

Cities 101

Glossary of Key Terms

Advisory Board: appointed by a city to advise a council on certain matters; usually comprised of volunteer citizens.

Ad Valorem (tax): Latin phrase meaning “to the value of” and used inter-changeably with the term property tax; the largest tax source for city and county government in Florida.

Annexation: How a municipality expands its physical boundaries, and how a property owner in the unincorporated area becomes part of an incorporated area; covered by Ch. 171, Florida Statute

Assessment: a fee placed upon property owners for an improvement specific to that property or area; can be paid with annual property tax bill or separately. Used for a variety of improvements.

Block Grant: a federal or state designation of funds that are awarded through competition or various qualifications. The funding may be used for an area (block) of programs

Charter: the broad governing document for municipal governments (cities, towns, villages and charter counties); adopted by the people and amended by the people through referendum. It is derived from the French word for “contract.” Every city in FL has a charter; only a few of the counties have charters.

Charter Officer: a position created and defined through a charter. Has legal standing because of placement in charter. (Example: the Council or Commission of a city are charter officers.)

City: municipal government; general-purposed local government created by the people to self-govern. Created through Ch. 165, F.S. (From the Greek, *civitas*, for citizen)

Code: the body of ordinances for a city or county; often codified regularly to make sure all ordinances are non-conflicting with one another.

Commission: elected body of a county or municipal government; also used to refer to the elected School Board members.

Conversion: a new process wherein an existing special district can convert to a municipality, per Chapter 165, F.S.

Comp. Plan (Comprehensive Plan) – required of the state, counties and municipalities in Florida; includes plans for development, land use, transportation and other factors to help plan for a twenty-year cycle, and to manage growth. Process extensively amended in 2011.

Concurrency: state law requiring that infrastructure be in place before development occurs; features prominently in city and county comprehensive plans. Amended in 2011 to be a guideline for local governments, and no longer a law.

Constitution (both federal and state): the broad governing documents for both entities; adopted by the people and amended by the people through referendum. The precepts of a constitution are then enacted through law.

Constitutional Officer: a position created and defined in a constitution; has legal standing through such creation. (Example: Sheriff is a constitutional officer of a county.)

Council: the elected body of a city government (in Florida, there is occasional use of Councilor, Supervisor, Trustee and Alderman; but less commonly than Council or Commission).

County: sub state; arm of state. A unit of general-purpose local government created by the state to deliver state services.

Ethics Law: as established by FL Legislature to enact Article II of Florida Constitution, this set of laws outlines many prohibitions, restrictions and reporting requirements for officials elected to state, county, municipal and special districts. Detailed in Chapter 112, F.S.

Fee: a charge for service issued by a local government; adopted through an ordinance. It is voluntary in purpose and proceeds must go to the service provided. Also called charge for service; user fee.

Growth Management: In Florida, a set of laws and policies in the 1970s to 2011 covering acceptable land use, conservation, development, zoning and other governmental regulation of growth. The 2011 law changes return most of this power and process to the city or county.

Home Rule: The Florida Constitution grants (1968), and the Florida Legislature upheld (1973), this power for city and county governments. It provides authority to adopt ordinances and enact programs without permission from the state, provided such ordinances do not conflict with state or federal law.

Impact Fees: Imposed by cities and counties to ensure that infrastructure and services related to growth are paid for by the growth area or entity. Must be spent on the specific service (fire service, for example) and are time-limited for collection and expenditure.

Incorporation: in government, used to describe creation of a municipality. The act of creating a city, town or village through referendum. Outlined in Ch. 165, F.S.

Infrastructure: the physical, man-made structures that support a service; i.e., pipes for water and sewer; water and wastewater treatment plants; paved roads; buildings and supportive systems for buildings; stormwater systems; parks.

Initiative: an effort placed before voters to amend a charter, ordinance or other legal action. Often defined in Charter, or law, as to procedure; often requires gathering a set number of signatures to gain ballot access.

Intergovernmental: affecting one or more governments; overlapping goals of more than one government; coordinated activities of more than one government; shared sources of revenues among governments.

Interlocal – refers to action between two governments, usually as an agreement for service, an exchange of funding, or other legally binding agreement.

Law: an enforceable action taken by government to restrict actions or set standards for compliance.

