

FREE BUYER GUIDE

Buying in Southwest Ranches

A buyer's guide to Southwest Ranches, Florida: the land, the neighborhoods, horses and zoning, wells and septic, and what to check before you make an offer.



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WELCOME

Living in Southwest Ranches

Southwest Ranches is a rural town in southwest Broward County, incorporated in 2000 to keep its large lots, equestrian character and open space. Homes here typically sit on an acre or more, many with barns, riding areas or room for them, and much of the town relies on private wells and septic systems.

Buying here takes a different kind of homework: zoning, usable acreage, drainage, permits and utilities all matter more than in a typical suburb. For a deeper look at the town's rules and day-to-day life, see the Southwest Ranches Guide that The Merino Group supports.

What buyers look for here

- Single-family homes on an acre or more, often with equestrian features
- Properties without a citywide HOA, where town zoning sets the rules
- Private wells and septic systems that need their own inspections
- Proximity to I-75 and the Weston, Davie and Pembroke Pines corridors

Homes and land

Most properties are custom single-family homes on large lots, from ranch-style houses to newer estates. Many include barns, paddocks, riding rings or room to add them, and some areas are known for their equestrian trails. There are also a few newer communities of large homes on large lots.

Unlike most of Broward County, many streets have no homeowners association, which gives owners more freedom and puts more of the upkeep on them.

Getting around

Southwest Ranches sits between Davie, Cooper City, Pembroke Pines and Weston. Griffin Road and Sheridan Street are the main east-west roads, and I-75 and U.S. 27 are close by to the west. Everyday shopping is in the neighboring cities, a few minutes away.

What to check before you buy

- **Zoning and lot size.** The zoning district decides what you can build and how many animals you can keep. Confirm it with the town before you plan a barn or an addition.
- **Usable acreage.** Drainage, easements and low areas can reduce how much of a lot you can actually use.
- **Well and septic.** Test the well water and have the septic system inspected along with the house.
- **Permits.** Make sure barns, fences, pools and additions were permitted.

- **Flood zone and insurance.** Check both for the specific address.

Learn more

For the town's rules on horses, barns and setbacks, and what day-to-day life looks like, see the Southwest Ranches Guide.

Schools

Public schools in Southwest Ranches are part of Broward County Public Schools. Attendance boundaries can change, so confirm the zoned schools for a specific address with the district.

Moving to Southwest Ranches, FL: What to Know Before You Buy

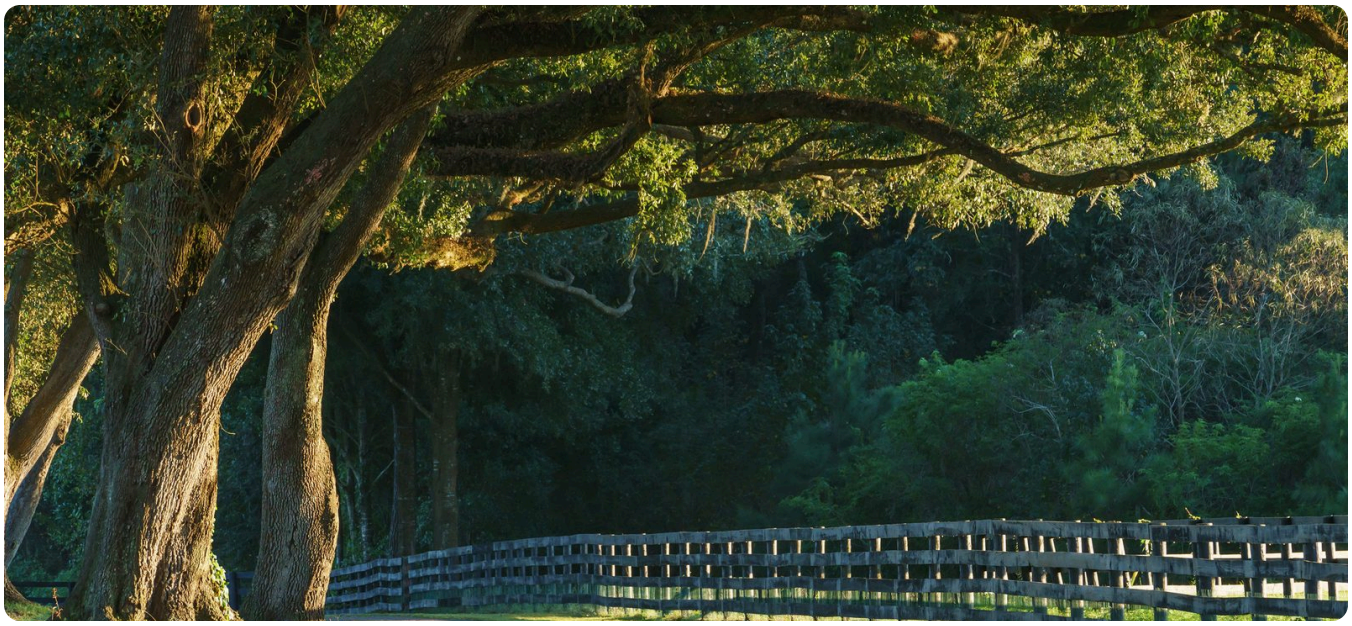
Southwest Ranches is a different kind of Broward town. Lots start at about an acre, horse trails take the place of sidewalks, and most homes run on their own well and septic system. Buying here takes different homework than buying in a typical suburb. This guide covers what to check before you make an offer.

