

# THE GLADES REGION OF THE PALM BEACHES

Belle Glade • Pahokee • South Bay

## Opportunity. Access. Room to Grow.

Located in western Palm Beach County along the southeastern shore of Lake Okeechobee, the Glades Region offers what's increasingly hard to find in South Florida: available land, strong infrastructure, and a workforce built for modern industry — all within reach of the state's largest markets.



**BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT  
BOARD**

*Palm Beaches*



# STATS

With direct highway access to three coasts and a workforce pipeline drawing millions in investment, the Glades Region is where South Florida's next chapter has room to happen. Located in western Palm Beach County, FL along the southeastern shore of Lake Okeechobee, the Glades Region offers what's increasingly hard to find in South Florida: available land, strong infrastructure, and a workforce built for modern industry — all within reach of key markets.

- Belle Glade, FL — “Her Soil is Her Fortune”
- Pahokee, FL — “Grassy Waters” in Seminole  
Palm Beach County's Other Coast
- South Bay, FL — “The Crossroads of South Florida”

The region is the epicenter of South Florida's agricultural production — sugar cane and more than 30 varieties of vegetables across 500,000 acres — and home to a growing ecosystem of food processing, sugar refining, manufacturing, and distribution operations. With 1,300 businesses and a population of 36,000, the Glades is where companies come to scale.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### **1,300 BUSINESSES**

Operating in the Region

### **36,000 POPULATION**

Across Belle Glade, Pahokee & South Bay

### **500,000 ACRES**

of Agricultural Land Harvested Annually

### **LESS THAN 2 HOURS**

To Three International Airports and Seaports

### **REACH 75% OF THE STATE'S POPULATION**

in a 100-Mile Radius

### **A-RATED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

10th Largest in the Nation

### **2ND LARGEST FRESHWATER LAKE IN THE NATION**

Lake Okeechobee is the 2nd largest in the continental U.S. and largest in Southeastern U.S.

# WHY THE GLADES REGION

## Connected to Everything. Room to Build Anything.

The Glades sits dead center in South Florida's road network — close enough to hit every major market, far enough to skip the coastal gridlock and the coastal price tag. You get the reach of the coast without paying the coastal tax in traffic, time, or rent.

### On the Road:

- Three highways, zero bottlenecks. U.S. 27, U.S. 441, and State Road 80 put your freight on the move fast — with U.S. 27 running north-south as the toll-free alternative to I-95 and the Turnpike. Skip the jam. Skip the tolls.
- The state is already investing in your supply chain. U.S. 27 and SR 80 are part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) — the priority network that gets dedicated state planning and infrastructure dollars to drive economic growth.
- Coast to coast, no I-95 required. Reach both of Florida's shores, Atlantic to Gulf, on open road.



- A workforce that can get to work. Palm Tran links all three communities to Palm Beach County's transit network — so your talent has an easy commute to work.

## By Air:

- Palm Beach International, Miami International, and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport — all within two hours
- Two local airports provide direct regional access: Palm Beach County Glades Airport in Pahokee (general aviation, recreational, and sport flying) and Belle Glade State Municipal Airport (single-runway, corporate jet capable)

## By Rail:

- Served by Florida East Coast Railway and South Central Florida Express, with connections to CSX and Norfolk Southern for freight access throughout the United States and Canada

## By Sea:

- Port of Palm Beach, PortMiami, and Port Everglades — all accessible within two hours
- Fact: The Port of Palm Beach is the only one with direct rail to port access in the Glades Region.

This is a location where a distribution truck reaches three major metros in under two hours, a freight train connects to the national rail network, and a site selector finds land that's actually available.



# BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

## Room to Build. Every Reason to Stay.

Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay aren't just open for business — they're organized around it. Local leadership, state incentives, and workforce partnerships move in lockstep, so companies skip the red tape and get straight to work.

And this is proven ground, not a pitch. The region is anchored by heavyweights — U.S. Sugar, Florida Crystals, and FINFROCK — running four active sugar mills, two refineries, and a fast-growing base of advanced manufacturers. The Glades doesn't just grow America's food. It refines it, builds with it, and ships it to the world.

