

# NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

## What a Florida site selector thinks about Vanderbilt moving in



*Construction in the city of West Palm Beach, Florida. Jock Fistick / South Florida Business Journal*



By Adam Sichko – Senior Reporter, Nashville Business Journal - Aug 27, 2024

The beaches are beautiful, sure. But corporate site selector John Boyd Jr. believes his home county in Florida offers way more than that to Vanderbilt University.

Vanderbilt is finalizing plans for a \$520 million campus in West Palm Beach that could open in 2026. Above all else, Vanderbilt's expansion is about wealth and growth, as Boyd sees it.

"It's this treasure trove of networking and business relationship-building opportunities that Palm Beach County presents to Vanderbilt. You think about opportunities for donations, corporate investments," Boyd said in an interview.

"The prevailing reaction was how this elevates Palm Beach County's academic stature to global companies, and that's true," Boyd added. "But a Palm Beach address brings prestige to Vanderbilt, given the amount of wealth and influence in Palm Beach County."

The Boyd Co. Inc. turns 50 next year and is a national economic development firm. About five years ago, Boyd moved himself and the business from New Jersey to Boca Raton, at the southern tip of Palm Beach County.

"It's just been this global magnet for wealth and influence and business and influencers who have moved here over the past decade or so," Boyd said, pointing to its nearly 60 billionaires as an example.

One of them, NFL team owner and real estate developer Stephen Ross, is among those backing Vanderbilt's desired move and raising money to fund construction. Vanderbilt has said the campus could have 1,000 students and about 100 faculty, featuring arms of its Owen Graduate School of Management and its School of Engineering. Other focus areas will include artificial intelligence and data science.



*John Boyd Jr., principal of The Boyd Co. Inc.*

"This is a way for Vanderbilt to expand in a high-growth area with strong incomes, strong student demand. When universities go into a new market ... it's about accessing outside funding, resources, exposure — outside of their traditional home bases," Boyd said. He also sees it as a recruiting tool for attracting and retaining faculty.

"Nashville and Palm Beach County share a lot in common," Boyd added. "They've been two of the big winners, with respect to ... talent leaving California, Chicago, New York."

Starting in March, Southwest Airlines — the largest carrier at Nashville International Airport — will begin daily nonstop service to Palm Beach International.