A town that chose to stay rural

Southwest Ranches did not grow into a town. Residents voted to incorporate in March 2000, largely to keep the area from being annexed and divided into smaller suburban lots. That history still shapes how the town works.

- **It contracts most services.** Police come from the Davie Police Department, fire and EMS from Davie Fire Rescue together with the town's own volunteer fire department, and trash collection from Waste Management.
- **Commerce is very light on purpose.** There are two commercial corners: Coquina Plaza, anchored by a Publix, at Sheridan Street and Dykes Road, and a Tom Thumb at Griffin Road and Dykes Road. A feed store on South Flamingo Road rounds out the list.
- **There are no sidewalks and essentially no streetlights.** Nights are truly dark, and that is by policy.

Most errands, restaurants and gyms are a 10 to 15 minute drive away in Pembroke Pines, Cooper City, Weston or Davie.



Live oaks along a four-board farm fence.

Zoning comes first

On any listing, check the zoning district before anything else. It sets the minimum lot size, how much of the lot you can build on and how many animals you can keep. The main residential districts are:

- **RE (Rural Estate):** 1 net acre minimum.
- **RR (Rural Ranches):** 2 net acres (2.5 gross).
- **RR-A (Rural Ranches-A):** 2.5 net acres, the most protective district.
- **A-1 and A-2 (Agricultural):** 2 net or 2.5 gross acres for a residence.

Some older lots of record are grandfathered, which is why you may occasionally see a legal parcel under an acre. Every district caps building height at 35 feet. Guesthouses are allowed as accessory buildings on larger lots, with size limits, and they cannot legally be rented out.

One line in the town code matters more than most: any use not expressly permitted is prohibited. If you are thinking about an event venue, a side business or parking a fleet of vehicles, check the permitted uses before you buy, not after.

Horses, barns and trails

Southwest Ranches writes horse-keeping into its zoning code. In the main residential districts (RE, RR and RR-A), the code allows one livestock animal per 10,000 square feet of lot, roughly four per acre, with more allowed on larger lots and in the agricultural districts.

- **Barns need permits.** Any structure used to shelter or keep animals must be permitted and sit at least 50 feet from property lines. On a one-acre lot, that is a real design constraint.
- **Check the permit history.** An unpermitted barn or arena becomes the buyer's problem after closing.
- **The trails are part of daily life.** The town maintains more than 25 miles of multi-purpose trails, and riders on the road shoulder are normal traffic.