### What companies find here:

- Available commercial and industrial land at a fraction of coastal pricing
- Workforce training programs purpose-built for employer needs
- State and local economic development incentives
- A local government culture that treats business growth as a shared priority

### Sectors in the Region:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Agribusiness
- Aviation and Engineering
- Construction and skilled trades
- Distribution and Logistics
- Food Processing
- Healthcare and professional services
- Renewable Energy and Cleantech
- Biofuels

### Special Incentives and Access to Capital

As a state-designated Rural Area of Opportunity, most companies in the Glades Region are eligible for enhanced State of Florida and Palm Beach County incentives, grants, and low-cost loan programs. Additionally, the Business Development Board of the Palm Beaches evaluates the potential for SBA 7A and 504 loans, USDA Rural Development grants and loan programs, New Market Tax Credits, Qualified Opportunity Zone investments, venture capital, angel funding, industrial revenue bonds, and other financing mechanisms. Ad valorem tax exemption — renewed by Palm Beach County voters in 2024 and active through 2034 — is available for new and expanding companies.



## Business Advantages

- **Rural Areas of Opportunity.** The cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay are designated by the state as Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO). This designation allows for enhanced incentives and authorized waivers of criteria among the following programs: Quick Response Training Program, Rural Job Tax Credit Program, Florida Job Growth Grant Fund, transportation projects, and brownfield redevelopment bonus refund.
- **Qualified Opportunity Zone.** Belle Glade is located within a federally designated Qualified Opportunity Zone, offering investors tax deferral benefits on capital gains through 2028. Under the Opportunity Zones 2.0 framework launching January 1, 2027, rural zones like the Glades will receive enhanced benefits, including a 30% basis step-up for investments held at least five years — one of the strongest rural investment incentives in the federal tax code.
- **Employer Training Incentives.** Employer-based incentive programs, administered by CareerSource Palm Beach County and CareerSource Florida are available. These programs are enacted and modified by laws at the federal, state, and local levels and can change at any time. On-the-Job Training provides employers financial assistance for training new employees in the skills they need to effectively perform their jobs. A portion of a new employee's wages may be reimbursed to the employer during the training period. Incumbent Worker Training provides reimbursement grant funding for training current employees of existing for-profit businesses to provide them with additional skills and opportunities for advancement. Companies benefit through increased productivity and employee retention, leading to the ability to compete more effectively in the global marketplace. Quick Response Training provides reimbursement grant funding for customized training for new or expanding businesses. The program is structured to be flexible and respond quickly to meet a business's training objectives
- **Rural Job Tax Credit.** Eligible businesses in the Glades Region can receive tax credits of \$1,000 to \$1,500 per qualified new job created. Credits can be applied against either the Florida Corporate Income Tax or the Florida Sales and Use Tax.

To receive a thorough review of city, county, and state incentives, please contact the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County at 561.835.1008.

# WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

## A Workforce Built for What's Next

The Glades Region isn't waiting for talent — it's building it. From Pre-K through postsecondary, the area's education ecosystem is deliberately designed to produce graduates with the credentials, technical skills, and real-world experience that advanced industries need now.

## School District of Palm Beach County

The 10th largest school district in the nation — and rated A. Palm Beach County's public schools aren't just educating students. They're building a workforce.

### • Career-Ready Academies:

Glades Central High School and Pahokee Middle-Senior High School offer dedicated academies in Engineering and Medical Science, giving students foundational skills aligned to the region's fastest-growing sectors.

### • Academic Rigor, Real Credentials:

Pahokee Elementary and Pahokee Middle-Senior High School are recognized International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools, cultivating critical thinking and global inquiry from an early age. Across the district, high student participation in Dual Enrollment and advanced academic tracks (AICE, AP, IB) means graduates leave with college credits and job-specific certifications — not just diplomas.

### • STEM From the Start:

Pahokee Middle-Senior High School's nationally recognized Robotics program has sent students to the University of Washington to collaborate with researchers on advancements in medicine. That commitment to STEM reaches into elementary and middle schools, where dedicated Robotics and Engineering Clubs are building the next generation of innovators from the ground up.

