



POLK
COUNTY

2021
Polk Profile



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
330 W. Church Street
PO Box 9005
Bartow, FL 33831-9005

Contents

About Polk County	4
Our Structure	5
Charter Government	6
Constitutional Officers	7
Annual Review	8
Trends and Issues	10

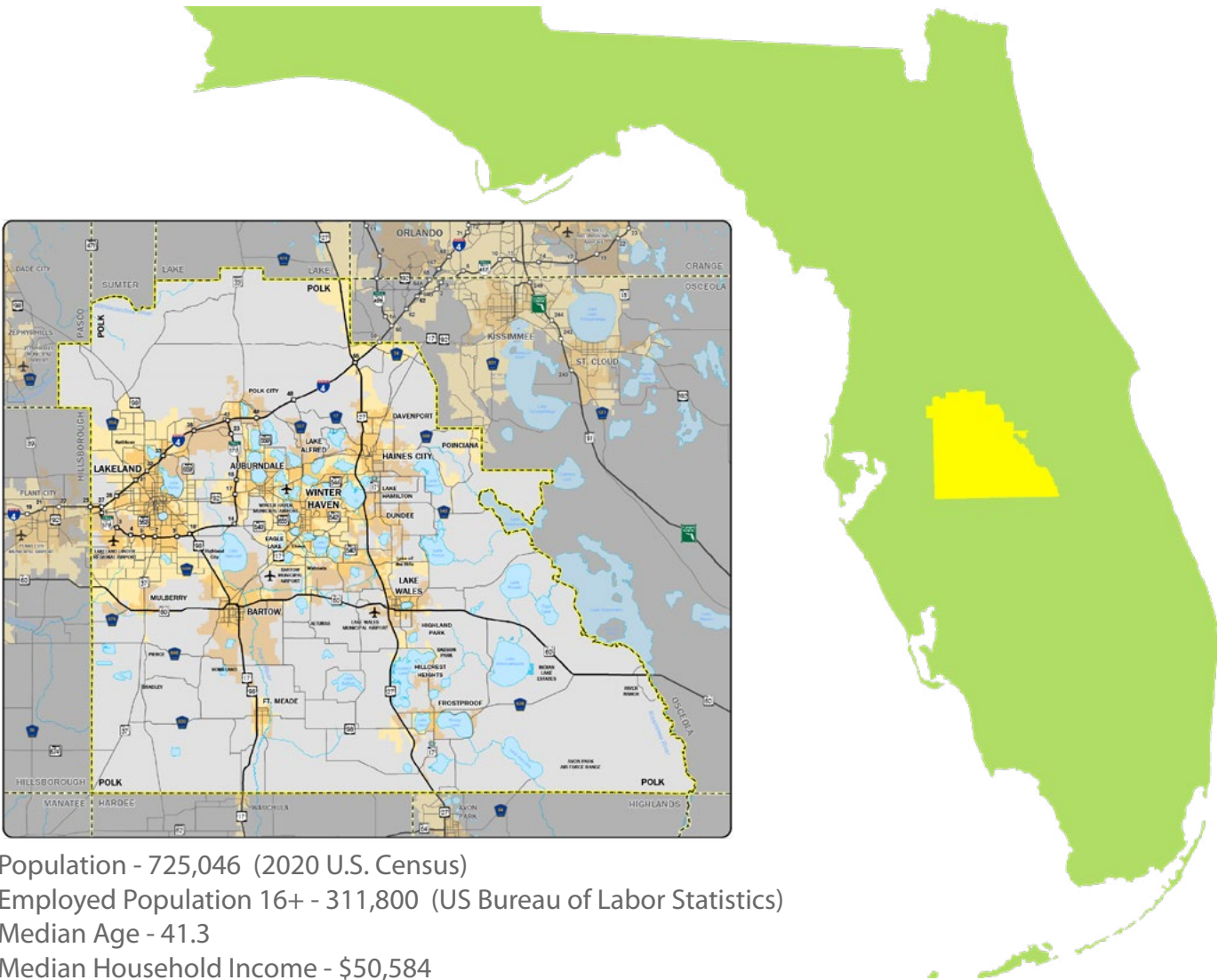


Mission:

We enhance the quality of life
for people throughout Polk County.