Ordinance: a legal action taken by a city/county government; often used to distinguish between state and federal laws.

Mandate: a legal action by a government requiring another level of government to do something; usually does not include funding (un-funded mandate).

Mayor: term used in municipal charters for the person on the Council or Commission who leads it; in certain charters, refers to a separate position not on the Council or Commission who is the city's administrator. Usually refers to the elected leader of a municipal government.

Millage Rate: the tax levy enacted by a government, usually for the property tax. It is from the Latin for 1,000 (mill) and is multiplied by the appraised value of a property to create a taxable amount.

Municipal: (Municipality) refers to city government; from the Latin “municipus” – many over the people. Used when you don't want to distinguish between city, town or village; also used legislatively to separate cities from counties.

Mutual Aid Agreement: inter-local agreement between and among governments to render assistance in disaster response and recovery

Place Name: used by planners to distinguish unincorporated areas known by local names (examples in Florida: Two Egg; Christmas); sometimes these are also called communities.

Public Hearing: a noticed meeting (per statute and/or ordinance) relating to legal action by a government; usually requires that the public must be heard before action is taken.

Referendum (a): a vote held on a government action; usually set in state or city/county law.

Resolution: when adopted by a city or county, this commemorative or expressive document has standing, but is usually not legally binding in the manner of an ordinance, unless that city's charter provides for such powers.

Save Our Homes: Constitutional amendment that limits the valuation of property; applies to local governments as a limit in the amount per year that a property may grow in value.

Save Our Seniors: Constitutional amendment, with local enactment, that permits a county or municipality to add to the homestead exemption for qualifying elderly persons.

School District: In Florida, this special-purpose district is created by the state to provide K-12 public education. School districts are funded through state and a required local effort (RLE), which is a levy of property tax set by the State and levied by the school district board of commissioners. In Florida, this district shares the same physical boundaries as a county.

Special District: created by the Legislature (independent) or a city or county (independent) to provide a single purpose in a specified area. Known as special-purpose local governments. (Examples: Independent Fire District; Dependent Downtown Improvement Authority)

Sunshine: Short-hand for Florida's Open Meetings/Open Records Law; in Florida Constitution and Chs. 119, 186 F.S. Applies to state in limited capacity, and to local governments in a very extensive capacity. ("All meetings are held in the Sunshine.")

Tax: a mandatory payment from a citizen to a government; levied through the authority of a government. Rates are established by the government through either the state constitution or by government law.

Town: a municipal government; also used to describe unincorporated areas. (From the Old English – "lives within the walls")

Unincorporated: land in a county that is not within the boundaries of a municipality. Often called by a locally known name, but without a government.

Village: a municipal government; also used to describe unincorporated areas. (From the Latin, "*villa, villagio*" – place to dwell)

Workshop: for local governments, a meeting at which issues are discussed without a vote. Under Florida's Sunshine Laws, this is one of the most effective means of publicly discussing public business without taking action, so that all members of the governing body know where one another stands on an issue.

Zoning: set of laws creating categories of land use within a city or county; used to separate areas by activity or use of property. (Example: commercial zoning; residential zoning; industrial zoning)

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS USED WITHIN FLORIDA GOVERNMENTS

