



2026 CENTRAL FLORIDA MARKET OUTLOOK:

Central Florida Commercial Real Estate

OCALA — THE VILLAGES — LEESBURG



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2026 MARKET OUTLOOK:

CENTRAL FLORIDA COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Executive Summary

As we step into 2026, our region of Central Florida — spanning Ocala, The Villages, Leesburg, and the broader Marion, Lake, and Sumter Counties — continues to show strong momentum across several commercial real estate sectors. While many Florida markets have transitioned from rapid post-pandemic expansion to more measured growth, this corridor stands out for its resilience, demographic strength, and consistent deal flow.

Population growth continues to drive this market forward. Ocala's population now exceeds 71,800, with Marion County surpassing 427,000 residents in 2025 — reflecting strong migration and housing absorption. In Lake County, home to both Leesburg and the outer edges of The Villages, the population is estimated at over 461,600, with an annual growth rate near 4%. And The Villages, one of the nation's fastest-growing retirement communities, has reached 86,000+ residents, with home sales and new construction remaining active.

In 2025, our team saw a noticeable increase in land sales tied to future multifamily developments totaling over 400 units, as well as active participation in warehouse-related transactions. The medical and dental sectors also drew increased investor and tenant interest across the region.

About the 2026 Outlook Report:

This report is designed to guide owners, investors, and businesses evaluating Central Florida — offering insight into the top-performing asset classes, key developments, and what's next in 2026.

Recent Developments Setting the Tone

In 2025, the industrial sector delivered a defining milestone when Trailhead Logistics Park — a nearly 943,000-square-foot, Class- A warehouse in Ocala — achieved full lease-up by a national third-party logistics operator. Plans for expansion on adjacent acreage indicate that industrial absorption in this market is more than a one-off event. Additionally, a 1 million-plus-square-foot warehouse near an existing Amazon fulfillment center in Ocala was acquired for \$97.7 million—reinforcing Ocala's appeal as a central logistics hub due to its I-75 access and scalable labor pool.

Adding to this momentum is a planned luxury warehouse development brokered by RE/MAX Commercial's David Bryant, featuring over 100 high-end small-bay units designed for a mix of uses including RV and boat storage, contractor suites, and light manufacturing or business operations.

In Lake County, the approval of the Oak Ridge community will add nearly 600 acres and more than 900 planned homes near Leesburg. Combined with continued residential growth around The Villages — which spans parts of Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties — this expansion is expected to drive demand for retail, medical, and service-based commercial development. These are just a few of the developments illustrating how the Marion, Lake, Sumpter County region of Central Florida is evolving at a more rapid pace than ever — solidifying its position as a serious contender within Central Florida's broader commercial real estate landscape.

MARKET BY ASSET CLASS

Industrial, Warehouse & Logistics

Ocala and its surrounding corridors are now firmly on the map as Florida's emerging industrial hub. The recent large-scale logistics lease and warehouse acquisition demonstrate growing confidence from national and regional distribution operators. Land near major highways and business parks remains in demand. For 2026, developers and investors should prioritize small-bay/flex industrial parks and build-to-suit warehouses. Modern, well-positioned industrial units (especially near I-75) are likely to remain highly sought after.

Medical, Dental & Professional Services

Healthcare-related real estate continues to show strength. Demand for outpatient care, dental services, and senior-serving medical practices keeps rising, supported by the region's aging and in migration populations. We saw an uptick in medical and dental office transactions and leasing activity across the region, including participation in stabilized asset sales and repositioning deals. Given limited modern supply in many submarkets, well-located medical or service-oriented office buildings will likely remain in demand through 2026 and beyond.

Office and Professional Services

While traditional office space is not a lead asset class in the region, the office sector maintains a specialized role across Central Florida. In submarkets like Leesburg, Ocala, and Lady Lake, we continue to see interest in low-rise professional office space, flex-office suites, and healthcare-aligned uses. Most office activity is either owner-user driven or tied to retail-medical centers or master-planned nodes. New speculative office construction is limited, but repositioning and small-footprint office formats — especially in growing areas — still offer opportunity.

Retail, Mixed-Use & Lifestyle Commercial

Retail in Central Florida remains resilient — particularly community-serving and service-based formats. As new residential developments (such as Oak Ridge and new phases of The Villages) take shape, demand is increasing for grocery-anchored centers, medical-retail hybrids, quick-service restaurants, and health/fitness locations. Mixed-use concepts are gaining traction as municipalities and developers pursue walkable, lifestyle-focused environments that serve both retirees and working families.