For the full rules by district, see Leslie's Southwest Ranches Guide.

Wells, septic and utilities

Assume a property has a well and septic system until you confirm otherwise. A limited number of properties get piped water, and the provider depends on the location: the City of Sunrise, Pembroke Pines Utilities or Cooper City Utilities. Two homes not far apart can have different providers, or none.

- **Get the water source in writing** from the seller, then confirm it with the utility named.
- **Test the well.** Local well water commonly carries iron and sulfur, so most homes run a treatment system. Ask for its service history.
- **Inspect the septic system** separately from the general home inspection, and compare the tank's capacity with the number of bedrooms.
- **Plan for a generator.** A well pump needs power, so an outage means no water.

Instead of a town-wide hydrant grid, fire protection relies on dedicated fire wells that pumper trucks draw from. Ask your insurance agent how that affects the property's rating.



A horse grazing behind a wooden fence.

Drainage and flood zones

Roads drain into open swales and canals rather than storm drains, and many canal-side roads have no guardrails. Drainage is managed in layers: the town handles local swales, and a drainage district handles the secondary canals, depending on where the parcel sits.

Flood zones vary parcel by parcel. Broward County's current FEMA flood maps took effect in July 2024, so look up the specific address and get a flood insurance quote early. If you can, walk the land during the rainy season. Standing water in a pasture or near a drainfield tells you a lot.

Taxes and assessments

The town's own property tax rate has been among the lowest of any Broward municipality, but the town portion is only one part of the bill. County, school and drainage district taxes apply too, and fire and trash service arrive as separate flat assessments on the same tax bill.

Florida's agricultural classification can lower the assessed value of land in bona fide commercial agricultural use, such as a working nursery or livestock operation. The use must exist on January 1, and the application goes to the Broward County Property Appraiser by March 1. It covers the qualifying land, not the house, and keeping a few horses for weekend riding does not qualify on its own. Confirm current rates and requirements with the Property Appraiser.

Schools

Southwest Ranches does not run its own schools. Students attend Broward County Public Schools, most commonly Hawkes Bluff Elementary (inside the town), Silver Trail Middle and West Broward High. Some parts of town are assigned to other schools, including Walter C. Young Middle, so check the specific address with Broward Schools' Find My Assigned School tool. Archbishop McCarthy High School, a private Catholic high school, is on Flamingo Road inside the town.

Your pre-offer checklist

- Zoning district and permitted uses, compared with your plans
- A survey showing easements (trail, drainage and utility easements are common)
- Water source verified, plus well flow and lab tests
- Septic inspection, tank capacity and drainfield age
- Permit history for every structure, including barns, arenas and guesthouses
- Flood zone and a flood insurance quote
- Private-road status and any shared maintenance terms
- Any deed restrictions or covenants in the title work

Frequently Asked Questions

Does Southwest Ranches have city water?

Mostly not. The town is mainly served by private wells and septic systems. Limited areas receive piped water from Sunrise, Pembroke Pines or Cooper City, so verify each property.

Can you keep horses in Southwest Ranches?

Yes. In the main residential districts the town code allows one livestock animal per 10,000 square feet of lot, roughly four per acre. Barns need a permit and a 50-foot setback from property lines.

What is the minimum lot size?

It depends on zoning: 1 net acre in RE, 2 net acres in RR and 2.5 net acres in RR-A, with some older lots grandfathered. Confirm the district for the specific parcel with the Town of Southwest Ranches.

Is there shopping in Southwest Ranches?

Very little, by design. Coquina Plaza, with its Publix, is the town's shopping center. Most other errands are a 10 to 15 minute drive into neighboring cities.

Talk with Leslie

Southwest Ranches is Leslie Merino's home market, and her office is next door in Pembroke Pines, where she lived for 15 years. She can walk you through zoning, utilities and permits on any property you are considering, in English or Spanish. Start with the Southwest Ranches neighborhood guide, browse

homes for sale, or contact Leslie to talk through a specific property.

