Oakbridge expands into Tampa Bay with coastal property specialist

The deal gives Oakbridge its first Tampa Bay presence through a team that knows Florida's coastal underwriting from the inside

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By Josh Recamara

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Oakbridge Insurance Agency has partnered with Northeast Underwriters, a St. Petersburg-based commercial insurance agency specializing in coastal property and condominium association risks, establishing the firm's first presence in the Tampa Bay market.

Northeast will continue operating from St. Petersburg with its existing client-facing team, while gaining access to Oakbridge's expanded specialty capabilities and operational resources.

Matt James, Oakbridge's chief executive officer, said local market knowledge is non-negotiable in coastal property underwriting.

"You can't give good advice on coastal property without deep local knowledge. Northeast has that knowledge, built over years in this market. Bringing their expertise into Oakbridge strengthens what we can offer clients in Florida and gives the Northeast team broader resources to build on what they already do exceptionally well," James said.

Ken Kijowski, president of Northeast Underwriters, said the partnership was chosen specifically because it preserved what the agency considers fundamental to its success.

"We wanted our team to have more support and more opportunity, but we also wanted clients to continue working with people who know them and understand this market. Oakbridge aligned with and respected both priorities from the beginning," Kijowski said.

What Northeast brings to Oakbridge

Northeast's value to Oakbridge is specific rather than generic. The agency has spent years building carrier relationships and underwriting expertise for businesses operating in coastal Florida, a market that has become one of the most difficult property placement environments in the country following years of carrier exits, rising reinsurance costs and repeated hurricane losses.

Condominium association coverage in particular has become a specialized niche in Florida since state legislative changes in 2022 and 2023 tightened reserve and insurance requirements for associations, creating both complexity and demand for specialist brokers who understand how those requirements interact with available carrier appetite.

Trae Vaughan, Oakbridge's president, said the firm's approach to integration is built around keeping producers focused on clients rather than on operational transition.

"We want our local teams spending their time understanding clients, advising them well, and building lasting relationships. When we can put stronger support behind that

work without changing who the client trusts or who is accountable to them, it reaffirms that we are building partnerships at Oakbridge the right way," Vaughan said.

Troy Young, a senior producer at Northeast, said the ability to grow without pulling producers away from clients was central to the decision.

"We have a strong producer group and a business we're proud of, so the question was how to keep building without losing momentum on the work in front of us. Having Oakbridge behind the team gives us support in areas that become more demanding as a firm grows, allowing our producers to stay focused on serving clients and developing the business," Young said.

Why this matters for Florida coastal property clients and brokers

For commercial property owners and condominium associations along Florida's Gulf Coast, Northeast's continued local presence under Oakbridge's broader platform means day-to-day service through people who already know the market, while access to Oakbridge's national carrier relationships and specialty resources adds capacity that a standalone regional agency would struggle to match in the current Florida property environment.

Robbie Smith, Oakbridge's executive chairman, said the firm specifically seeks agencies with differentiated expertise and local commitment.

"Northeast has built a business with a clear sense of responsibility to its clients and its people. We saw a team worth investing in and a culture that fits Oakbridge well. The opportunity now is to give them the support to keep building for the long term," Smith said.

For brokers watching the Florida coastal property market, this deal is another data point in a broader pattern: as admitted carriers have pulled back from Florida coastal risk and surplus lines placements have become more common, specialist agencies with deep local carrier relationships and underwriting knowledge have become

attractive acquisition or partnership targets for larger brokerages seeking differentiated capacity rather than simply geographic coverage.

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