About POLK



Population - 725,046 (2020 U.S. Census)

Employed Population 16+ - 311,800 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Median Age - 41.3

Median Household Income - \$50,584

- Polk County represents 3% of the total population of Florida
- Ten million people and a workforce of 3.5 million are within a 100-mile radius of Polk County
- Polk County has six traditional colleges/universities, including the newest state university, Florida Polytechnic University. Combined, these institutions enroll more than 19,000 students

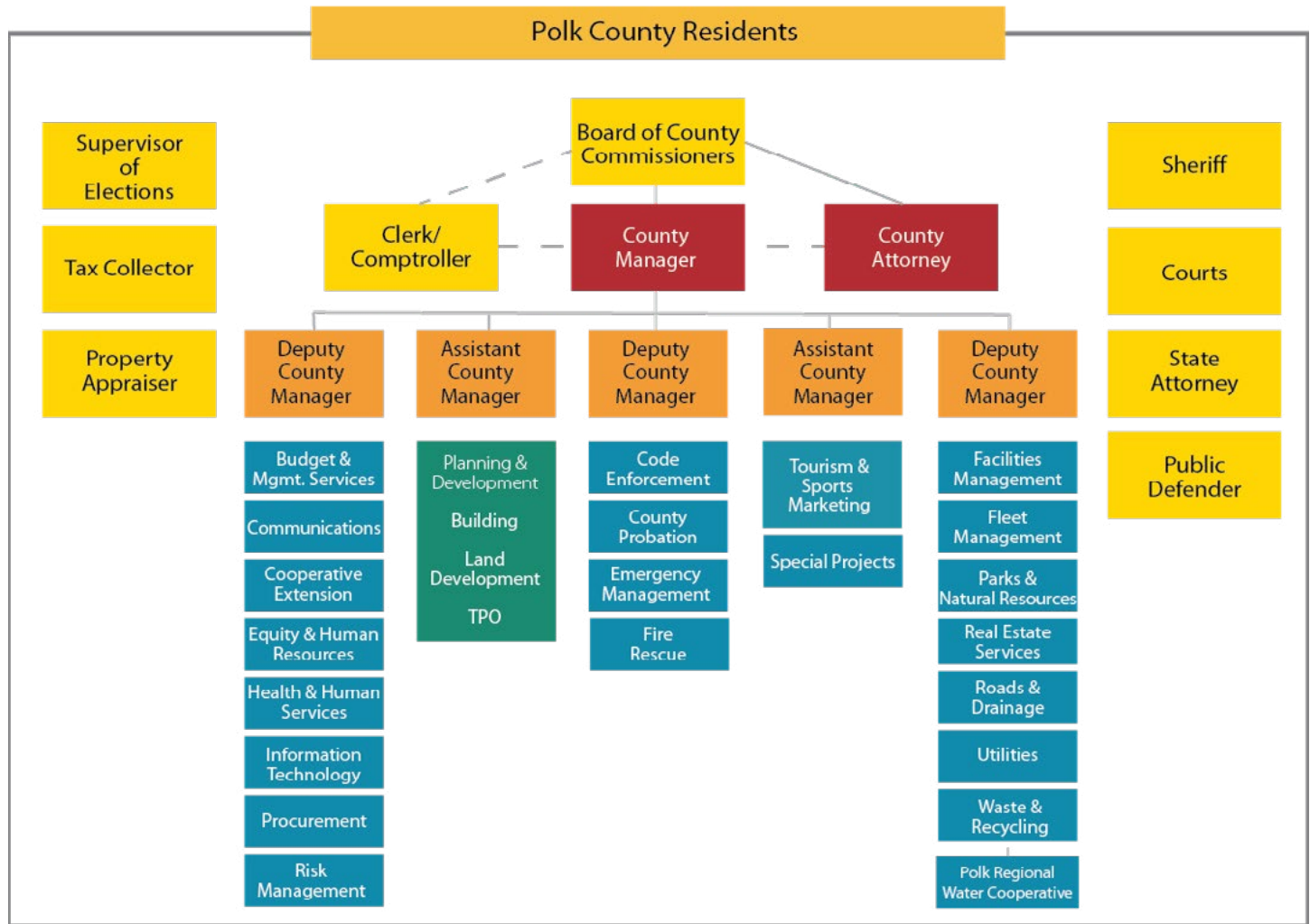
Total Square Miles - 2,012

Square Land Miles - 1,875

Square Water Area - 135

- Polk County is Florida's fourth largest county and is larger than the State of Rhode Island
- The County has 17 municipalities, the largest being Lakeland and the second being Winter Haven. Other municipalities include Auburndale, Bartow, Davenport, Dundee, Eagle Lake, Fort Meade, Frostproof, Haines City, Highland Park, Hillcrest Heights, Lake Alfred, Lake Hamilton, Lake Wales, Mulberry, and Polk City

Our STRUCTURE



Polk County Government...

- Provides fire protection and ALL ambulance services
- Coordinates emergency evacuations
- Enforces housing codes and regulations
- Determines land use and zoning
- Facilitates garbage and recycling collection
- Issues building permits
- Operates County landfill
- Administers affordable housing programs
- Provides health and welfare programs
- Preserves natural ecosystems
- Builds, resurfaces, and maintains roads
- Assists in developing small businesses
- Supplies drinking water
- Minimizes mosquito population
- Produces Government television (PGTV)
- Builds and maintains parks
- Preserves wildlife
- Provides wastewater collection/treatment
- Stimulates economic development
- Reviews development construction plans
- Offers agricultural education programs
- Initiates Countywide clean-up projects
- Recruits sporting events and promotes tourism
- Provides public transportation
- Plans transportation to accommodate growth
- Maintains more than 12,500 street signs each year
- Monitors criminals who are on probation
- And much more!

