

FLORIDA IS HER CITIES!

FUN FACTS:

- Florida has 412 active municipalities (cities, towns and villages) representing 51% of Florida's population (21.6 million).
 - 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.
- Florida's smallest city, Marineland, has a population of 8.
- Florida's largest city, Jacksonville, has a population of 907,093.
- Municipality is from the Latin and means "the people over themselves" – self-government.
- More than two-thirds of the 412 cities are under 15,000 in population. Florida is a state composed of mostly smaller cities, with the median city population at 5,700.
- Florida's oldest cities are St. Augustine and Pensacola – both of which functioned as cities before Florida was a state. The newest cities are Indiantown, incorporated in 2018; and Westlake, incorporated in 2016.

UNDERSTANDING FLORIDA'S CITIES:

- In Florida, there is no legal difference between a city, town or village – all are municipalities.
- Florida has four 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 (i.e street construction and maintenance), parks and 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.
- 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 three members and the largest have 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 has been one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. for more than 40 years. In the 1980s to 1990s, more than 1,000 people moved to the state per day! Now, Florida is growing at a rate of over 900 people per day, which has a substantial impact on water, wastewater, solid waste, recycling and traffic on roads.
- 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. Despite legislative and constitutional reform efforts, no system-wide changes have been made to the revenue sources available at this time. This leaves cities, as an optional level of local government, with few revenue options.
- 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.

THE FLC COMMITMENT TO CITY YOUTH COUNCILS

Over the years, the League has encouraged cities to develop and foster Youth Councils. In 2008, the League held the first-ever Youth Councils Day in conjunction with the League's annual conference. Along with the Annual Conference Program, the League has established the Community Service Contest, Video Competition, and the Legislative Action Day Civic Education Program for municipal youth councils to participate in.