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Ag Reserve

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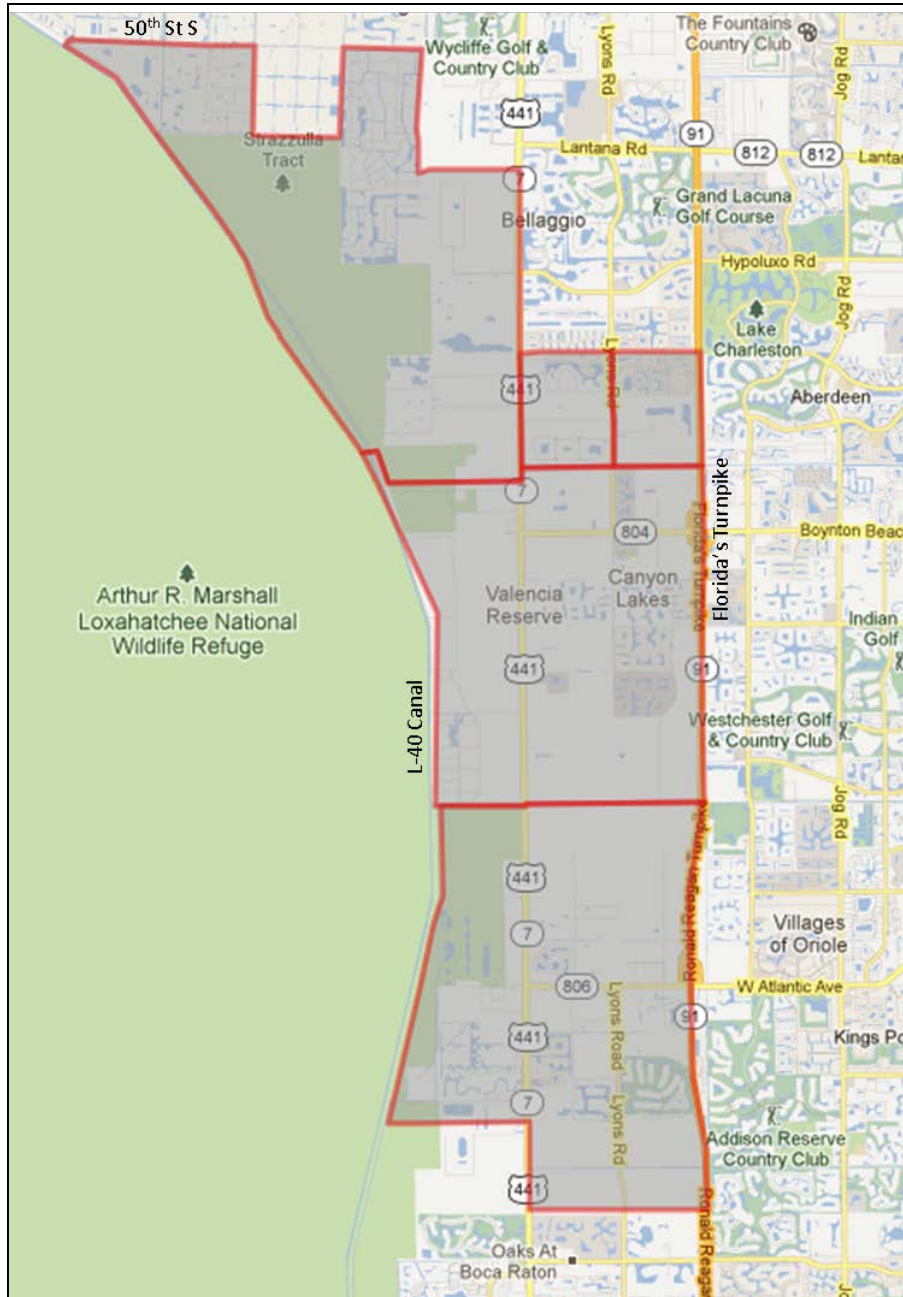
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Community Background Report

Ag Reserve



Note: The Ag Reserve consists of five Census Block Groups based on the 2010 US Census.¹ The Census Block Groups are identified in the Demographic section of this report.

