


The Palm Beach Post  
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Palm Beach County's population is expanding at a rate of **42** people per day

**1.6 million** people are expected to live here in 2030 (1.4 million live here now)

# Palm Beach County 2030

## How will we grow?



**POPULATION**  
Who will live here?  
We'll be getting older and our ethnic mix greater.

**MEDICAL CARE**  
Hospitals are expanding and top-rated medical companies are moving in.

**NEW DEVELOPMENTS**  
Thousands of new homes: Here are the five biggest housing projects in the works.

WILL THE TOURISTS KEEP COMING?

## Hoteliers hot to meet demand of leisure, business travelers

BY ALEXANDRA CLOUGH ■ THE PALM BEACH POST

### UNIQUE HOTELS WILL OFFER LARGER VARIETY OF AMENITIES FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE

Tourism is strong and likely to stay strong in Palm Beach County, making the county an attractive place for new hotels.

What's in store for visitors? A greater variety of places from which to choose.

In West Palm Beach alone, two unique, stylish properties are under construction and set to open by year end. The two speak to a trend in the next decade: niche, boutique properties, some owned by major hotel companies. These companies want to expand their presence in hot tourism markets by offering guests a greater choice of experiences.

One new hotel coming is **The Ben**, a Marriott Autograph Hotel Collection property opening at Flagler Banyan Square, the old city hall site now being developed into a hotel, apartments and shops. The other is Canopy by Hilton, being built on Dixie Highway in the heart of the downtown.

The properties' construction comes amid continuing record-breaking visitors to Palm Beach County in 2018.

Discover The Palm Beaches, the tourism marketing organization for Palm Beach County, said year-end hotel performance data shows 8 million visitors came to the county last year, a 1.7 percent increase from 2017. The increase marked 10 years in a row of visitor growth to Palm Beach County and serves as a good indicator of things to come.

Tourism isn't limited to weary Northerners escaping cold weather, although these travelers always are a key source of business for the county's hoteliers.

Discover sees room for more growth from the international markets, and in February the organization said it planned to launch new marketing efforts in Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Germany and Mexico.

In fact, tourism in the next decade is likely to further develop into a year-round business, thanks in part to the success of the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach and the growing roster of corporate meetings and events. The growth in business travelers received a boost with the 2016 opening of the Hilton convention center hotel.

Tourism leaders see continued growth in corporate meetings and events, which they believe will be an increasing driver of the county's economy, said Jorge Pesquera, president of Discover The Palm Beaches.

Conventions book one or two years in advance and when attendees are in town, they frequent restaurants, shops and other ancillary businesses, Pesquera said. They rent cars. They host events at museums.

The potential business to be had from this market is so profound that tourism planners are devising strategies for making the county a more prominent destination for meetings and corporate events.

Discover reported a 98 percent increase in room nights booked by Discover's sales team for groups, meetings and conventions from 2014 through 2018. Last year saw the highest convention booking, with 231,000 nights booked for hotel rooms.

When these conventions are in town, bookings rise at hotels near the

convention center hotel, reflecting pent-up demand for meetings business in the county. As a result, more hotels are needed near the convention center, including the addition of another hotel adjacent to the convention center, tourism leaders say.

A study just completed by HVS, a hospitality consulting firm, said the convention center could use another 600 hotel rooms immediately, within a half mile of the convention center. That translates into 130,000 lost hotel room nights in 2018, and 98,600 room nights projected for 2019, the HVS study found.

Throughout the county, hotel developers are trying to keep pace with demand. During the next two years, another 1,695 hotel rooms will open throughout the county.

Hotels under construction now in Delray Beach include Aloft Hotel, Courtyard by Marriott and The Ray boutique hotel. The long-awaited Mandarin Oriental Hotel is under construction in downtown Boca Raton. And to the west, a Sunshine Inn is going up in Royal Palm Beach.

Meanwhile, a Home2 Suites by Hilton is being built near Palm Beach International Airport.

Also in West Palm Beach, plans are afoot to build a Radisson Blu at 415 S. Dixie Highway, between Fern and Gardenia streets. An Indigo Hotel north of CityPlace, at Railroad Avenue, between Third and Fourth streets, also is planned.

