

THE CORRIDOR REPORT



Florida's corridor, decoded every week.

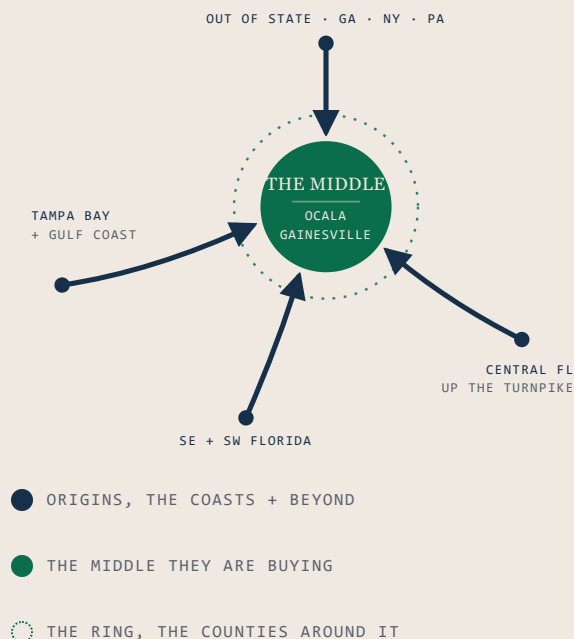
Expert weekly intelligence on the North Central Florida corridor, the booming interior between the coasts, and the trends, money, and risk reshaping it. Kane Brooks, Keller Williams Gainesville.

THE LEAD • WHAT MOVED THE CORRIDOR THIS WEEK

A wet August, and a record-low Ichetucknee.

The migration to the middle

Coastal Florida, the Turnpike, and out-of-state movers, converging on Alachua, Marion, and the ring.



The ring is Columbia, Levy, Sumter, Suwannee, Gilchrist, and Lake, the six counties the middle is spilling into.

16.85 in.

Twelve-month rainfall deficit in the Suwannee River district, even after a wet August.

SOURCE • SRWMD, AUGUST 2026 REPORT

The Suwannee River Water Management District recorded **9.43 inches** of rain in August, about 23 percent above normal. On August 31 the Ichetucknee River at U.S. 27 still set its **lowest daily flow on record**, and the Upper Floridan Aquifer, the source corridor wells and springs draw on, ended the month near the **24th percentile**. The district's 12-month rainfall deficit stands at 16.85 inches, and it remains under a Modified Phase II Water Shortage Order. WUFT, reporting with the Florida Springs Institute, counts **nine** North Central Florida springs that stopped flowing in 2026.

SOURCES • SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT • WUFT • FLORIDA SPRINGS INSTITUTE

64%

Who draws the district's groundwater

Agriculture accounts for 64 percent of groundwater use in the Suwannee River district. A 2024 district study tied the long-term decline in spring flow in part to groundwater pumping.

Source • WUFT / FL Springs Institute, Sep 2026

About 1/3

Poe Spring was low before the drought

Florida Springs Institute scientist Bill Hawthorne puts Poe Spring's flow near a third of its historical level. Its park near High Springs closed. White Springs first went dry in 1977.

Source • WUFT / FL Springs Institute, Sep 2026

14 months

A springs national park, no hearing

H.R. 4656 would order a federal study of a 2,800 square mile park across the Ocala National Forest, Silver Springs and Paynes Prairie. Since July 23, 2025: two actions, introduction and referral.

Source • GovInfo, H.R. 4656 status, Sep 2026

THE READ THIS WEEK "What a falling aquifer means for a corridor home on a well."

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What changed this week.

Four sourced developments moving the corridor, and why each bends the migration inland.

Downtown Ocala lost three long-running storefronts; the city is weighing \$500,000

ON THE GROUND

Ocala’s Community Redevelopment Agency is weighing a Downtown Retail and Restaurant grant to replace a \$50,000 commercial grant with awards up to \$150,000 per project. It follows the closing of a 16-year boutique, an 18-year pantry and a 17-year restaurant. CRA grant applications have been frozen since July 31 while staff rewrite the program.

Source • 352today • Oct 2026

Marion’s largest one-year gain on record: 19,197 people, mostly outside city limits

THE NUMBERS

UF’s Bureau of Economic and Business Research puts Marion County at 447,170 residents on April 1, 2026, up 19,197 in a year, a 4.49 percent gain and the largest on record. The prior year added about 14,000. Unincorporated Marion took 16,941 of the new residents, rising 4.86 percent to 365,261.

Source • UF BEBR via Ocala-News • Sep 2026

Short-term rentals, part two: Gainesville listings fell 24%, occupancy rose

THE INVESTOR

AirDNA counts 1,401 active Gainesville short-term rentals, down 23.9 percent year over year, at 51 percent occupancy and a \$162 average nightly rate. Occupancy rose 4.5 percent from August 2025 to August 2026. In Ocala, covered in Issue 09, AirROI counted supply up 35.9 percent and revenue per listing down 13.5 percent.

Source • AirDNA, Sep 2026; AirROI, Jul 2026

The latest on El Nino: forecasters expect a wetter, stormier Florida winter

THE CLIMATE

Forecasters on Florida Public Radio’s emergency network expect the subtropical jet to shift across the peninsula after New Year’s. Central and South Florida average about twice the normal tornado count in an El Nino winter. The 1998 Central Florida outbreak, in a strong El Nino, killed 42 people, a state record.