Southwest Ranches Neighborhoods: How to Choose Where to Buy

Southwest Ranches covers about 13 square miles, and almost all of it is land of an acre or more. That makes the neighborhoods look alike on a map, but they differ in ways that matter: lot sizes, trail access, gates and, above all, whether a mandatory homeowners association comes with the deed. This guide walks through the main communities and how to compare them.

Start with the HOA question

Most of Southwest Ranches has no mandatory HOA. The large open neighborhoods have voluntary civic associations instead. These nonprofits advocate for the neighborhood, publish newsletters and hold monthly meetings, but they cannot charge mandatory dues, approve your paint color or place a lien on your property.

In those areas, the town code does the job an HOA does elsewhere: acre-plus zoning, setbacks for animal structures, fence rules and limits on how much of a lot can be built on. That freedom works both ways. You will not need an architectural review board's approval for your barn, and neither will your neighbor.

A few gated enclaves were platted with recorded covenants. There, the HOA is mandatory, with dues, gates and architectural standards.



A pasture gate in horse country.

The open neighborhoods

Sunshine Ranches

Sunshine Ranches is the equestrian heart of the town. Farms, stables and arenas are common, many properties have direct trail access, and the town's Sunshine Ranches Equestrian Park is here, with about 10 acres of horse and nature trails. Typical lots run about 2 to 2.5 acres.

The Sunshine Ranches Homeowners Association is voluntary. Membership has been $50 a year, and the association publishes a monthly magazine, the Waggler, whose classifieds are a common way to find hay suppliers, farriers and trailer mechanics. A few subdivisions inside Sunshine Ranches, such as Stone Creek, have their own gates or deed restrictions, so check the title work on any specific parcel.

Rolling Oaks

Rolling Oaks offers custom estate homes with equestrian trails and its own historic community barn. Typical lots range from about 1 to more than 2.5 acres. Rolling Oaks Park has equestrian trails along three of its boundaries. The Rolling Oaks Civic Association is voluntary and meets at the Rolling Oaks Barn.

Chambers Estates, a subdivision within the Rolling Oaks area, has many lakefront lots. Some listings describe it as gated, so verify its status and any association for the specific parcel.

Green Meadows

Green Meadows has about 210 homes, built mostly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, on lots of an acre or more. It is often seen as the town's relatively attainable entry point, and many of its older homes can be renovated or eventually rebuilt. No active association was found here; neighbors organize informally.

Country Estates

Country Estates runs along the western Griffin Road corridor near the edge of the Everglades and has a deeply rural feel. Lots typically range from about 1 to more than 2.5 acres, and its homeowners association is voluntary. The town's Country Estates Fishing Hole, a 16-acre open space with walking and riding trails, is part of the town's park system.

The gated communities

Landmark Ranch Estates

Landmark Ranch Estates is the town's best-known gated community: 44 fully custom homes on lots of roughly 2 to 3 acres, behind a staffed gate with 24-hour patrols. The Homeowners' Association of Landmark Ranch Estates is mandatory and covers security, common areas and architectural guidelines. It has no public website, so confirm the current dues and billing period for any home you consider.

Ivanhoe Estates

Ivanhoe Estates is a smaller guard-gated community in the northeast part of town, mostly built in the mid-1980s, with lots of about an acre. Its mandatory association bills quarterly, and its forms and governing documents are posted on the association's website. There is also a non-gated "Ivanhoe" area in neighboring Davie, so read listing addresses carefully.



Sunrise over open ranch land.

What changes in a mandatory HOA

If you buy in Landmark Ranch Estates or Ivanhoe Estates, a few things work differently:

- **Exterior changes need association approval first,** then a town permit. Under Florida's HOA law (Chapter 720), the architectural review board has a formal say, and the covenants can be stricter than town code.
- **Your closing requires an estoppel certificate** from the association, showing dues, fines and any open violations on the property. Your title company orders it.
- **Dues are part of your carrying costs.** Ask early for the current amount, the billing schedule and the governing documents.

