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An in-depth review of the key issues facing Palm Beach County's economy, featuring the exclusive insights of prominent business and regional leaders.

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A 21st century city

West Palm Beach offers 'a great canvas' to create an exciting urban place

Gopal Rajegowda

Executive Vice President & Partner – Related Southeast

What is the vision of Related Companies for urban development in West Palm Beach?

At Related Companies, we are excited about building a model 21st century city. Such a city needs educational establishments including K-12 schools and higher ed institutions, healthcare systems including world-class hospitals, vibrant inclusive public spaces, restaurants and retail that cover all daily needs and the amenities of a connected city. West Palm Beach offers a great canvas to create this exciting urban place. We currently control a lot of land and have a great relationship with the City and County. Additionally, the City has great connectivity thanks to the Tri-Rail, Brightline train and its proximity to I-95 and Palm Beach International Airport.

What kind of opportunities does the migration of people into Florida bring for Related Companies?

The population of Palm Beach County is 1.6 million people and growing. This is a place where young people and young families want to live and work. In the post-COVID era, people are thinking about lifestyle, so Florida has pivoted out of being a seasonal resort and tourist destination and becoming a place where people want to live with their families. The younger generation has realized that Palm Beach is not just a place for retirees, but an area where they can live, work and thrive. There are great communities to live in and around Palm Beach County, all within a 25 mile radius of West Palm.

How is Related Companies working to address the need for affordable housing in Palm Beach County?

Stephen Ross, the chairman and founder of Related

Companies, originally started as an affordable housing developer, over 50 years ago. He is focused on building this type of housing and how it is a necessary component for building inclusive cities. For affordable housing to grow, there needs to be public-private partnerships and incentives in place that motivate developers to build more affordable or workforce housing. Related has an affordable housing division that runs that business line from New York and recently bought a site in West Palm Beach that we are renovating.

How does Related Companies practice sustainability in its business operations?

We have a major commitment to sustainability that is tied to building cities. We are constantly thinking about the best and most efficient ways to build buildings, which has become a conversation with the technology start-ups that are innovating in the construction space. We are continuously looking for the best methods, means and materials, while being committed to building at the LEED gold and platinum standards.

What are the top priorities of Related Companies in Palm Beach County for the short term?

Palm Beach has changed a lot since I moved here, and I expect that it will be an entirely different city in the next five years. We can expect to have more people living here year-round, restaurants, retail and exciting developments from Related and other developers. I am excited about the public-private initiatives that Related is working on with the city and about how we deliver the model 21st century city vision and create a place of inclusive growth. ■