Source • WUSF, Sep 22 2026; NOAA CPC, Sep 10

WHAT TO WATCH

- **October 20.** Marion commissioners vote at 2 p.m. on the NW 49th Street land-use change: up to 535 homes and a 500-room hotel across Interstate 75 from the planned Buc-ee’s.
- **November 3.** Amendment 3 polled at 61 percent in a UNF survey until voters heard the price tag, then 45. It needs 60 percent to pass.
- **January 19–31.** WEC Ocala hosts the inaugural FEI PAEC Championships of the Americas, with eventing cross-country at the Florida Horse Park, inside a 13-week winter circuit.

BY THE NUMBERS

7.28% 30-YR FIXED Up 25 basis points in a week. A year ago 6.34%. Highest since Nov 2023. Freddie Mac • Oct 1 2026	\$415,000 FL SINGLE-FAMILY MEDIAN Closed sales down 1.5%, inventory down 13% from a year earlier. FL Realtors • Aug 2026	\$290,000 MARION SINGLE-FAMILY MEDIAN 4.8 months of supply, 61 days to contract. FL Realtors / OMCAR • Aug 2026
\$1,020 ALACHUA CITIZENS PREMIUM Marion \$1,263, Levy \$1,385, Sumter \$1,728. Statewide average \$1,843. Citizens / FL OIR • Apr 2026	266,231 CITIZENS POLICIES IN FORCE Down from a 2023 peak of 1.4 million. Four more OIR rate cuts in September. Insurance Journal / OIR • Aug 2026	\$4.12 FL AVERAGE GAS Ocala \$4.13, Gainesville \$4.19 a gallon. AAA • Sep 15 2026

Three exits, three different bets.

Three projects along Interstate 75 moved between August and October: a mixed-use district across from the planned Buc-ee's, a subdivision near the US 27 interchange, and an FDOT study for a new Sumter County exit.

NW 49th Street, Marion UNANIMOUS FIRST VOTE

535 **500** **450,000**

HOMES, AT MOST

HOTEL ROOMS

SQ FT COMMERCIAL

Marion's Planning and Zoning Board approved a land-use change on **October 2** for 105 acres at NW 49th Street and NW 44th Avenue, across Interstate 75 from the planned Buc-ee's. An equine-themed facility is under consideration, and the change allows uses from a truck stop to an amusement park. The County Commission votes October 20.

Source • WKMG ClickOrlando, Oct 2 2026

US 27 at NW 60th Avenue SENT BACK FOR RESUBMITTAL

330 **83.8** **9.975**

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

ACRES

COMMERCIAL ACRES

Golden Lake Development of Tampa filed the Stancils Pineywoods PUD near where US 27 meets Interstate 75. It needs a rezoning from agricultural, a public sewer extension and a traffic study. County staff marked it **Requires Re-submit** in August.

Source • Ocala-News, Sep 20 2026

CR 514, Coleman, Sumter INDUSTRIAL DEMAND, PER FDOT

2nd **PD&E** **435476-2**

NEW EXIT UNDER STUDY

FDOT STUDY PHASE

FDOT PROJECT NO.

FDOT is running a Project Development and Environment study for a new interchange at the County Road 514, Warm Springs Avenue, overpass in Coleman. FDOT cites rising transportation demand and development tied to **recent industrial activity**.

Source • FDOT via CFLRoads, Aug 26 2026

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THE READ

The water under the growth.

THE READ • BY KANE BROOKS

The number I keep coming back to is **16.85 inches**. That is how far behind on rain the Suwannee River district sits over twelve months, and one wet August did not close it. The Ichetucknee hit its lowest flow ever recorded on August 31. Nine springs in our region stopped flowing this year. We sell this corridor on springs, and right now some of them are not running.

Put that next to Marion's count. The county added **19,197** people in a year, a record, and 16,941 of them landed in unincorporated county, which mostly means a private well and a septic tank on the same aquifer. I am not saying growth caused the drought. The district's own study points at pumping, mostly agricultural. I am saying the buyer moving onto five acres should know what is under it.

Then the rate. Freddie Mac put the 30-year at **7.28 percent** on October 1, the highest since November 2023. Money got more expensive while the water got scarcer and the interstate kept pulling projects to its exits. None of that makes the corridor a bad bet. It makes due diligence the whole game this fall.

Kane Brooks

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

If you're buying

Buyer: on any well-and-septic property, put a well yield and water quality test in the inspection contingency. The aquifer closed August near the 24th percentile, and the 30-year is at 7.28 percent, so lock early.

If you're selling

Seller: if your listing sells a spring, look at it before the photos. Nine regional springs stopped flowing in 2026. Lead with what is true now: the land, the well report, the insurance quote.

If you own here

Investor: springs-tourism rentals around High Springs carry a water risk the pro forma does not show. Poe Spring's park closed. Underwrite on a 16.85-inch rain deficit, not a brochure.

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SOURCES & DATA VINTAGE

SRWMD • WUFT • FL Springs Institute • GovInfo • Freddie Mac • FL Realtors / OMCAR • Citizens / FL OIR • Insurance Journal • AAA • WKMG • Ocala-News • UF BEBR • FDOT / CFLRoads • 352today • AirDNA • AirROI • WUSF • NOAA CPC • UNF PORL • WEC. Aug–Oct 2026 unless noted. Rates, corridor median / DOM / supply, gas, commute, and weather refresh each issue from the named source; no unsourced figure ships.

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