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act; federal law.
AGO – Attorney General Opinions (state level; legal advice compiled on the AG web site)
BEBR – Bureau of Economic and Business Research (at UF; calculates populations)
BOCC – Board of County Commissioners
CDBG – Community Development Block Grant (Federal and State)
CDD – Community Development District – independent special district (F.S. Ch. 190) created for development; has substantial fiscal authority
CFLGE – Center for Florida Local Government Excellence – created to support Florida’s local governments through training, research and convening entities for discussions
CFO – Chief Financial Officer – added to FL Cabinet to replace other offices in 2003; position combines former duties of comptroller, chief fire marshal and insurance commissioner
CIE – Capital Improvement Element: planning document for infrastructure maintenance and improvements
CIP – Capital Improvement Plan – local government document outlining several years of long-term planning, usually related to infrastructure
CRA – Community Redevelopment Agency (also called DIA) – created by city or county, this governing body has special taxing authority for redevelopment and improvements to a blighted area. CRA’s are dependent special districts
DEM – Division of Emergency Management – governor’s office division that oversees all emergency operations for state and local governments (man-made and natural)
DEO – Department of Economic Opportunity – state agency responsible for many growth management reports from cities and counties; also provides housing assistance, grants and technical assistance in public and affordable housing
DIA – Downtown Improvement Area (also called CRA) – see definition above
DSCP – Division of State and Community Partnerships (State)
DEP – Department of Environmental Protection (State)
DOR – Department of Revenue (State)
DOT – Department of Transportation; used with U.S. or F in front of it
EAR – Evaluation Appraisal Report – part of county and city comprehensive plans
EDR – Committee on Economic and Demographic Research – committee of the Legislature which houses the state economist and most state and local fiscal data
EOC – Emergency Operations Center – one statewide office and 67 county-based offices provide a centralized command center for disaster response and recovery
EPA – Environmental Protection Administration (Federal)
FAC – Florida Association of Counties
FACC – Florida Association of City Clerks
FCCA - Florida Clerks of the Court Association
FASD – Florida Association of Special Districts
FCCMA – Florida City and County Management Association
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
FGFOA – Florida Government Finance Officers’ Association
FLGISA – Florida Local Government Information Services Association
FLM – Florida League of Mayors
FLSA – Fair Labor Standards Act (Federal)

FMAA – Florida Municipal Attorneys Association

FMASH – Florida Municipal Association for Safety and Health

FRA – Florida Redevelopment Association

FRCA – Florida Regional Councils Associations (all of the RPCs)

FRDAP – Florida Recreation Development and Parks – grant program through the DEP

F.S. – Florida Statute – the statutory provisions of Florida law, separated into chapters

FSBA – Florida School Boards Association

GFOA – national Government Finance Officers’ Association

HUD – Housing and Urban Development (federal department)

ICMA – International City/County Management Association – professional organization for local public managers

IOG – Institute of Government (state); nickname for John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government, located at several universities and used by counties and cities

JPA – Joint Planning Agreement; used by counties and cities to set boundaries for service delivery and/or utility services

LPA – Local Planning Agency (local governments create them or councils/commissions act as them)

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization – a federal designation of a state-coordinated advisory board that works with federal and state transportation planning (roads, airports, bridges, ports); applies to areas that reach MSA level (see next term)

MSA – Metropolitan Statistical Area – federal designation for areas of 50,000 population or greater; can extend beyond a city’s boundaries. Used in allocation of various resources/programs

MSBU – Municipal Services Benefit Unit – created by counties, these districts provide services through fee or assessment under FL law; can include municipal areas.

MSTU – Municipal Services Taxing Unit – created by counties, these districts provide services through the property tax under FL law; can include municipal areas.

NACo – National Association of Counties

NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems – collective term for all EPA storm-water regulations and requirements

OSHA – Occupational Safety & Health Administration (Federal)

P&Z – Planning and Zoning (usually refers to a committee or board for a city or county)

PSC – Public Service Commission – Florida’s regulatory body for utilities

RPC – Regional Planning Councils (established regions in Florida for planning; there are 10 and cover all of the state). Advisory in nature, but opinion is highly valued by DCA.

SBA – State Board of Administration – state agency; responsible for investment pool used by local governments called the SBA Local Government Fund

TDC – Tourist Development Council – legislatively created districts that determine spending plans for tourist tax usage and advise counties and cities on tourism matters

TMDL - Total Maximum Daily Load – used to describe the limits in water and wastewater systems

TRIM – Truth in Millage; a FL law requiring the publication of property tax information

WMD – Water Management District – state-created boards that issue consumptive use permits for water (agriculture, industrial, commercial, governmental)

Florida Legislative Terms:

HB – House Bill; always an odd number

SB – Senate Bill; always an even number

CB – Committee Bill; filed by the committee as a whole, not an individual member

CS – Committee substitute; language is substituted for an existing bill

TP- Temporarily Pass – when a bill appears to be failing, the sponsor can TP the bill to bring it back at a future date for consideration

Fun Acronyms:

BANANA – Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone

CAVE – Citizens Against Virtually Everything

NIMBY – Not in My Back Yard

NIMTO – Not in My Term of Office

NIMLT – Not in My Life Time

NOPE – Not on Planet Earth