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THE NEXT OMAHA?

Better never settles

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, THE NEXT OMAHA?

Understanding growth cycles through comparative market insight

Stability as the Foundation. Growth as the Difference.

Everyone is chasing the next Austin. Fewer take the time to understand the power of markets built to perform quietly, long before they become headlines. Over the last few months, much of the conversation has focused on markets driven by a singular narrative. Places where rapid job creation, institutional capital, and aggressive underwriting collide to create outsized cycles. Those markets matter. They generate momentum, and at times, exceptional returns.

But there is a different category of market that deserves just as much attention. One where performance is not dependent on being rediscovered every cycle. Where demand is created not by capital flows or macro storylines, but by people simply living their lives. That is where Omaha enters the conversation.

At first glance, Omaha and Southwest Florida appear to have very little in common. One is often written off as a flyover city. The other is defined by lifestyle, weather, and migration. But when you look beyond the surface, the foundational economics of both markets are remarkably aligned. Both are built around stability.

A Shared Foundation Built on Everyday Demand

Omaha has never been a market people rush into. It does not generate urgency or speculative enthusiasm. Institutional capital is not lining up to front-run the next growth cycle. Development is measured, underwriting is conservative, and growth tends to occur incrementally.

It works because the economy is grounded in services that persist regardless of macro conditions. Healthcare, finance, logistics, professional services. These are sectors driven by usage, not momentum. Businesses are often local, frequently owner-operated, and closely tied to the communities they serve. Tenants are not chasing trends. They are serving customers. That structure creates a fundamentally different real estate market. Demand for office, retail, and medical space is not theoretical. It is directly tied to population and daily activity. Occupancy holds. Rent collections remain stable. Property values are supported by current operating performance rather than future assumptions. Southwest Florida shares far more of this DNA than most people realize.

At its core, it too is a service-based economy shaped by population. Demand for space is largely a function of residents going to restaurants, visiting doctors, running businesses, and accessing essential services. Small businesses and owner-users play a meaningful role, anchoring properties in real operating performance rather than financial engineering.

Neither market is institutionally dominated. Neither is perfectly priced or fully optimized. In both, properties are often run more like businesses than instruments. Assets frequently trade before being fully marked to market. And when buildings change hands, valuation methodologies in Southwest Florida often look far more like Omaha than those found in most primary or secondary markets across the country. This shared foundation explains why both markets have historically behaved with consistency.

STABILITY THROUGH THE CYCLES



Lower Volatility

Smaller vacancy swings mean less risk through economic cycles.



Faster Recovery

Return to pre-downturn levels quicker than the national average.



Demand Driven

Anchored by population, services, and daily-use demand.

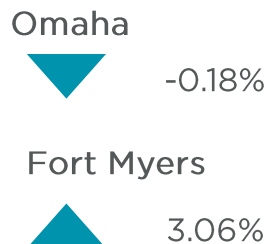
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Where the Paths Separate

The difference is not the foundation; the difference is trajectory. Omaha's structure provides stability, but its growth has been constrained. While the market continues to function reliably, population trends and workforce dynamics tell a more tempered story. Out-migration has increased, particularly among younger workers seeking higher pay, broader career paths, or faster personal and professional advancement. The local economy continues to serve its base well, but expansion opportunities remain limited relative to faster-growing regions.

Southwest Florida is accelerating off the same stable base. People are not just staying, they are arriving. And they are arriving with intent. Retirees are relocating with liquidity. Business owners are shifting operations. Remote workers are bringing income streams that are not tied to the local employment base. Capital is moving out of higher-tax, higher-cost markets into a region that offers both economic and lifestyle advantages. Importantly, this inflow is changing opportunity dynamics. Southwest Florida is retaining more of its college graduates as new employers, professional services, healthcare systems, and expanding businesses create clearer pathways for job placement and career advancement. Instead of exporting talent, the region is beginning to absorb and redeploy it.

2025 Population Growth (YoY by percentage)



Growth Layered on Stability

When population growth is introduced into a market that already behaves in a stable, demand-driven way, the outcome changes. Absorption does not simply hold, it tightens. Retail does not merely survive, it expands. Medical demand grows in direct correlation with demographics. Office space becomes less about speculation and more about actual use. This creates a different investment profile.

Income is more predictable. Leasing risk is more manageable. Value is supported by users rather than underwriting assumptions. Growth does not have to compensate for fragility because it is layering onto a base that already works.

Markets like Omaha demonstrate what durability looks like. Markets like Austin demonstrate what momentum can do. Southwest Florida sits between the two, but closer to Omaha than many expect, with one critical advantage.

It is growing. Viewed through that lens, Southwest Florida no longer looks like a secondary story. It begins to resemble a durable market with an expanding opportunity set. One that retains the stability of its foundation while offering a level of personal, professional, and economic growth that Omaha can no longer consistently provide.

Graduate Retention vs. Talent Out-Migration



Source: FGCU RERI Workforce & Education Reports, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)