In the voluntary areas there is no association approval to get, but every barn, fence and addition still needs a town permit.

How to compare neighborhoods

Instead of asking which neighborhood is best, start with how you plan to use the land:

1. **Horses or other livestock?** Look at trail access, lot size and the zoning district. A barn must sit at least 50 feet from property lines, which is easy on 2.5 acres and tight on one acre.

2. **Gate or no gate?** Decide whether you want staffed security and enforced standards, or the freedom of town code alone. Each comes with trade-offs.
3. **Older home or newer?** Some areas have more homes from the 1970s and 1980s. Budget for updates, and check the permit history on every structure.
4. **Utilities and drainage?** Wells, septic and piped water vary parcel by parcel, not neighborhood by neighborhood. Walk the property in the rainy season if you can.
5. **Easements and covenants?** Trail easements and deed restrictions show up in the survey and title work, sometimes in neighborhoods with no HOA.

Street-level differences, such as which blocks back onto a canal or where trail easements run, rarely make it into a general guide. That is where local experience helps.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which Southwest Ranches communities have a mandatory HOA?

Mainly the gated enclaves, notably Landmark Ranch Estates and Ivanhoe Estates. Sunshine Ranches, Rolling Oaks, Green Meadows and Country Estates have no mandatory HOA over the whole neighborhood, though some small subdivisions carry their own restrictions.

Is Sunshine Ranches an HOA community?

No. The Sunshine Ranches Homeowners Association is a voluntary civic organization. Joining is a choice, and it cannot compel dues.

What is the difference between a civic association and an HOA?

A mandatory HOA is created by recorded covenants, so membership and dues come with the deed and the association can enforce its rules. A voluntary civic association advocates for the neighborhood but cannot dictate what you do with your land.

Talk with Leslie

Southwest Ranches is Leslie Merino's home market, and she works with buyers in English and Spanish. If you are weighing two or three neighborhoods, she can help you compare specific parcels on zoning, utilities, gates and association rules. See the Southwest Ranches neighborhood guide, browse homes for sale, or contact Leslie to start the conversation. For more on the town's rules, read her Southwest Ranches Guide.

Buying a Horse Property in Southwest Ranches: Zoning, Barns and Livestock Rules

Southwest Ranches is one of the few places in South Florida where keeping horses is written into the zoning code as a permitted use. Lots start at about an acre, trails connect the neighborhoods, and barns are part of the landscape. That does not mean anything goes. How many animals you can keep, where a barn can sit and what kind of equestrian business you can run all depend on the property's zoning district and the town code.

This guide covers the rules buyers ask about most. Codes change, so use it as a starting point and confirm the details for any specific parcel with the Town of Southwest Ranches before you commit.

Start with the zoning district

The zoning district is the first thing to check on any horse property. It sets the minimum lot size, how much of the lot the house can cover, how many animals you can keep and which businesses are allowed. Most residential land falls into five districts:

- **RE (Rural Estate):** 1 net acre minimum.
- **RR (Rural Ranches):** 2 net acres or 2.5 gross acres.
- **RR-A (Rural Ranches-A):** 2.5 net acres, the most protective district.
- **A-1 (Agricultural Estate):** 2 net or 2.5 gross acres for a residence.
- **A-2 (General Agricultural):** 2 net or 2.5 gross acres for a residence, with working farms in mind.

Some older lots of record are grandfathered at smaller sizes, so a lot's size alone does not tell you its district. Get the district from the town or the Broward County Property Appraiser before you get attached to a property.



A horse grazing behind a wooden fence.

How many horses the code allows

The livestock limits are in Section 045-030 of the town's Unified Land Development Code, and they differ by district:

- **RE, RR and RR-A:** one livestock animal per 10,000 square feet of lot area, roughly four per acre. On lots over 4.5 net acres, one more animal per 10,000 square feet is allowed if all animals are sheltered.
- **A-1:** four animals per net acre. On 3.5 net acres or more, the count may be doubled if all animals are sheltered, and above 10 net acres there is no limit.
- **A-2:** number and type are not restricted, subject to Florida's nuisance and Right to Farm standards.
- **Bona fide farms in any district:** not restricted in number or type, as long as the operation qualifies under Florida law (F.S. § 823.14).

