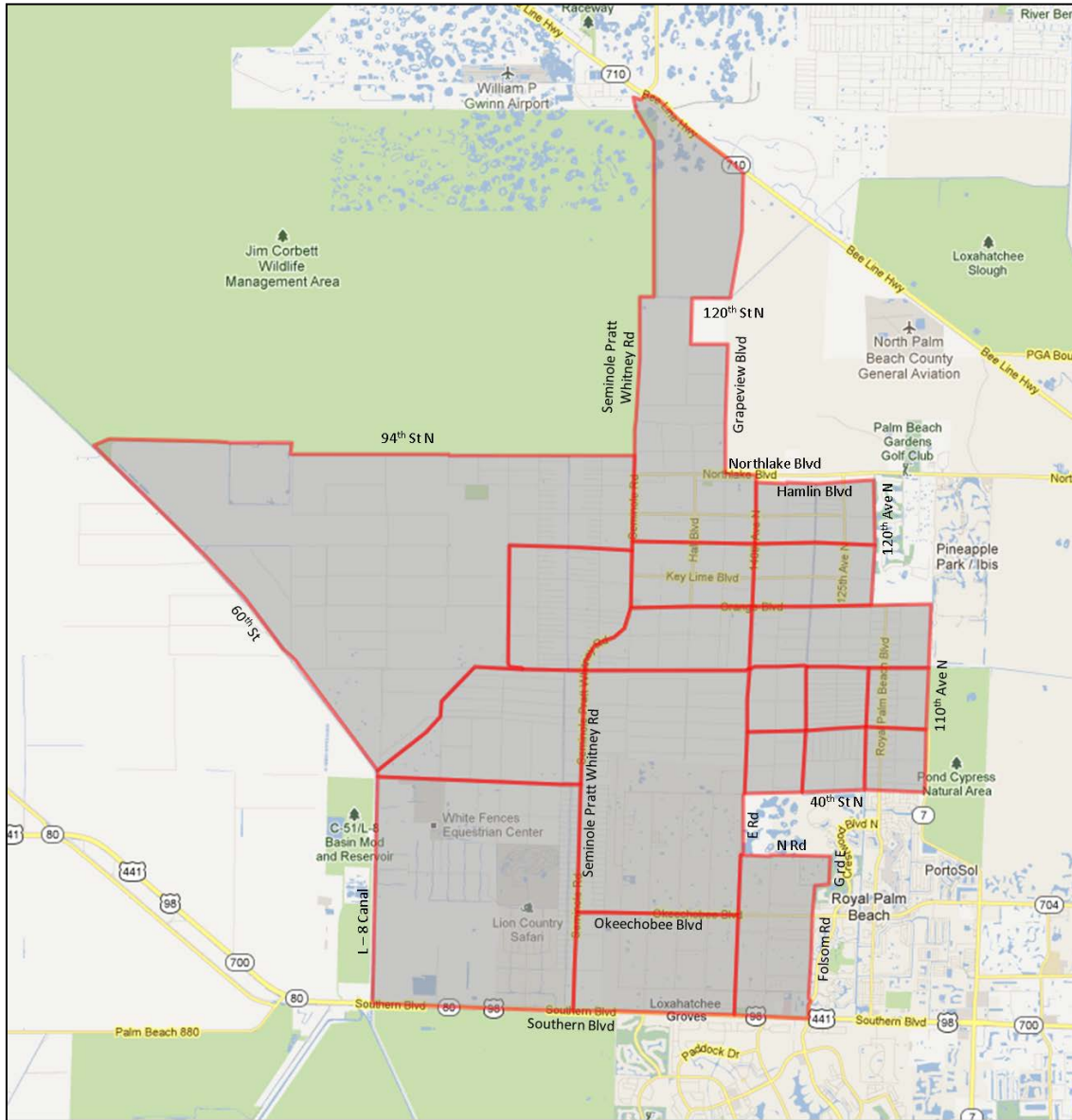


Community Background Report

Central Western Communities



Note: The Central Western Communities consists of twenty block groups based on the 2010 US Census and one partial block group.¹ The portion of the block group which is not within the boundaries of the Central Western Communities consists mainly of farmland and conservation areas. The Demographic section of this report provides a full list of the block groups.