Boundaries

North: 50th Street S

South: No distinguishable street or landmark

East: Florida's Turnpike

West: Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and L-40 Canal

Community Type:

The Ag Reserve study area is an unincorporated region of Palm Beach County that is primarily agricultural. The area has large agricultural operations, family-owned farms, and equestrian-related uses, as well as environmental reserve areas. A small portion of the of the Village of Wellington is located in the north western area of the Ag Reserve. ²

The boundaries of the **Ag Reserve study area** (as it is referred to throughout the report) have been established by the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in order to facilitate transportation outreach planning. These boundaries have not been officially designated by the County.

History

This section provides a general history of the Ag Reserve study area, as well as its surrounding communities. The details provided are not specific to the defined study area, unless otherwise specified.

The Ag Reserve study area and its surrounding areas have a long history. The first known occupants of these lands were the Jeaga Indians, who constructed the Boynton Mound Complex. This site dates back to 750 AD.³ In the early part of the 1900s, the Ag Reserve and the surrounding lands became known for agriculture. This was possible due to the creation of the Lake Worth Drainage District in 1915. By 1952, the area between Southern Boulevard and Hillsboro Canal, along State Road (SR) 7, had approximately 200 vegetable farms, 30 dairy farms, and 35 ranches with nearly 30,000 head of cattle.⁴ In last 50 years, the land in the land in the general area of the Ag Reserve study area has been used to grow citrus and more than 80 varieties of vegetables and 12 varieties of fruits.⁵

By the 1970s and 1980s, however, the impact of development in the agricultural areas was becoming evident. In an effort to protect and preserve the County's agricultural land, the Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan was amended in 1980 to create an Agricultural Reserve.⁶ It is important to note at this point that the boundaries of the Ag Reserve study area identified in this report differ from the official **Agricultural Reserve area** designated by the **Board of County Commissioners (BCC)** in the Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan. The Ag Reserve study area discussed in this report includes most of the land in the designated

Agricultural Reserve, plus areas to the north, including the national cemetery west of SR 7 and the residential area containing Venetian Isles and Verona Lakes. (To view the Palm Beach County Agricultural Reserve Tier Map, visit: http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/pzb/Maps/property_development.htm)

The designation of the Agricultural Reserve (as it will be referred to henceforth) has been one of the most significant policies to affect growth and development in the Ag Reserve study area and the surrounding lands. The 1980 Comprehensive Plan Agricultural Reserve designation set the density at one unit per five acres to prevent premature development. It also established provisions for a **transfer of development rights (TDR)** program. A TDR program is a market-based approach for preserving land. This program allows landowners to sever development rights from properties in government-designated preservation areas (**sending areas**), and sell these rights to purchasers who want to increase the allowable residential density on properties in areas that the County has selected for higher densities (**receiving areas**). The Agricultural Reserve area was designated by the TDR provisions as a sending area for development rights at a rate of 0.8 units per acre. In addition, an option was provided allowing densities up to one unit per acre on properties with at least 40 acres if the units were clustered to preserve the remaining land for agriculture.⁷

The boundaries of the designated Agricultural Reserve were revised with the adoption of the 1989 Comprehensive Plan. More than 5,000 acres were removed from the designated Agricultural Reserve, reflecting development approvals through the 1980s. The remaining lands were designated as an area to be primarily preserved for agriculture or developed at a very low density. A study of the designated Agricultural Reserve was called for, with a moratorium placed on new non-agricultural development pending completion of the study. In response to concerns of property owners, however, the moratorium was lifted in 1995 and the Comprehensive Plan was amended to create an alternative clustered option. The TDR program was revised to increase the transfer rate to one unit per acre. The County also created a program for the **Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE)**, in which the County would purchase the development rights of a property, with the original landowner retaining ownership. The goal was for farm land protection and agricultural perpetuation.⁸

In July 1998, The Board of County Commissioners directed development of a Master Plan for the Agricultural Reserve. The purpose was “*To preserve and enhance agricultural activity and environmental and water resources in the [Agricultural] Reserve, and produce a master development plan compatible with these goals.*”⁹ The Master Plan was completed in 1999 by the County, following an extensive study by a consultant and input from stakeholders. During the same year, the County adopted the **Managed Growth Tier System (MGTS)**, which changed the Agricultural Reserve Overlay to one of the five tiers in the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Agricultural Reserve Master Plan was incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan in 2001, via Ordinance 2001-61.¹⁰

Since the adoption of MGTS, the Agricultural Reserve has experienced several unanticipated development approvals which have increased the development of units anticipated in the area by approximately 1,300 units. The land available for agriculture has been further reduced by the

designation of additional land to the South Florida Water Management District for preservation areas.¹¹ Finally, the approval of the Bethesda West Community Hospital in the Agricultural Reserve “has resulted in significant development pressure to develop properties proximate to the Hospital with commercial medical office development.”¹² All for these pressures have called for ongoing review over the years of the policies related to the Agricultural Reserve and have affected growth and development in the Ag Reserve study area.

