; Career Source Palm Beach County

Unemployment Rate

The County's median household income is \$76,592. The County's labor force employed is estimated to be 781,270. As the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate increased from roughly 2.9 % in September 2022 to 3.3% in September 2023. Additionally, the rate in Palm Beach County is lower than the national rate and slightly higher than the state rate.

Sources used include: Census Reporter; Business Development Board of Palm Beach County; Career Source Palm Beach County

Property Taxes

Property taxes are a lien on all taxable property as of January 1st of each year. Taxes are due November 1st and are payable by April 1st of the following year. Each parcel of property is assessed to the last known owner as established from the latest recorded deed or tax return.

There are three types of property which are subject to an Ad Valorem tax (a tax based on the assessed value of real or personal property). The three types are:

- **Real Estate** covers land and the improvements thereon;
- **Tangible Personal Property** includes property such as fixtures, equipment, and machinery; and
- **Intangible Personal Property** includes stock, bonds (except those exempt), mortgages accounts receivable, mutual funds, notes, trusts, estates, etc. (State tax handled directly by the State of FL).



All property owners who maintain their permanent home on the property are entitled to a "Homestead Exemption" which exempts the first \$25,000 of assessed value of the property from Ad Valorem taxes. Effective January 1, 2008, a property with an assessed value of \$75,000 or more receives an additional \$25,000 exemption. Additional exemptions are also available to widows/widowers, disabled veterans, totally disabled non-veterans, senior citizens, and others. The November 8th, 2016 Elections passed additional exemptions for totally and permanently disabled first responders and a homestead tax exemption for certain senior, low income, long-term residents.

The BCC levies a countywide millage that applies to all property owners in the County on the net assessed value of property. Millage is the rate used to determine the amount of tax. A mill is one-tenth of a cent, or \$1.00 of tax for every \$1,000 of net assessed value. The FY 2024 Countywide rate is 4.5000 mills.

Palm Beach County Fire Rescue and the County Library are dependent districts under the control of the BCC. They levy millages that apply to all property owners in the unincorporated portion of the County and residents of the municipalities that have elected to join the districts rather than provide the services themselves. The municipalities also levy millages to finance their local government's operating costs.

In addition to the BCC and municipalities, various other taxing districts levy millages that affect all property owners in the County or property owners in the particular districts. Some other entities in the County that levy property taxes are drainage districts. These taxes are not based on the value of the property, but on the number of acres in the parcel. Each district assesses an "Acreage Levy", a fixed amount for each acre or part thereof, to cover the maintenance and debt of the drainage facilities in the district. Additionally, some districts assess a "Parcel Levy", a fixed amount per parcel, to cover the cost of road maintenance and debt within the district.

Fire Rescue Taxing Districts (MSTU)

Belle Glade	Lake Clarke Shores	Palm Springs
Cloud Lake	Lake Park	Royal Palm Beach
Glen Ridge	Lake Worth Beach	South Bay
Haverhill	Lantana	South Palm Beach
Juno Beach	Loxahatchee Groves	Wellington
Jupiter	Pahokee	Westlake

Serviced by Fire Rescue

Manalapan

Fire Rescue has an emergency service agreement with Martin and Broward County.

Dispatched by Fire Rescue Outside the Fire Rescue Taxing District

Atlantis	Highland Beach	Palm Beach Gardens
Delray Beach	Jupiter Inlet Colony	Palm Beach Shores
Greenacres	Mangonia Park	Riviera Beach
Gulf Stream	North Palm Beach	Tequesta
	West Palm Beach	

County Library Taxing Districts

Atlantis	Juno Beach	Palm Beach Gardens
Belle Glade	Jupiter	Palm Beach Shores
Briny Breezes	Jupiter Inlet Colony	Royal Palm Beach
Cloud Lake	Lake Clarke Shores	South Bay
Glen Ridge	Loxahatchee Groves	South Palm Beach
Greenacres	Mangonia Park	Tequesta
Haverhill	Ocean Ridge	Wellington
Hypoluxo	Pahokee	Westlake

Countywide Taxing Districts

<p>The School District of PBC 3300 Forest Hill Boulevard West Palm Beach, FL 33406 Telephone: (561) 434-8000</p>	<p>Health Care District 2601 10th Avenue North, Suite 100 Palm Springs, FL 33461 Telephphone: (561) 659-1270</p>
<p>Children's Services Council 2300 High Ridge Riad Boynton Beach, FL 33426 Telephone: (561) 740-7000</p>	<p>Florida Inland Navigation District 1314 Marcinski Road Jupiter, FL 33477 Telephone: (561) 627-3386</p>
<p>South Florida Water Management District Sotuh Water Management Basin Everglades Construction 3301 Gun Club Road West Palm Beach, FL 33406 Telephone: (561) 686-8800</p>	

Non-Countywide Taxing Districts

<p>Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District 21618 St. Andrews Boulevard Boca Raton, FL 33433 Telephone: (561) 417-4599</p>	
<p>Port of Palm Beach District 1 East 11th Street Suite 600 Riveiera Beach, FL 33404 Telephone: (561) 383-4100</p>	<p>Jupiter Inlet District 400 N. Dekaware Boulevard Jupiter, FL 33458 Telephone: (561) 746-2223</p>