### • Character & Leadership:

Programs like Criminal Justice, Civil Air Patrol, and AVID develop discipline, ethics, and leadership in young professionals preparing to enter the workforce. Gove Elementary School's Spanish Dual Language program is preparing students to compete and connect as bilingual members of an international economy.



Palm Beach State College's welding program



Palm Beach State College, Belle Glade campus

## West Technical Education Center

Located in Belle Glade, West Tech is Palm Beach County's workforce engine — serving both high school students and adult learners from a nine-building campus. It houses the H.E. Hill Construction Academy and the Mechatronics Academy, and offers adult career training in healthcare (Medical Assisting, Phlebotomy, EKG Technician), skilled trades (carpentry, electrical, welding, HVAC, plumbing), commercial driving, and material handling. West Tech is one of only two public adult training centers in Florida accredited by the Council on Occupational Education, and the only public facility in Palm Beach County certified to administer commercial driver's license skills examinations. Programs continue to expand, with an Electronic Systems Technician track. Graduates leave with industry-recognized credentials and a direct path into the workforce, post-secondary education, or the military.

## Glades Day School

Glades Day School is a fully accredited Pre-K-3 through 12th-grade independent school set on a 30-acre campus in western Palm Beach County. Founded in 1965, the school ranks in the top 20% of Florida private schools, with an 8-to-1 student-teacher ratio and a 100% college attendance rate among graduates. Academics include Honors, Advanced Placement, and Dual Enrollment tracks. The Gators' athletic programs have produced seven state football championships, and the school's size allows every student to be known, challenged, and prepared — for college and for life.

## Palm Beach State College — Belle Glade Campus

Florida's first public college — founded in 1933 and now offering more than 170 programs across five campuses — has a strong presence in the Glades. The Belle Glade campus is in the middle of a major expansion: a nearly \$4 million state investment is transforming it into a digital and workforce hub for the region, with upgraded computer labs, telehealth facilities, a career center in partnership with CareerSource Palm Beach County, and an expanded Pearson VUE Testing & Certification Center including local industry credential exams in fields like nursing, real estate, automotive service, and law enforcement. It also has a new Low Voltage program in development.

Career certificate enrollment at the Belle Glade campus grew 57% this year, with programs in welding, diesel technology, and other high-demand trades placing graduates directly into local jobs — including with employers like Everglades Farm Equipment Group and through partnerships with U.S. Sugar.



Musical rehearsal – Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center, Belle Glade



Lake Okeechobee

# QUALITY OF LIFE

## Lake Okeechobee at Your Doorstep.

**The Palm Beaches Within Reach.** The Glades Region offers something rare in South Florida: a pace of life that lets you breathe — without being far from everything a major metro offers. Employees relocating here find affordable housing, outdoor recreation that rivals anywhere in the state, and a tight-knit community culture with deep roots.

**On the Water.** The region sits directly on the shore of Lake Okeechobee — Florida’s largest freshwater lake and the Bass Fishing Capital of America. With 730 square miles of open water, it’s a year-round destination for bass fishing, boating, kayaking, jet skiing, and airboat tours. Pahokee Marina & Campground and Torry Island Campground put residents directly on the lake.

**On the Trail.** The 109-mile Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail — part of the Florida National Scenic Trail — runs atop the Herbert Hoover Dike and is open year-round for hiking, biking, horseback riding, birdwatching, and photography. Panoramic lake views from 35 feet up make it one of the most unique trail experiences in the state.

**On the Green.** The Belle Glade Golf Club is the only course in Florida situated directly on the shores of Lake Okeechobee — an 18-hole experience unlike anything on the coast.

**Culture & Community.** The 467-seat Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center, located on Palm Beach State College’s Belle Glade campus, hosts concerts, theater, dance, and community events year-round. The Lawrence E. Will Museum preserves the region’s rich agricultural and cultural heritage. And annual traditions like the Black Gold Jubilee bring the entire Glades community together to celebrate the harvest season.

