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The Biggest South Florida Housing Boom Is Near the Rail Stations

Brightline, the privately owned rail service, opened stations in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach about five years ago

By [Deborah Acosta](#)

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In West Palm Beach, homes near the station appreciated 37% versus a 30% median increase for the area. PHOTO: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

South Florida housing values [are still rising](#) even as home prices in much of the country [are starting to come down](#). Values for homes located near the region's expanding rapid transit rail system are appreciating even faster.

Brightline, the privately owned and operated rail service, opened stations in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach about five years ago, and more recently opened two more in Aventura and Boca Raton. Last week, Brightline started selling tickets for a new stop in Orlando, slated to open toward the end of the summer.

While mass transit systems throughout the U.S. [are suffering from](#) decreased business as more people work from home, Brightline reported a 68% increase in ridership in March of 2023, compared with the same month last year.

The popularity of the rail line is spilling over to the residential real-estate market, enabling home sellers to command higher prices for proximity to the transportation system, according to an analysis by the real-estate data and analytics firm Green Street.



Last week, Brightline started selling tickets for a new stop in Orlando, slated to open toward the end of the summer. PHOTO: PAUL HENNESSY/ZUMA PRESS

In Fort Lauderdale, home values for residences within the ZIP Code near the station have appreciated by 67% from 2018—when the station opened—to last year. That compares with a 33% median price increase for the Broward County area over that period. In West Palm Beach, homes near the station appreciated 37% versus a 30% median increase for the area.

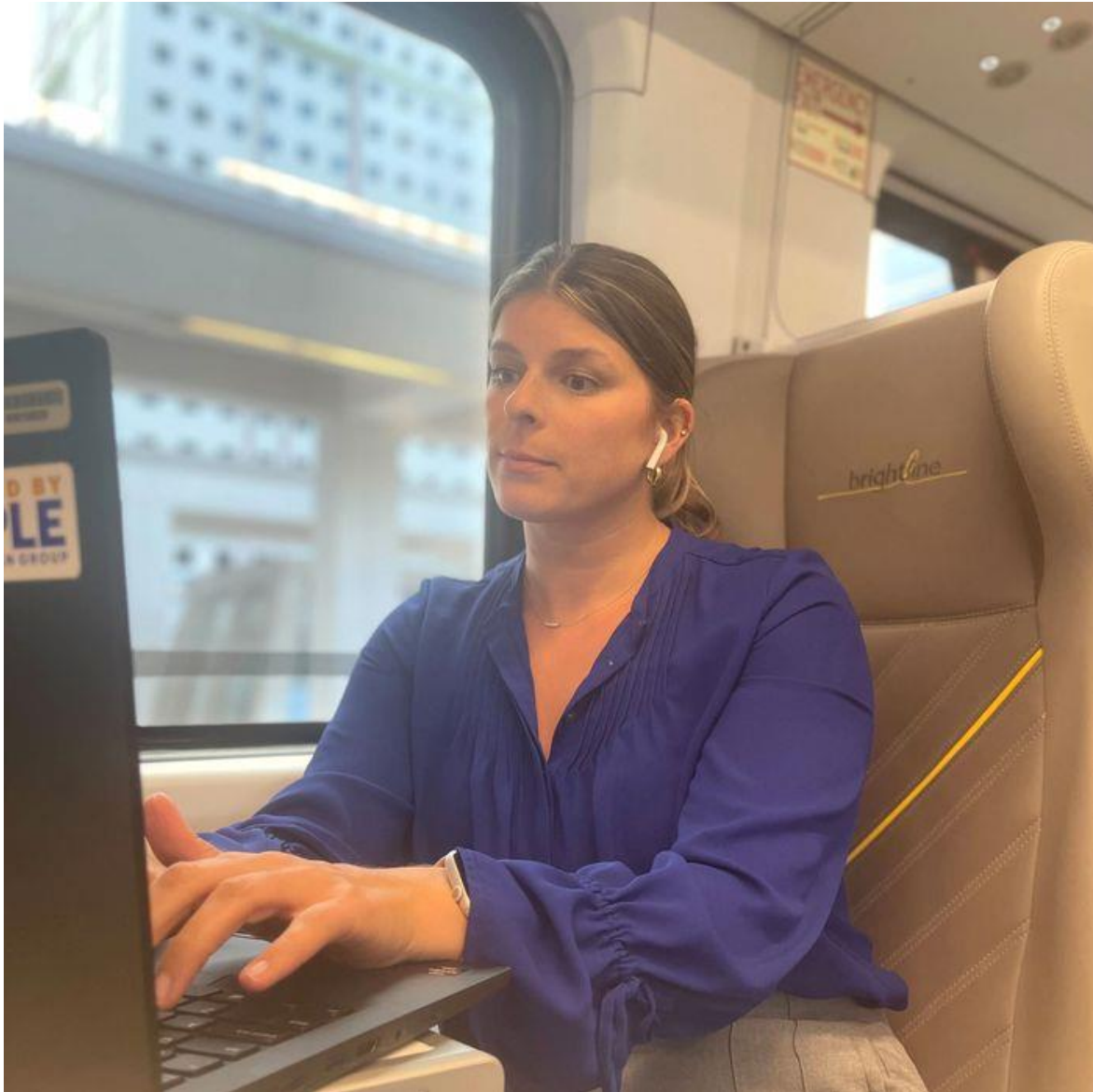
The difference was most stark in Miami. Property values near the station were up 83% in price over that period, compared with a 38% median increase for the Miami area.

“When cities get busy and grow and you can’t add roads, there’s only one thing to do: Start taking public transportation,” said Nitin Motwani, a real-estate developer and the managing partner of Miami World Center, a 27-acre development near Miami’s Brightline station. The \$4 billion mixed-use project includes thousands of residential units, with more under construction.

Rent has also increased at a higher rate near the Brightline train stops. In Fort Lauderdale, rental premiums are up most, 28% higher than the market average, according to Tina Tsyshevskaya, an analyst at Green Street.

Motwani and his brother and business partner, Dev Motwani, are developing three apartment buildings in the immediate area of the Fort Lauderdale Brightline station through their company Merrimac Ventures. They were also partners on a building with two [Hilton](#) hotel brands that is walking distance to the train.

“For me it’s obviously very exciting because we made a very early bet on transit-oriented development before it was a cool buzzword,” Nitin Motwani said.



Ariana Rabin commutes four days a week from Fort Lauderdale to her job in Miami, and says she can't imagine not living near the rail station. PHOTO: ARIANA RABIN

With the new Orlando station and others under consideration, Brightline is helping to create the transportation grid South Florida needs to continue its growth trajectory, according to Javier F. Aviñó, a lawyer at Bilzin Sumberg who represents developers and specializes in land development and government relations.

"It unlocks opportunities for people to commute and live in different ways than we'd seen before," he said.

At the Brightline train stop in Miami during the afternoon rush hour last week, Ariana Rabin sipped a glass of white wine while waiting for the next train to Fort Lauderdale, where she shares an apartment with her boyfriend. The Fort Lauderdale/Miami trip takes

about 30 minutes on the Brightline. If she drove to Miami instead, it usually takes about 75 minutes each way.

“Occasionally I’ll drive and it’s always a nightmare,” said Rabin, who commutes to work at Royal Caribbean four days a week. Since moving to Fort Lauderdale in 2020, her rent has increased more than 40% to \$2,719 a month. Still, she can’t imagine not living somewhere near the rail station.

“If I wanted to move, it would have to be somewhere I can catch the Brightline easily,” she said.

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