Community Dynamics

The Ag Reserve study area is part of Palm Beach County’s main agricultural area. The land is mainly used for agricultural uses by large farming operations, as well as family owned farms. The area also serves as a buffer between urban development and environmentally sensitive lands. Though there is a strong effort to preserve the agricultural industry and protect the natural areas, there are constant pressures from growth and development in this community. The households living in the Ag Reserve study area tend to be well-educated and have a higher income than Palm Beach County as a whole; however, there are small pockets of poverty in the area. Foreign nationals include persons from Mexico, Germany, Haiti, and Guatemala. Since some of these residents do not speak English, outreach efforts should account for possible language barriers. (See the Demographic section for more information.)

The Ag Reserve study area is covered by three of the five tiers that Palm Beach County uses to manage growth: the Agricultural Reserve Tier; the Rural Tier; and the Urban/Suburban Tier.¹³ (To view the Palm Beach County Managed Growth Tier Map, visit: http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/pzb/Maps/property_development.htm)

The **Agricultural Reserve Tier** covers the majority of the Ag Reserve area. This Tier serves as a buffer between the suburbs and Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The area includes lands critical to Everglades restoration, such as the East Coast Buffer and the future site of the potential Agricultural Reserve Reservoir. Both Palm Beach County and the South Florida Water Management District have purchased lands in the area to protect environmental and water resources, especially in areas adjacent to the wildlife refuge, such as the Strazzulla Tract (a 3,335-acre wetland buffer that protects the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge from farming and residential areas).¹⁴ This area, which contains sandy soils, is a significant source of winter vegetables and nursery plants. The objective is to enhance agricultural, environmental and water resources while accommodating some of the County’s growth pressure. The County also seeks to promote agriculture and open space by relaxing standards to facilitate farming activities and allowing uses such as packing plants and food processing facilities.¹⁵ The levels of service for properties in this area are classified as limited urban. Thus, a developed property in this tier could be served by a well or a centralized potable water and by onsite disposal or by centralized sanitary sewer system.¹⁶ The development patterns show that the clustered residential developments are generally located east of SR 7 and the agricultural lands are primarily located to the west. The clustered residential developments that are east of SR 7 include Equus, Valencia

Reserve, Canyon Lakes, Canyon Isles, Canyon Trails, and Saturnia Isles. Other significant landmarks include the Willis Gliderport, and the Strazzulla Tract.

The Rural Tier covers the northwestern corner of the Ag Reserve area, which includes the 313-acre South Florida National Cemetery operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on the west side of SR 7 and north of Hypoluxo Road.¹⁷ The Rural Tier includes agricultural land and rural settlements that range in density from 1 dwelling unit (DU) per 5 acres to 1 DU per 20 acres. These areas support large agricultural operations as well as family-owned farms, including equestrian-related uses. Due to the declining availability of land and the increase in population in the Urban and Exurban Tiers, the Rural Tier is beginning to experience pressures for residential densities and nonresidential intensities that are normally associated with a more urbanized area. A rural level of service occurs in this tier, meaning that public water and sewer is not provided. Residents must use wells and septic tanks. The focus is to protect and enhance rural communities that support agricultural and equestrian uses.¹⁸

The **Urban/Suburban Tier** is located in the northeastern corner of the Ag Reserve and makes up the smallest portion of the area. It includes residential developments such as Verona Lakes and Venetian Isles. The Urban/Suburban Tier's main objective is to manage growth through the creation of communities that will accommodate the county's residents. While existing regulations allow low density, automobile-oriented suburban neighborhoods, this tier also promotes infill development and strengthens provisions to promote traditional mixed-use, compact and pedestrian friendly communities. Properties in this tier are located inside the Urban Service Area of Palm Beach County, which requires all public services including centralized public water distribution and centralized sewerage collection and disposal systems.¹⁹

Public facilities located in the Ag Reserve include Sunset Palms Elementary School at 8650 Boynton Beach Boulevard, the West Atlantic Branch Library, and West Delray Regional Park. Future parks planned for the area include Indian Mounds Regional Park and Canyon District Park. The visitor center for the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Center is situated on Lee Road in the Ag Reserve. The 221 square-mile wildlife refuge, the most northern remnant of the historic Everglades, offers such recreational services as hunting, fishing, hiking, boating and birding.

