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# FLORIDA IS HER CITIES!

## FUN FACTS:

- Florida has 410 active municipalities (cities, towns and villages) representing 50% of Florida's population (18.8 million).
- Florida's smallest city, Weekie Wachee, has a population of 8.
- Florida's largest city, Jacksonville, has a population of 859,421.
- City is from the Greek word for citizen – civitas; we also get the words civics and citizenship from this root.
- Town is from Middle English and means 'within the walls' – like a fortified living area
- Village is from the Latin, 'villa' and means a place to dwell.
- Municipality is from the Latin and means 'the people over themselves' – self-government.
- The median population of the 410 active cities is 5,800 in 2008...we are a state of smaller cities.
- Florida's oldest cities are St. Augustine and Pensacola – both of which functioned as cities before Florida was a state; the newest cities are Grant-Valkaria (in Brevard County) and Loxahatchee Groves (Palm Beach County) – formed in 2006.

## UNDERSTANDING FLORIDA'S CITIES:

- There is no legal difference between a city, town or village – all are municipalities.
- Florida has 4 kinds of local governments: counties, school districts, special districts and municipalities.
- Cities are the only level of government that a citizen can choose – you make the choice when you choose where to live. Cities are the closest level of government to the people.
- Cities are always within a county and school district (those boundaries are established by the state). There are also special districts in certain parts of the state; these are also a local government.
- Citizens create cities because they want to self-govern; the process is called incorporation (like a company) because cities conduct certain businesses on behalf of their citizens.
- Just a city is incorporated, a city can be dissolved: if citizens decide they no longer wish to self-govern, a process called dissolution is followed. The area is then served by county government.
- Some of the most common city services are police protection, fire prevention and protection, water and waste water provision, public works programs like street construction and maintenance, parks & recreation, code enforcement, planning/ zoning and growth management, and building inspection.
- Cities write a charter, voted on by the citizens, that is like a constitution; it establishes the legislative body (council or commission), sets the powers and duties of key positions, and establishes a structure for the day-to-day administration.

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- The legislative body of a city (called a council or commission) may have any number of seats on it (usually an odd number to avoid tie votes); in Florida, the smallest councils have 3 members and the largest has 19 members.
  - City councils adopt laws, called ordinances, which are enforceable within the city's boundaries.
  - Cities raise the funds to pay for infrastructure, services and programs through taxes, fees, assessments and other means.
  - Prior to 1968, cities and counties could only enact programs with permission from the state. In 1968, the Florida Constitution was changed to give cities and counties Home Rule powers, so each can enact their own ordinances.
  - Cities are intergovernmental partners on certain programs like emergency management: working with the county, state and federal government on hurricane preparation and recovery is an example.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FLORIDA'S CITIES:

- Florida was the fastest-growing state between World War II and 1980; annual increases averaged 1,000 people per day moving into the state during some of these years. Florida is now growing at less than 200 people per day moving into the state – and that creates economic challenges for the state and local governments.
- Florida's tax structure was largely written in the 1940s, and many citizens are calling for broad tax reform. Florida's counties, school districts and cities all share in property tax revenue and several constitutional and state law measures are changing this tax source – creating major fiscal issues for cities.
- When the federal or state government requires another government to pay for a program the government never had before, this is called a mandate. Most mandates are enacted with no funding – which leads to reductions in other programs – usually against the wishes of the citizenry. For example, some cities have had to cut library hours, reduce the number of police officers, or close parks because of unfunded state mandates.

### WHAT IS THE FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES?

Created in 1922, the League is an association that serves as a united voice for all municipal governments in the state, and also serves as the forum for cities to get together and share information, ideas and concerns. The League serves as the advocate for Florida's cities in front of the Florida Legislature and state government, as well as the U.S. Congress and federal government and regional governments. The League provides services to its members and has offices in Tallahassee and Orlando. Nearly every city, town and village is a League member – 99% this year.

### THE FLC COMMITMENT TO CITY YOUTH COUNCILS

Over the years, the League has encouraged cities to develop and foster Youth Councils. Some Youth Councils have attended League functions – but not many. In 2008, the League held the first-ever Youth Councils Day in conjunction with the League's annual conference. Over 20 Youth Council members participated from five different programs. In 2009, we hope to expand this program to include even more Youth Councils. The League has developed a model for creating and sustaining Youth Councils and has shared this information with every FLC member.