Boundaries

North: J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area, State Road 710 (Beeline Highway) and various roadways

South: Southern Boulevard (State Road 80)

East: Various roadways

West: L-8 Canal and 60th Street

Community Type:

The Central Western Communities study area is primarily a rural and semi-rural region of Palm Beach County that encompasses an **unincorporated community** known as “The Acreage” and the Town of Loxahatchee Groves. The area consists mostly of farms, citrus groves, equestrian facilities, and single family homes on large lots.

The boundaries of the **Central Western Communities 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 Central Western Communities study area and its surrounding areas. The details provided are not specific to the defined study area, unless otherwise specified.

The study area defined as the Central Western Communities for the purpose of this report was wilderness until the early 1900s. This area was part of a large area of swamp and overflow land. In the 1800s, overflow land was property that was classified as wet and unfit for cultivation. On March 21, 1850, the land of the Central Western Communities study area and the surrounding areas was transferred from the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund to the Disston Land Company as the result of the federal Swamp Act of 1850. This Act allowed the subsidized sale of land to private investors. After several other transactions, including the purchase of two million acres in 1902 by the Southern States Land and Timber Company of New Orleans, the US Army Corps of Engineers started working on the West Palm Beach Canal (C-51) in 1917, opening it for travel by boat and barge.² Besides providing access to the area, the canal drained the wetlands, which made the soil suitable for farming.

The first western community to be developed in the study area was Loxahatchee Groves (also known as Loxahatchee Farms in the early twentieth century and as Loxahatchee in recent years), which is located in the southeastern portion of the Central Western Communities. It was founded

in 1917 by George Bensel, the branch sales manager for Southern States Land and Timber Company, who sought to build a farming community by the route of the new waterway. By 1924, a road along the canal and Okeechobee Road was built, which allowed the area to be accessed by automobiles and trucks. In 1925, Bensel was instrumental in opening a combined grocery, gas station and post office in the area. Bensel and several others formed Palm Beach Loxahatchee Company and purchased 6,500 acres in and around the study area from Southern States Land and Timber Company in order to establish a farming community. The general area prospered in the 1930s as an agricultural area, and 56,000 citrus trees were planted.³ The Central Western Communities discussed in this report made up a portion of that land.

In the late 1950s, Pratt & Whitney opened a large aerospace plant just north of the Central Western Communities study area. This development made the area attractive to people who were not farmers. In 1967, a family-oriented tourist attraction, Lion Country Safari, opened for business within the area.

With the development boom of the very early 2000s affecting all of South Florida, the Town of Loxahatchee Groves incorporated in 2006 with 7945 acres in order to protect its rural lifestyle. This new Town became the 38th municipality in Palm Beach County.

Community Dynamics

The Central Western Communities study area represents an area of multiple communities. This developing area is still rural or semi-rural in nature. The area is comprised of single family homes on large wooded lots, small farming operations, citrus groves, and equestrian uses. People ride horses on dirt roads and trails. In addition, the area has a tourist attraction (Lion Country Safari), scattered institutional activities along Okeechobee Boulevard in Loxahatchee Groves, and limited commercial development along Southern Boulevard and Seminole Pratt Whitney Road. The area also includes two county-owned nature areas, the 116-acre Acreage Pines in the center of the area and the 2,967-acre Hungryland Slough at the north end, located adjacent to the Beeline Highway (SR 710). (See map of Hungryland Slough at: <http://www.pbcgov.com/erm/natural/naturalareasmap/index.asp>)

Residents of the Central Western Communities study area tend to have a lower education and income than the County as whole. They also tend to be younger. Though most of the residents are US nationals, foreigners make up about 17% of the population, including people from Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti and other Latin American, Caribbean, European, and Asian countries. Indeed, there is a mix of non-English speaking residents who speak Spanish, Indo-European Languages, such as French, and Asian languages. Given this diversity, outreach efforts should take into account possible language and cultural barriers. (For more details, see the Demographic Highlights section.)