Demographic Highlights

The demographic data that follows was compiled using Census Block Group data. The Ag Reserve study area is made up of the five 2010 Census Block Groups listed below. Census Block Groups consist of several census blocks and generally have a population of 600 to 3,000 people.

120990077131 120990077132 120990077531 120990077561 120990077562

*According to the 2010 US Census, the Ag Reserve has a population of 17,280 people.*²⁰

The Ag Reserve population is primarily white, with Blacks and Asians making up the next largest segments of the population. In 2010, whites made up the largest segment of the population at 82.72%, followed by Blacks and Asians, with 7.85% and 4.79% of the population respectively.²¹

The Ag Reserve population has a younger population than Palm Beach County. In 2010, adults ages 65 and over represented 15.22% of the population in the Ag Reserve. In Palm Beach County adults 65 and over made up 21.6% of the population.²²

The level of educational attainment in the Ag Reserve is higher than in Palm Beach County. Approximately 75.5% of the area’s residents had some college education, a college degree or graduate degree, compared to 60.1% for Palm Beach County as a whole.²³

Education	Study Area	%	County	%
With a Degree or Some College				
Doctorate	141	1.7	11,103	1.2
Professional	415	5.0	28,863	3.1
Master	1,045	12.7	68,815	7.4
Bachelor	2,285	27.8	186,552	20.1
Associates	921	11.2	73,088	7.9
Some College	1,401	17.0	190,510	20.5
	6,208	75.5	558,931	60.1
High School or Less				
High School	1,585	19.3	248,302	26.7
Below High School	433	5.3	122,361	13.2
	2,018	24.5	370,663	39.9
Total	8,226	100	929,594	100

The average income per capita in the Ag Reserve is higher than the average per capita income for Palm Beach County as a whole. The average per capita in the Ag Reserve is \$48,128, compared to \$33,610 for the county.²⁴

The percent of people living in poverty in the Ag Reserve is substantially lower than in the County as a whole, at 6.65% compared to 16.48% respectively.²⁵

The Ag Reserve has a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied units than Palm Beach County. Approximately 79.33% of the total housing units in the Ag Reserve are owner-occupied and 7.93% are renter-occupied. In Palm Beach County, 58.46% of the occupied housing units are owner-occupied and 23.43% are renter-occupied.²⁶

Approximately 15.32% of the Ag Reserve residents identified themselves as Hispanic, compared to 19% in Palm Beach County as a whole.²⁷

Place of Birth, Nationality, and Language Spoken at Home

The place of birth, nationality and language data presented below are reported at the Census Tract level instead of at the Block Group level since the 2010 US Census does not have such information available by Census Block Groups. Though the Census Tracts represent a larger area than the study area, the data provides valuable information on the social characteristics of the population living in and around the Ag Reserve.

Census Tracts are subdivided into Block Groups and have a population of 1,500 to 8,000 people. They are created to be fairly homogeneous with respect to social and economic characteristics. The Ag Reserve study area is located within the following three Census Tracts: 12099007713; 12099007753; 12099007756. The data reported below are for these Census Tracts.

Place of Birth ²⁸

Born in Florida	5,798	29%
Born in Different State	11,366	56%
Born in Puerto Rico or abroad to American parent(s)	260	1%
Foreign Born	2,741	14%
Total population	20,165	100%

Foreign Born Population: Top Ten Places of Birth ²⁹

Mexico	661	24%
Germany	206	8%
Haiti	175	6%
Guatemala	137	5%
Colombia	125	5%
United Kingdom (Including Crown Dependencies):	109	4%
Vietnam	103	4%
Iran	82	3%
Brazil	81	3%
Israel	80	3%

Language Spoken at Home ³⁰

Language	Population 5 Years and Over	%	Speak English Less Than Very Well	%
English only	14,841	80%	0	--
Language other than English				
Spanish	2,199	12%	1,177	66%
Other Indo-European languages	1,124	6%	316	18%

Language	Population 5 Years and Over	%	Speak English Less Than Very Well	%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	243	1%	109	6%
Other languages	230	1%	172	10%
Population 5 years and over	18,637	100%	1,774	100%

Transportation Trends

The figures below provide key transportation indicators for the Ag Reserve region derived from Census Block Group data:³¹