For scale, a 2.5-acre parcel in RR zoning works out to roughly ten animals under the lot-area formula. In practice, pasture management is usually the real limit, not the code.

A few details surprise even long-time owners:

- Foals and other offspring under weaning age do not count against the limit.
- In the RE, RR and RR-A districts, up to 25 birds or fowl are allowed in an enclosure set at least 50 feet from lot lines.
- Any area animals can reach must be fenced well enough to keep them off streets and neighboring land.
- Barbed wire and razor wire are not allowed as fencing. Low-voltage "hot wire" is allowed, and fences can be up to eight feet tall.

Barns, stables and arenas

The town supports barns, but they are not permit-free.

- **Permits are required.** Barns, stables and covered arenas go through town permitting like any other structure.
- **50-foot setbacks.** Any building, roofed structure, pen or coop used to shelter or keep animals must sit at least 50 feet from property lines. On a one-acre lot that shapes the whole site plan. On 2.5 acres it is usually easy to meet.
- **Farm buildings get carve-outs.** Nonresidential farm buildings are exempt from the plot-coverage caps, which limit houses to between 8% and 20% of the lot depending on the district, and from the 35-foot height cap. A hay barn does not compete with the house for buildable area.
- **A relief process exists.** The code's noncommercial farm special exception (Article 155) lets an owner ask for relief from setback, coverage or height rules by showing that a rule restricts a generally accepted farming practice.
- **Small things get cited.** Feed must be stored rat-proof, and nothing can be parked or stored on the drainage swale along the road.

Equestrian businesses: check the permitted-use list

Commercial equestrian operations are a permitted principal use in the A-1, A-2, RE and RR districts, which cover most of the town. Unlike most of Broward, a legitimate boarding or training operation is on the list here.

The other side of the code is strict. Section 045-060 says any use not expressly permitted is prohibited. Do not assume an activity is allowed because horses already live on the property. Boarding, lessons, clinics, events and large-scale trailer storage each depend on whether the permitted-use list covers them. Veterinary clinics and hospitals, and commercial kennels, are not permitted anywhere in town. If you plan to run any kind of business from the property, confirm it with the town before you make an offer.



A horse in the afternoon sun.

Horses and the agricultural classification

Florida's agricultural classification, often called greenbelt, lets land in bona fide commercial agricultural use be assessed at its agricultural use value instead of market value. It applies to the qualifying land, not the house, and owning horses you ride on weekends is not a commercial operation. If a property already has the classification, ask whether it will continue with your intended use, and check with the Broward County Property Appraiser before you count on it.

Where you can ride

More than 25 miles of multi-purpose trails along the town's rights-of-way link the neighborhoods and over 150 acres of parkland.

- **Sunshine Ranches Equestrian Park:** 20 acres, with about 10 acres of horse and nature trails.
- **Rolling Oaks Park:** equestrian trails along three boundaries and a restored historic barn used as a community facility.
- **Country Estates Fishing Hole and Frontier Trails:** 16 and 30 acres of open space with pedestrian and equestrian trails.

What to verify before you buy

1. **Zoning district.** It decides your animal count, coverage cap and permitted businesses.
2. **Permit history on every structure.** Unpermitted barns and arenas exist, and after closing they become your problem, not the seller's.
3. **Setback compliance.** Check the distance from existing barns to the property lines. Grandfathered nonconformities can complicate renovations.

4. **Drainage and pasture elevation.** A pasture that holds water all rainy season is hard on horses. Walk the land in summer if you can.
5. **Easements.** Some parcels carry trail easements. They show up in the survey and title work.
6. **The septic drainfield.** Horses and heavy vehicles should stay off it, so find out where it is before you plan paddocks.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many horses can I keep per acre in Southwest Ranches?