The Central Western Communities study area is comprised of areas designated by the Palm Beach County Managed Growth Program as Rural and Exurban Tiers. **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 those owned by a family, 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 County's focus in the unincorporated area in the Rural Tier is to protect and enhance communities that support agricultural and equestrian uses

The **Town of Loxahatchee Groves** is located in the Rural Tier and has an adopted Comprehensive Plan that is supportive of rural development, The vision for the future use of the community is as follows: "Loxahatchee Groves will protect its natural environment and rural character in midst of an urbanizing region..." The Future Land Use Map in the adopted comprehensive plan shows that 98.7 % of the town is classified as Rural Residential 5 (1 dwelling unit per 5 acres).⁵

The Exurban Tier supports residential subdivisions created prior to 1970 and before the adoption of the Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan and its regulations. Historically, these areas have been considered rural due to a sparse development pattern, large wooded lots, presence of small agricultural operations including equestrian uses, a desire for minimal services and regulations. However, growth has marked a change in character from rural to more suburban and semi-rural, exurban, as the existing and vested⁶ 1.25-acre lots⁷ develop with single-family homes. The corresponding increase in population has caused an escalating increase in the demand for services.⁸ 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 well or centralized potable water and by onsite disposal or by centralized sanitary sewer system.⁹ Areas inside the Rural Tier that have levels of service classified as limited urban include the Agricultural Enclave and Glades Area Protection Overlay.¹⁰

Public services in this area are provided by multiple sources, including the Town of Loxahatchee Groves, several countywide agencies and special districts. The Town of Loxahatchee Groves provides code enforcement and solid waste pickup. Services provided by countywide agencies include public schools (Palm Beach County School District), solid waste disposal, parks, and utilities in limited areas, libraries and fire/rescue services. Public transit service by Palm Tran is limited with Route 40 stopping at Palms West Hospital and locations south of the area in Wellington and Route 52 stopping just outside of the area at the Village Hall for Royal Palm Beach located at Okeechobee Road and Royal Palm Beach Boulevard (For further details, see the Palm Tran website at www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/palmtran/maps_schedules/). Drainage services are provided by following districts: Northern Palm Beach County Improvement, Indian

Trail Improvement, Cypress Grove Community Improvement, Seminole Improvement and Loxahatchee Groves Water Control. The Indian Trail Improvement District also provides road improvements, trails, greenways and parks. The Seminole Improvement District supplies potable water. Public schools situated in the area include five elementary schools (Loxahatchee Groves, Frontier, Acreage Pines, Golden Grove and Pierce Hammock), two middle (Osceola Creek and Western Pines) and one senior high (Seminole Ridge Community). Public parks in the area include Loxahatchee Groves, County Pines Recreation Complex, Nicole Hornstein Equestrian, Kidscape, Citrus Grove, Temple, Coconut, Sycamore, Downers and Bob Hoelf. The public library in the area is The Acreage Branch.

Palm Beach County has taken measures to maintain the rural character of the area. Roads that have been designated as Rural Parkways include Northlake Boulevard (from Seminole Pratt Whitney Road to the Palm Beach Gardens municipal golf course), Persimmon Boulevard (from 140 Avenue North to Seminole Pratt Whitney Road) and 140 Avenue North (from Persimmon Boulevard to 60 Street N). Rural Parkways have cross-sections, alignments and landscaping requirements that maintain the rural landscape.¹¹

In addition to the Rural and Exurban Tiers, The Central Western Communities contain 15 of the 20 subdivisions that have been designated by the County as Unincorporated Rural Neighborhoods, where annexations will not only require at least five votes on the Board of County Commissioners but also approval from a majority of the registered electors residing within the borders of the neighborhood.¹² These designated Unincorporated Rural Neighborhoods situated in the northeastern part of the Central Western Communities study area include Stonewal Estates (AKA Bayhill Estates), The Acreage and Kramer's U/R (AKA Rustic Lakes). The designated Unincorporated Rural Neighborhoods located west of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road include Deer Run, Sunny Urban Meadows, Deer Run Plat 2, Los Flores Ranchos, Mendel, Entrada Acres, Santa Rosa Groves, Tall Pine Acres U/R, Waite Subdivision U/R, Canal Pine Acres, Dellwood Estates and White Fence Estates.

The largest of these Unincorporated Rural Neighborhoods is The Acreage, which covers most of the northeastern portion of the Central Western Communities and a small portion of the area west of the Town of Loxahatchee Groves. The Acreage Landowners Association has been active in preserving the character of this rural neighborhood. This association prepared The Acreage Neighborhood Plan that was initially drafted in 1995, amended in 2007 and formally received by the Board of County Commissioners in 2008. The plan addressed such concerns as future government; land use; code enforcement; open space, parks and linkages; equestrian; thoroughfares and roads; water, sewer and canal system; drainage; fire-rescue; public safety; and education. The overall vision of the plan states the following: "Preserving and promoting our unique rural lifestyle by planning today for tomorrow."¹³ This vision captures the basic community dynamics in much of the Central Western Communities study area.