**Football Is Religion.** The Glades is “Muck City” — home to one of the most storied high school football cultures in the country. Glades Central, Pahokee, and Glades Day have combined for 19 state championships and produced more than 75 NFL players, including Santonio Holmes, Fred Taylor, Anquan Boldin, and Kelvin Benjamin. Friday nights here draw thousands, and the annual Muck Bowl is one of the most anticipated rivalry games in the nation.

**Proximity to the Palm Beaches.** The Glades Region is just 38 miles from the Palm Beaches and Florida’s Atlantic coast — giving residents easy access to world-class dining, shopping, beaches, and cultural institutions while enjoying a lower cost of living and a community-centered lifestyle at home. Drive into Pahokee and seven miles of towering royal palm trees remind you this is Old Florida at its best.

**Rooted in Culture** **Canal Point** became an important transportation gateway after the West Palm Beach Canal opened in 1917, connecting Glades farmers to eastern rail lines and national markets. Today, the historic community includes Canal Point Park and Community Center near the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail.

**Rodeo Las Palmas** celebrates the region’s agricultural heritage through bull riding, live music and community events. The open-air venue draws thousands of attendees for concerts, dancing and family gatherings.

# SUCCESS STORIES

## FINFROCK: \$36 Million Bet on the Glades

When FINFROCK — one of Central Florida's largest design-build manufacturers — searched South Florida for its next expansion site, the company chose Belle Glade. The result: a \$36 million investment in a 140,000-square-foot precast concrete manufacturing facility on 94 acres at Glades Gateway Commerce Park, with a commitment to create more than 200 jobs over the next decade.

FINFROCK's decision wasn't just about land availability — it was about the full package: proximity to developers across Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Southwest Florida; workforce partnerships and access to local talent; career fairs with CareerSource Palm Beach County and talent pipelines with Palm Beach State College; and an economic development partner — the Business Development Board — that moved fast to make the deal happen.

## THAT'S THE GLADES MODEL: INVEST HERE, GROW HERE, HIRE HERE.

### Everglades Equipment Group: From Belle Glade to One of the World's Largest

What started as a family farming operation on Lake Okeechobee in the early 1900s became a John Deere dealership in 1963 — and today, Everglades Equipment Group is one of the largest John Deere dealers in the world. Still family owned and operated from its original Belle Glade roots, the company now serves farmers, contractors, landscapers, and property owners from 19 locations across Florida.

### Florida Crystals: 190,000 Acres of Innovation

Florida Crystals Corporation is a family-owned, fully integrated sugarcane company farming 190,000 acres in South Florida — including the only certified organic sugarcane operation grown and milled in the United States and the country's largest Regenerative Organic Certified farm. With 2,000 employees, two sugar mills, a sugar refinery, a rice mill, and North America's largest biomass renewable power plant, Florida Crystals combines agricultural scale with sustainable innovation. Named to Newsweek's America's Greatest Workplaces 2024 list.

### TKM Bengard Farms: The Largest Lettuce Grower East of the Mississippi

TKM Bengard Farms, a multi-generational family operation in Belle Glade, cultivates over 8,000 acres of lettuce, leafy greens, and sweet corn. As the largest lettuce grower east of the Mississippi, TKM supplies major processors, retailers, supermarkets, schools, and restaurants across the country from its 70,000-square-foot packing house — delivering fresh produce with rigorous food safety standards and advanced tracking technology.

# CLN of South Florida: Precision Manufacturing, Rooted in Belle Glade

CLN of South Florida is a family-owned manufacturer of high-precision CNC machines for sign-making, metal fabrication, and industrial applications — operating from Belle Glade for nearly 30 years. The company sources almost all raw materials from Florida-based suppliers and partners with local technical schools to train the next generation of skilled workers. Recognized as a GrowFL Florida Companies to Watch honoree, CLN is scaling with plans for continued growth from its Glades headquarters.