In the RE, RR and RR-A districts, the code allows one livestock animal per 10,000 square feet of lot area, roughly four per acre, with room for more on larger lots where all animals are sheltered. Limits are different in A-1 and A-2, so confirm the district first.

Do I need a permit for a barn?

Yes. Barns, stables and covered arenas need a town permit, and any structure for sheltering or keeping animals must be at least 50 feet from property lines.

Talk with Leslie

Southwest Ranches is Leslie Merino's home market. She is a REALTOR® with Lifestyle International Realty and works with buyers in English and Spanish. For more on the town's rules and daily life, read Leslie's Southwest Ranches guide. You can also browse the Southwest Ranches neighborhood guide or contact Leslie to talk through a specific property.

Wells and Septic Systems: What to Check Before You Buy in Southwest Ranches

Most of Southwest Ranches was built to stay off the suburban utility grid. A typical home draws water from a private well and sends wastewater to a septic tank and drainfield on the same lot. That is part of the town's design, not a defect, but it changes how you evaluate a property. Here is what to check, and who to ask, before you buy.

Rules, providers and requirements can change. Confirm the details for a specific property with the Broward County Health Department, the Town of Southwest Ranches and the utility involved, and use licensed inspectors.

Assume a well until proven otherwise

The town's Public Works department describes Southwest Ranches as "mostly served by individual water wells and onsite disposal systems." With a well, your water comes from the ground under your own land, through your own pump, pressure tank and treatment equipment.

A limited part of town has piped water, and it does not come from one utility. Depending on where the parcel sits, service may come from the City of Sunrise, Pembroke Pines Utilities or Cooper City Utilities. Two houses a short distance apart can have different providers, or none. Broward County does not supply water here. Its role is regulatory: the Broward County Health Department oversees wells and septic systems.

Before you make an offer:

- Ask the seller to document in writing what the property has: well or piped water (and from which provider), and septic or sewer.
- Verify that answer with the named utility. A line in the listing is not verification.



Open ranch land at dusk.

What to know about well water

The shallow aquifer here commonly carries high iron and sulfur. Without treatment they stain fixtures and cause odor, so nearly every well home runs a treatment system. A typical setup combines some of these steps:

- Aeration or chlorination
- Filtration
- Softening

How to check the well

- **Flow test.** Shows how much water the well delivers.
- **Lab test.** Have the water tested by a lab so you know what you are treating.
- **Service history.** Ask for the treatment system's records, the age of the pump, pressure tank and equipment, and when parts were last replaced.
- **Ongoing costs.** Plan for salt, filter media and regular maintenance, and for a larger expense if the system is due for replacement.

Septic: your own private system

With few exceptions, homes in Southwest Ranches handle wastewater through a septic tank and drainfield, permitted and regulated by the Broward County Health Department. A well-maintained system is unremarkable. Pump the tank every few years, keep heavy vehicles and horses off the drainfield, and be careful with what goes down the drain.

What a septic inspection should cover

- **Inspection with pump-out.** A septic inspection with the tank pumped is standard practice here, separate from the general home inspection.
- **Capacity versus the house.** Additions and guesthouses built over the years do not always come with a larger septic system. A six-bedroom house on a tank sized for three bedrooms is a real problem, and one an inspection can find.
- **Drainfield elevation and age.** The water table is high and rainy-season standing water is a known issue, so a low drainfield can struggle. Ask when it was last replaced.
- **Room to replace.** Drainfields are eventually rebuilt. Setbacks from wells, canals and barns limit where a new one can go, especially on smaller lots.

No power means no water

Electricity comes from FPL. A well pump needs power, so during a hurricane outage a home without backup power also has no water. That is why generators are common on estate properties here. Check whether the home has a generator and transfer switch, or plan to add one.



A pasture gate in horse country.

Fire protection and insurance

There is no town-wide hydrant grid. Fire trucks draw water from dedicated fire-protection wells that are inspected each year. Ask your insurance agent how they rate the property's fire protection class before you set your budget.