Demographic Highlights

The demographic data that follows was compiled using Census Block Group data. The Central Western Communities study area is made up of twenty 2010 Census Block Groups and one partial Block Group which extends beyond the boundaries of the Central Western Communities (See below for a complete list). Since the partial Block Group is primarily unpopulated, the demographic data presented below can be mostly attributed to the Central Western Communities. Census Block Groups consist of several census blocks and generally have a population of 600 to 3,000 people

120990078081 120990078082 120990078091 120990079081 120990079082,
 120990079083 120990079101 120990079102 120990079103 120990079122,
 120990002131 120990078092 120990078201 120990078202 120990078211,
 120990078212 120990078391 120990078392 120990078394 120990002102,
 120990079121 (Partial Block Group)

According to the US Census, the population of the Central Western Communities is 38,841¹⁴

The population of the Central Western Communities is primarily white, with Blacks making up the second largest group. In 2010, whites made up the largest segment of the population at 79.71%, followed by Blacks at 12.31% of the population.¹⁵

The population of the Central Western Communities is younger than the Palm Beach County population. In 2010, adults ages 65 and over represented 8.14% of the population in the Central Western Communities. In Palm Beach County adults 65 and over made up 21.6% of the population.¹⁶

The level of educational attainment in the Central Western Communities is lower than in Palm Beach County. Approximately 55.4% of the area’s residents had some college, a college degree, or graduate degree, compared to 60.1 % for Palm Beach County as a whole.¹⁷

Education	Study Area	%	County	%
With a Degree or Some College				
Doctorate	109	0.4	11,103	1.2
Professional	327	1.3	28,863	3.1
Master	1,008	4.0	68,815	7.4
Bachelor	4,030	15.8	186,552	20.1
Associates	2,716	10.7	73,088	7.9
Some College	5,911	23.2	190,510	20.5
	<u>14,101</u>	<u>55.4</u>	<u>558,931</u>	<u>60.1</u>

High School or Less

Education	Study Area	%	County	%
High School	8,913	35.0	248,302	26.7
Below High School	2,453	9.6	122,361	13.2
	11,366	44.6	370,663	39.9
Total	25,467	100	929,594	100

The average income per capita in the Central Western Communities is 17% less than the average per capita income for Palm Beach County as a whole. The average per capita in the Central Western Communities is \$27,887, compared to \$33,610 for the County.¹⁸

*Though the average per capita income is lower, the percent of the total population living in poverty is less in the Central Western Communities than in the County, at 9.36% compared to 16.48% respectively.*¹⁹

The Central Western Communities has a substantially higher percentage of owner-occupied units than Palm Beach County. Approximately 83.59% of the total housing units in the Central Western Communities are owner-occupied and 8.17% are renter-occupied. In Palm Beach County, 58.46% of the total housing units are owner-occupied and only 23.43% are renter-occupied.²⁰

*Approximately 17.7% of the population in the Central Western Communities identified as Hispanic compared to 19% for Palm Beach County.*²¹

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 Central Western Communities.

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 Central Western Communities study area is located within the Census Tracts listed below. The data reported below are for these Census Tracts.

12099000210	12099000213	12099007808	12099007809	12099007820
12099007821	12099007839	12099007908	12099007910	12099007912

Place of Birth ²²

Born in Florida	20,657	39%
Born in Different State	22,061	42%
Born in Puerto Rico or abroad to American parent(s)	912	2%
Foreign Born	8,984	17%
Total population	52,614	100%

Foreign Born Population: Top Ten Places of Birth ²³

Jamaica	1805	20%
Cuba	1349	15%
Haiti	818	9%
United Kingdom (inc. Crown Dependencies):	515	6%
Colombia	414	5%
Vietnam	330	4%
Poland	288	3%
India	264	3%
Trinidad and Tobago	257	3%
Guatemala	184	2%

Language Spoken at Home ²⁴

Language	Population 5 Years and Over	%	Speak English Less Than Very Well	%
English only	40,322	81%	0	--
Language other than English				
Spanish	5,726	11%	1,833	59%
Other Indo-European languages	2,529	5%	681	22%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	1,303	3%	568	18%
Other languages	88	0%	12	0%
Population 5 years and over	49,968	100%	3094	100%

Transportation Trends

The figures below provide key transportation indicators for the Central Western Communities:²⁵

Housing units with vehicles available:

Central Western Communities	12,004 (99.31%)
Palm Beach County	490,820 (93.82%)