But two upcoming downtown West Palm Beach hotels soon will draw a lot of attention, due to their boutique style.

Hilton's 150-room Canopy Hotel, now under construction at the southeast corner of South Dixie Highway and Trinity Place, already is booking convention rooms for 2020 and beyond. That's according to Michael Diaz, chief operating officer of Driftwood Hospitality, the hotel's North Palm Beach-based developer.

This 14-story hotel is going full millennial with room selection and check-in services available via a mobile device, bicycles and scooters at the ready for getting around town and a robot delivering room service.

Evening tastings of local beer, wine and spirits will be complimentary.

There also is a gym, a sixth floor outdoor deck that can host special events and about 3,000 square feet of meeting space. The hotel will also be using robot technology to deliver amenities, room service and greet people in the lobby.

But the most striking feature of the Canopy will be the public art built into the space.

The work includes a series of nine root like structures that appear to crack through the ceiling and toward the floor, and a 10-foot banyan "root" that appears to break through the southern wall of the hotel's ground floor restaurant and into the sidewalk below.

The "roots" will be made of hand-painted tubing, dipped in sand and interwoven with hand-blown crystals. The artist creating the work is Norwegian-born Terje Lundaas, of Miami.

Having a wide and creative variety of hotels from which to choose is important for a destination, tourism leaders say.

Fortuitously, the other soon-to-open West Palm Beach hotel will be unique, too.

In March, builders of The Ben held a topping-off ceremony to mark the hotel reaching its structural completion.

The Ben refers to the Ben Trovato estate in West Palm Beach, owned by a pioneering resident, author Byrd 'Birdie' Spilman Dewey and her husband, Fred. Their downtown home along the water was dubbed Ben Trovato, where the couple entertained the Vanderbilts, Henry Phipps Jr. and Woodrow Wilson. "Ben trovato" means, roughly, "a very interesting story, even if it isn't true" in Italian.

The lively, chatty scene evoked by reference to the Dewey's West Palm Beach home is one the developers hope will be replicated at The Ben. It's Old Florida history but with a modern twist, so expect eclectic styling when the hotel is completed at year-end.

The 208-room hotel, at 251 N. Narcissus Ave., will feature numerous amenities. The luxury property will have waterfront views, a rooftop pool and amenity deck with bar, as well as a rooftop ballroom, according to Concord Hospitality, a developer of the hotel.

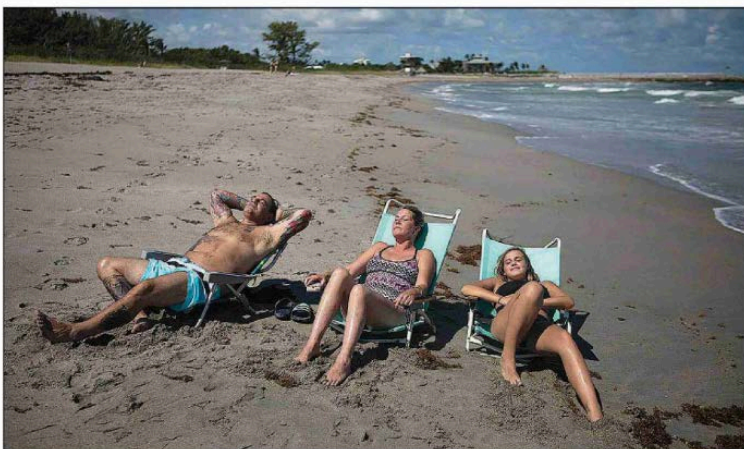
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A recent hospitality firm study said  
**the convention center**  
could use another 600 hotel rooms  
immediately, within a half mile



The Palm Beach County Convention Center. GREG LOVETT/ THE PALM BEACH POST



Mike McCoy, left, Kim McCoy, center, and their daughter Lauren enjoy the sunshine on Jupiter Beach. The family was visiting from Pennsylvania, and was thinking about moving to South Florida, which Mike calls "paradise." PALM BEACH POST 2018



**The Ben Hotel:** It's Old Florida history but with a modern twist, so expect eclectic styling when the hotel is completed at year-end.

LANNIS WATERS/ THE PALM BEACH POST