Drainage and flood checks

A septic system depends on how well the land drains, so review both together.

- **Flood zone.** Zones vary parcel by parcel. Broward County's current FEMA flood maps took effect in July 2024. Look up the specific address and get a flood insurance quote rather than assuming.
- **Drainage district.** Secondary canals are managed by the Central Broward Water Control District east of SW 148th Avenue (Volunteer Road) and by the South Broward Drainage District west of it. The district shows up as a line on the tax bill.
- **Swales.** Open swales, not storm drains, carry road runoff. Keeping them clear is part of owning here, and parking on them is a code violation.
- **Rainy-season visit.** Walk the land in the rainy season if you can. Grading and standing water are easier to judge in September than in March.

Your well and septic checklist

1. Water source documented by the seller and verified with the provider, or a well flow test and lab test.
2. Age and service records for the well equipment and treatment system.
3. Septic inspection with pump-out, tank capacity compared with bedroom count, and drainfield age.
4. Flood zone from the county's 2024 maps and a flood insurance quote.
5. A generator and transfer switch, or a plan to add one.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does Southwest Ranches have city water?

Mostly no. The town is predominantly served by private wells and septic systems. Limited areas receive piped water from the City of Sunrise, Pembroke Pines Utilities or Cooper City Utilities. Service varies by parcel, so verify it for each property.

Do I need a separate septic inspection?

Yes. A septic inspection with the tank pumped out is standard practice in Southwest Ranches, and it is separate from the general home inspection.

Who regulates wells and septic systems?

The Broward County Health Department permits and regulates wells and septic systems in Southwest Ranches. Contact it with questions about a specific property's systems.

Talk with Leslie

Southwest Ranches is Leslie Merino's home market. She is a REALTOR® with Lifestyle International Realty and works with buyers in English and Spanish. For more on utilities, drainage and daily life in town, see Leslie's Southwest Ranches guide. You can also search homes for sale or contact Leslie to talk through a specific property.

CHECKLIST

Before you make an offer

A short list our clients use. Bring it to every showing.

- [ ] **Confirm the zoning district**
  Ask the Town of Southwest Ranches which district the parcel is in. It decides how many animals you can keep and what you can build.

- [ ] **Order a survey**
  Know the exact lot lines, easements and where any barn, fence or pool sits before you count on them.

- [ ] **Test the well water**
  Order a lab test for bacteria and common contaminants, and ask how old the pump and tank are.

- [ ] **Inspect and pump the septic**
  Have a septic contractor inspect the tank and drain field. A failing drain field is one of the most expensive surprises.

- [ ] **Check permits for every structure**
  Barns, guest quarters, additions and enclosures should have permits on file with the town.

- [ ] **Check the flood zone and insurance**
  Look up the FEMA flood zone and get windstorm and flood quotes early; they shape the real monthly cost.

- [ ] **Plan the homestead exemption**
  If it will be your primary home, file with the Broward County Property Appraiser by March 1 of the year after you buy.

Questions buyers ask

Is Southwest Ranches a town or a city?

Southwest Ranches is an incorporated town in southwest Broward County. It was incorporated in 2000 to keep its large lots, equestrian character and open space.

Are there HOAs in Southwest Ranches?

Much of Southwest Ranches has no homeowners association, and town zoning sets the rules. Some subdivisions do have associations, so confirm for each property.

Can you keep horses in Southwest Ranches?

Many properties allow horses and other livestock, subject to the town's zoning and lot-size rules. Check the rules for the specific parcel before you buy.

Do Southwest Ranches homes use wells and septic?

Many do. Plan separate inspections for the well and the septic system as part of your due diligence.

Where can I learn more about Southwest Ranches?

Read the Southwest Ranches Guide at southwestranchesguide.com, or contact Leslie to talk through specific properties.



Questions about a home or a street?

Leslie and the team work in English and Spanish across southwest Broward and northwest Miami-Dade. Call, text or write, and we will answer the same day.

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