Mean (Average) Vehicles per households:

Central Western Communities	1.21
Palm Beach County	1.54

Means of Transportation to work:

	Central Western Communities	Palm Beach County
Carpool	8.4%	11.15%
Drive Alone	82.8%	78.66%
Public Transport	0.56%	1.55%
Motorcycle	0.2%	0.27%
Bicycle	0.28%	0.59%
Walking	1.34%	1.69%
Other	1.0%	1.16%
Work at Home	6.14%	4.92%

Special Events

The Indian Trail Improvement District and the Acreage Horseman’s Association sponsor most of the major events in this area. Along with other organizations, the Indian Trail Improvement District sponsors events such as the Great American Cleanup, Relay for Life and Community Jams. The Acreage Horseman’s Association hosts monthly Pleasure and Barrel Shows at Nicole Hornstein Equestrian Park.²⁶

Business Landscape

The largest employers with operations located within the general area of the Central Western Communities study area are The School District of Palm Beach County, Palms West Hospital (Hospital Corporation of America) and Lion Country Safari. Two large aerospace employers, Sikorsky Aircraft and Pratt &Whitney Rocketdyne, are located just north of the study area. Wellington Regional Medical Center, another large employer, is situated south of the area.²⁷ Commercial development within the Central Western Communities includes The Acreage and Grove Market shopping centers on Seminole Pratt Whitney Road, and scattered commercial activities along Southern Boulevard (SR 80), as well as very limited commercial development on Okeechobee Road. Access to the area will be enhanced by scheduled improvements including the widening of Southern Boulevard and Seminole Pratt Whitney Road, as well as the extension of SR 7 to Northlake Boulevard.

Additional Resources

- **Loxahatchee Groves Comprehensive Plan** by the Town of Loxahatchee Groves: <http://www.loxahatcheegroves.org/index.php?go=pages.page&pageId=54>
- **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>

Sources

¹ The Central Western Communities represented in this report consists of twenty 2010 Census Block Groups and one partial Block Group: 120990078081, 120990078082, 120990078091, 120990079081, 120990079082, 120990079083, 120990079101, 120990079102, 120990079103, 120990079122, 120990002131, 120990078092, 120990078201, 120990078202, 120990078211, 120990078212, 120990078391, 120990078392, 120990078394, 120990002102, 120990079121 (Partial Block Group)

² Ibid.

³ Palm Beach County History Online. Retrieved July 2012 from <http://www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/loxahatchee-groves>

⁵ Town of Loxahatchee Groves. *Loxahatchee Groves Comprehensive Plan*. P1-3. Retrieved November 2012 from <http://www.loxahatcheegroves.org/index.php?go=pages.page&pageId=54>

⁶A vested lot in this case is one in which the property owner has the right to build a single-family dwelling.

⁷ The 1.25 acre lot represents the typical lot in the Exurban Tier but not every lot.

⁸ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning & Building Department. *Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Element*. P. 19-21 FLUE .Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/planning/comprehensiveplan>

⁹ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning & Building Department. *Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Element*. P. 63-65 FLUE. Retrieved July 2012 from <http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/planning/comprehensiveplan/>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Element*. P. 21-24 FLUE. Retrieved July 2012 from <http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/comprehensiveplan>

¹² Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department. *Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan, Intergovernmental Coordination Element*. P. 17 ICE. Retrieved July 2012 from <http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/comprehensiveplan>

¹³ The Acreage Landowners Association. *Acreage Neighborhood Plan*. Retrieved November 2012 from <http://www.acreagelandowners.org>

¹⁴ US Census Bureau. American Fact Finder: 2010 US Census. Retrieved July 2012, from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ US Census Bureau. 2006-2010 American Community Survey. Retrieved July 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ US Census Bureau. American Fact Finder: 2010 US Census. Retrieved July 2012, from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.

²² US Census Bureau. 2007-2011 American Community Survey: DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. Retrieved December 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

²³ US Census Bureau. 2007-2011 American Community Survey: B05006: Place Of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population in the United States. Retrieved December 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

²⁴ US Census Bureau. 2007-2011 American Community Survey: DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. Retrieved December 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

²⁵ US Census Bureau. 2006-2010 American Community Survey. Retrieved July 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

²⁶ Indian Trail Improvement District. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.indiantrail.com/>

²⁷ Business Development Board of Palm Beach County. Retrieved July 2012 from <http://www.bdb.org>