



# Florida's Cities HOME RULE = LOCAL CONTROL

## WHAT IS A CITY IN FLORIDA?

Under Florida's Constitution, municipalities are corporations – vested with broad governmental and proprietary powers. Each city is a corporation with a board of directors (council or commission) elected by the people (stockholders) to provide services and self-determination. Each city in Florida has a charter detailing its elections, administrative structure and scope of services. Details are found in policies, ordinances and administrative codes.

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## HOME RULE

Since 1968, Floridians have recognized the need for cities to have Home Rule powers, as included in the Constitution [Article VIII, Section 2(b)] and ratified by the Legislature in 1973. This right gives each city the flexibility to craft its laws specifically to its own unique needs. After all, with 412 cities ranging in size from Marineland (pop. 8) to Jacksonville (pop. 907,093), one size does not fit all. This right means any city can adopt its laws so long as the law doesn't conflict with state or federal law. Cities in Florida are not "of" the state, but "in" the state; it's an important distinction between municipal authority and other local governments.

## WHY ARE CITIES CREATED?

Services and self-determination. Cities provide their residents with essential services, such as water, wastewater, stormwater utilities, police, fire prevention and EMS, road building and maintenance, parks and recreation, land-use codes, planning and code enforcement, animal control, solid waste and recycling, neighborhood services, libraries and cemeteries. Self-determination is the ability to make local decisions locally. Cities are citizen-driven representative democracies with citizen engagement, citizen input and citizen leadership.

## MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Just as no two cities are alike, each city's menu of services is also different. The most important aspect of municipal services is that the services are created to meet the demands of the residents. Each city offers those services desired by its own citizenry.

## CATALYSTS FOR ACTION

A city is a key player in economic development, business retention and regional commerce. City leaders work with county, state and federal resources to help provide new business incubators, workforce placement, affordable housing, educational and technical needs, and public transportation. City leaders also help with redevelopment when an area is faced with blight or struggles to overcome other challenges.

## REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

Florida's cities receive an average of half of their revenues from user fees and charges for service. The largest sources of tax revenue come from the property tax; state shared revenue, which includes a portion of the state sales tax and gas tax; and the public service tax, also called utilities tax. Cities also rely upon intergovernmental revenue, grants, license fees and permit fees.

## FOCUSED ON EXCELLENCE

Cities are the only optional level of local government in Florida. Cities must provide their services as cost effectively as possible. Councils and commissions know their success often rests upon the bottom line and achieving their key goals with a balance of efficiency, effectiveness and innovation to create a city that residents are proud to call their hometown. ■