Multifamily / Build-for-Rent (BFR) / Workforce Housing

Multifamily demand remains steady, especially in workforce housing and BFR segments. As mortgage rates and living costs increase, rental housing remains attractive. We were involved in land sales supporting multifamily projects totaling more than 400 units. Well-located multifamily properties — near employment hubs, infrastructure, or medical/retail centers — stand to perform well in the coming years.

Land & Strategic Development

Land remains a core long-term play, though with greater emphasis on use-case, infrastructure proximity, and realistic project timelines. Parcels near highways, infrastructure, and active growth zones (industrial, residential, mixed-use) attract the most interest. For investors and developers, success in 2026 will depend on aligning acquisition, zoning, and development plans with actual demand drivers — not speculation.

SPOTLIGHT:

LEESBURG, FLORIDA

Growth Snapshot

Leesburg was ranked one of the top three fastest-growing cities in the U.S. in 2025, with an estimated 18% year-over-year population increase. The city's population now exceeds 40,000, up from just over 27,000 in 2020 — a nearly 50% increase in five years. That growth is being fueled in part by residential spillover from The Villages and demand for more affordable housing and services in Lake County.

Government & Planning Highlights

In 2025, Leesburg's city commission rejected a proposed moratorium on new residential development, signaling continued local support for growth and infill. Lake County is also exploring a shift to charter government — potentially improving planning coordination between municipalities and the county. Active rezoning and land-use amendments suggest a municipality actively managing growth, not resisting it.

What It Means for CRE

Leesburg now functions as more than a secondary market — it's emerging as a primary submarket in its own right. For commercial real estate investors and developers, this means:

- Demand for grocery-anchored, service-oriented retail is growing
- Medical office and outpatient service providers are expanding
- Workforce housing and multifamily development are in demand
- Repositioning opportunities may emerge as land becomes more constrained
- Landowners may benefit from strategic sale or joint venture as rezoning and infrastructure evolve

In Summary: Snapshot by Asset Class

- **Industrial / Warehouse**

Strongest growth trajectory; logistics demand rising with institutional-level deals.

- **Medical / Professional Services**

Stable and growing; outpatient care and senior services driving new development and investor interest.

- **Office / Flex / Professional Services**

Specialized but steady; professional suites and healthcare office formats offer resilience.

- **Retail / Mixed-Use**

Performing well when tied to population growth; convenience-based formats remain resilient.

- **Multifamily / BFR**

Solid demand; rental housing remains relevant amid economic pressures.

- **Land**

Most attractive when entitled or located near infrastructure and active submarkets.

Capital remains more selective entering 2026, and underwriting is tighter — but quality deals are still getting done. For borrowers or developers seeking flexible financing, lenders such as The Lending Spot offer creative loan structures across commercial real estate asset types — including acquisition, refinance, and development scenarios. These solutions continue to support progress in a capital-constrained environment. As the region continues to evolve, the most successful strategies will come from aligning capital, location, and timing with real, sustained demand.

For a deeper dive into Central Florida's commercial real estate landscape — including active corridors, submarket dynamics, and investment strategies — check out *Investing in the Heart of Florida: A Strategic Guide to Commercial Real Estate in Central Florida*, available on Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.

To connect directly about expanding your company into Central Florida, capital solutions, or to find out what your property is worth, contact:

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This report is provided by RE/MAX Commercial Land & Development Advisors, the area's newest commercial real estate brokerage — led by Commercial Real Estate Broker, David Bryant.

The firm is committed to delivering strategic insight and brokerage expertise to property owners, investors, and developers across Central Florida's evolving market.



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BROUGHT TO YOU BY: **DAVID BRYANT, CCIM**



David Bryant, "The Land Man," is the name you need to know for commercial real estate & land sales in Central Florida.

As the Director of Commercial Real Estate at RE/MAX Premier Realty, David is the go-to advisor for landowners, business owners, local developers, and international investors across Marion, Sumter, Polk, and Lake counties. With approx. four decades of real estate sales and development experience, David has become known as a dealmaker throughout the Southeast, from Florida to Texas.

He has an extensive background in international real estate marketing and sales. He has clients in 40 states and 25 countries, and has personally developed properties in 10 states. With a database with just under a million contacts, including builders and developers, investors, realtors, and international buyers. David's reach spans buyers from all 50 states and 7 continents, making him a valuable asset for sellers.

David's career includes instrumental roles in a wide range of projects, including land, housing developments, apartments, retail spaces, hotels, and strip centers. His extensive experience in international marketing and development underscores his ability to manage complex deals and deliver outstanding results.



"Your Vision. My Expertise. Unmatched Results."

When you partner with David Bryant, you get exclusive access to one of Florida's largest networks of corporations, investors, and business owners —locally and globally. Let his proven track record and connections work for you to deliver the results your property deserves.

David Bryant

Director of Commercial Real Estate



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