Housing units with vehicles available:

Ag Reserve	4,141 (98.83%)
Palm Beach County	490,820 (93.82%)

Mean (Average) Vehicles per households:

Ag Reserve	1.42
Palm Beach County	1.54

Means of Transportation to work:

	Ag Reserve	Palm Beach County
Carpool	5.81%	11.15%
Drive Alone	78.05%	78.66%
Public Transport	0.28%	1.55%
Motorcycle	0.34%	0.27%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.59%
Walking	1.39%	1.69%
Other	2.9%	1.16%
Work at Home	11.23%	4.92%

Special Events

The visitor center at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge sponsors two special events in the Ag Reserve study area. The Non-Native Pet Amnesty Day is held in January. This event is intended to give owners of exotic pets an opportunity to give others a chance to adopt their pets. The Annual Everglades Festival, which is held in February, includes wildlife demonstrations, games, conservation exhibits, music and entertainment.³²

Business Landscape

The largest employer with operations located within the Ag Reserve study area is The School District of Palm Beach County.³³ A mixture of agriculture-related businesses are located along SR 7 and Boynton Boulevard including the following packing houses: Yee Farms, Alderman Farms, Whitworth Farms, Pero Family farms and Crossroad of Boynton.³⁴ The West Bethesda Memorial hospital is under construction at the northeast corner of Boynton Boulevard and SR 7 and is expected to have 80 beds and approximately 300 employees when it opens in 2013.³⁵ In addition, the Agricultural Reserve study area contains one shopping center, the Canyon Town Center.

Additional Resources

- **Agricultural Reserve Master Plan** by the Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning, and Building Department Planning Division and the South Florida Water Management District: http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/pzb/planning/ag_reserve/ag_reserve.htm
- **Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan** by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District: <http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/projects/proj-39-strazzula.aspx>
- **Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan** by the Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning, and Building Department Planning Division: <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/pzb/planning/comprehensiveplan/tableofcontent.htm>
- **SR 7 Transit Supportive Land Use and Urban Design Study** by Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council in cooperation with the Palm Beach County MPO: http://www.tcrpc.org/departments/studio/sr7_transit_supportive_land_uses/sr7_transit_supportive_land_uses_home.htm

Sources

¹ The Ag Reserve study area represented in this report consists of five 2010 Census Block Groups: 120990077131; 120990077132; 120990077531; 120990077561; 120990077562.

² Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Agricultural Reserve Master Plan*. P 4-10. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/pzb/planning/publications/Ag-Reserve-Master-Plan-1.pdf>

³ Palm Beach County History Online. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/archeology-in-palm-beach-county-a-sampler>

⁴ Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. *SR 7 Transit Supportive Land Use and Urban Design Study*. P. 3 Retrieved August 2012 from http://www.tcrpc.org/departments/studio/sr7_transit_supportive_land_uses/09_15_11

⁵ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Agricultural Reserve Master Plan*. P 4-10. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us./pzb/planning/publications/Ag-Reserve-Master-Plan-1.pdf>

⁶ Ag Reserve Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners Workshop: Exhibit 1. *Ag Reserve Policy Background*. January 17, 2012. Retrieved October 2012 from www.pbcgov.com/pzb/Planning/ARG_workshop/Exhibits.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Agricultural Reserve Master Plan*. P 4-10. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us./pzb/planning/publications/Ag-Reserve-Master-Plan-1.pdf>.

¹⁰ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Comprehensive Plan Amendment Staff Report Amendment Round 12-1*. P 4. Retrieved October 2012 from http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/planning/luab/2012/jan/12-1_AGR_WorkshopRpt_PackingPlant.pdf

¹¹ Ag Reserve Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners Workshop: Exhibit 1. *Ag Reserve Policy Background*. January 17, 2012. Retrieved October 2012 from www.pbcgov.com/pzb/Planning/ARG_workshop/Exhibits.pdf

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Element*. Map LU.1 Managed Growth Tier System. Retrieved on July 2012 from <http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/planning/comprehensiveplan>

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¹⁷ US Department of Veterans Affairs. Retrieved October 2012 from <http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/southflorida.asp>

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- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ US Census Bureau. 2006-2010 American Community Survey. Retrieved July 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
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- ³⁴ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Comprehensive Plan Amendment Staff Report Amendment Round 12-1*. P 5. Retrieved October 2012, from http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/planning/luab/2012/jan/12-1_AGR_WorkshopRpt_PackingPlant.pdf
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