## COMPANIES IN THE GLADES REGION:

- Alderman Farms

American Sugar Refining  
(ASR Group)

Cemex

CLN of South Florida

Duda Farm Fresh Foods

Erickson Farms

Everglades Equipment Group

Everglades Research  
& Education Center (UF/IFAS)

FINFROCK

Florida Crystals

Glade & Grove Supply Co Inc

Grower’s Management

Hundley Farms

JEM Farms Inc

Kennedy Farms

King Ranch

Lakeside Medical Center
- McNeill Labor Management

Okeelanta Corporation

Orsenigo Farms

Pioneer Growers Cooperative

Pope Farms Inc

R.C. Hatton Farms

Roth Farms

SM Jones & Co

Star Ranch Enterprises Inc

Stewart Stein Farms

Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative  
of Florida

Sugar & Spice

Tellus Products

TKM Bengard Farms

U.S. Sugar

Wedgworth Farms

Wilkinson-Cooper Produce



Everglades Equipment Group in Belle Glade, FL - Photo Credit Jack Fistick

# DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

## Sites Ready for Your Vision

The Glades Region offers development-ready commercial and industrial properties with the space, zoning, and infrastructure to support operations at scale. Whether you need 5 acres or 50, these sites are positioned along high-visibility corridors with direct highway access and proximity to South Florida's major metros.

As a state-designated priority rural area, businesses in the Glades Region are eligible for enhanced state and local incentives — including grants, tax exemptions, and low-cost financing — designed to accelerate investment in the community.

For a confidential review of available sites, contact the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County.

## Available Economic Development Sites:

### **South Bay Park of Commerce - South Bay, FL**

Lot Size: 88 Acres

### **U.S. Highway 27 - South Bay, FL**

Lot Size: 75 Acres

### **1000 U.S. Highway 27 - South Bay, FL**

Lot Size: 70 Acres

### **County Rd 827A, Belle Glade, FL 33430**

Lot Size: 69.59 Acres

Located in unincorporated PBC

### **2444 State Road 15, Belle Glade, FL 33430**

Lot Size: 47.13 Acres

### **1201 S Main Street, Belle Glade, FL 33430**

Lot Size: 14.64 Acres; Total Square Feet: 92,095

Former General Hospital Campus

### **470 US Hwy 27 N, South Bay, FL 33493**

Lot Size: 14 Acres

### **County Rd 80, Belle Glade, FL 33430**

Lot Size: 11.62 Acres

Located in unincorporated PBC

### **2000 S Main St, Belle Glade, FL 33430**

Lot Size: 10.79 Acres

Palm Beach County Owned

### **1977 College Dr., Belle Glade, FL 33430**

Lot Size: 5 - 10 Acres

Owned by Palm Beach State College

# YOUR PARTNER IN GROWTH

## Business Development Board of the Palm Beaches

Whether you're exploring the Glades Region for the first time or ready to break ground, the Business Development Board is your single point of contact — at no cost and in full confidence.

Established in 1982, the Business Development Board is the official public-private economic development organization for Palm Beach County and the state of Florida, serving all 39 municipalities. Over the past five years, it has supported 135 companies, helping create or retain more than 11,600 direct jobs with average salaries exceeding \$80,000 — driving over \$1 billion in capital investment into the county.

## What We Provide — Complimentary and Confidential

- **Site selection** — confidential inventory of available land, buildings, and office space
- **Guided site tours** — led personally by our Business Relocation & Expansion team
- **Incentives** — state, county, and municipal grants, tax incentives, and financial assistance
- **Workforce training** — connections through CareerSource Palm Beach County
- **Key introductions** — elected officials, business leaders, and industry partners
- **Education concierge** — tours and introductions to public, private, and higher-ed institutions
- **Permitting & zoning** — expedited assistance
- **Research** — demographics, labor-market data, and custom analysis
- **Relocation support** — cost-of-living data and vetted referrals for families
- **Professional connections** — banking, legal, and other professional service providers

## Our partners include:

FloridaCommerce, SelectFlorida, Palm Beach County, CareerSource PBC, the Economic Council, municipal leaders, local chambers, academic institutions, and 350 private-sector leaders.

**OPPORTUNITY.  
ACCESS.  
ROOM TO GROW.**

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Business Development  
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**FLORIDACOMMERCE**

CLADES REGION