Charter Government



County Commissioners: (Front) Rick Wilson, District 2 (Chair); Martha Santiago, District 4; Neil Combee, District 5; (Back) George Lindsey III, District 1. District 5; Bill Braswell, District 3.

Polk County has a charter government authorized by the Florida Constitution. It may only be amended by a vote of the local registered voters. It is a means by which local control, home rule, and citizen input are enhanced. A county charter is a written document defining the powers, structure, and functions of the county. The charter acts as a “mini-constitution” for the people of Polk County.

County government is granted all home rule powers of self-government as approved by the local voters that are consistent with state law.

Some of the key provisions of the Charter:

- Requires that candidates for County Commission reside in the district in which they are running at

the time that they qualify for office, in addition to maintaining residency after being elected

- Ordinances and charter amendments can be proposed by petition of the voters
- Members of the County Commission and the Constitutional Officers may be recalled from office in accordance with state law and the Governor retains the right to suspend or remove any county official from office
- Constitutional officers are non-partisan.

The Charter does not affect city governments. It is not a form of annexation or consolidation. It does not affect the powers or duties of the Constitutional Officers or the School Board.

The State Legislature is the only governing body with the power to create, abolish or consolidate counties. A county cannot change its form of government, such as combining city and county governments, without a referendum.

Board of County Commissioners

The Board of County Commissioners is the governing body of Polk County. Each commissioner is elected by a Countywide vote to a four-year term. In the November 2018 election, the Polk County Charter was amended to limit the number of terms to three consecutive four-year terms.

Each of Polk County's five commissioners represents a County district and must reside in his/her district. Commissioners from districts one, three, and five are elected in Presidential election years; districts two and four are elected in the intervening years.

In November, a chairman and vice chairman are elected by the members of the County Commission. The board selects committee chair/liaisons who, in turn, work with the County Manager and staff to establish Board policies in specific focus areas, such as tourism, community outreach, and legislative issues.

They also select residents to serve on a variety of commissions, boards, and councils.

Duties

The Florida Constitution and Chapter 125 of the Florida Statutes authorize the Board of County Commissioners to exercise all powers not prohibited by law. This includes levying taxes, distributing tax monies through budgeting and appropriations, constructing and maintaining roads and bridges, providing health and welfare services, managing all County-owned property, and providing supervision of all County functions and services. County taxes support many of the activities and services of County government, including the justice system, the sheriff, circuit, and county court.

The Board meets the first and third Tuesday of the month in the Boardroom of the Administration Building in Bartow. Florida's "Government in the Sunshine" law requires that all county government business takes place in public meetings and the public be given adequate notice of such meetings. The Board's agenda is posted before each meeting and is available on the county's website at www.polk-county.net. Meetings are also televised by PGTV and can also be viewed on the internet at the County's website.

Constitutional Officers

Tax Collector
Joe Tedder



Supervisor of Elections
Lori Edwards



Sheriff
Grady Judd



Property Appraiser
Marsha Faux



Clerk of the Courts
Stacy Butterfield



County Manager

The Board of County Commissioners hires the County Manager who is responsible for all the divisions within the County Commission, except for the County Attorney's Office, which answers directly to the Board. The County Manager serves as the budget officer and selects, employs, and supervises

county personnel. In FY 21/22, the County will employ about 2,189 people.

Advisory Groups

Advisory groups play a critical role in Polk County government. State law created some groups, the BoCC created others as advisors in specific areas. County residents are encouraged to participate by expressing a desire to be appointed to these groups or make recommendations for appointments.



Fire Rescue Services (September 2021)

Stations	46
Employees (Full-time)	613
Assist to Outside Agencies	88
Citizen Assist/Service Calls	2,061
Fire Alarm	2,340
Fire Calls	3,291
Hazardous Conditions	772
Medical Calls	97,542
Other	497
Rescue Call Special Detail	37
Technical Rescue	89
Traffic/Transportation Incidents	9,249
Total	116,329

Source: Polk County Fire Rescue Division



Police Protection-Sheriff (FY 2020/21)

Employees (total)	2,011
Sworn	701
Certified	347
Civilian	727
Total Crimes in Polk County	5,827
Marine/Agriculture Calls for Service	2,200
911 Calls for Service	300,313
Traffic Crashed Investigated	6,796
Calls for Animal Control	25,738
Daily Average Jail Population	2,363
Jail Bookings	20,230

Source: Polk County Sheriff's FY 2020/21 Strategic Plan and Budget



Water and Wastewater Utilities

Water (September 2021)

Plants	31
Connections	74,213
Average Daily Flow Pumped (mgd)	17.35
Average Daily Flow Permitted (mgd)	31.47

Wastewater

Wastewater Facilities	7
Pumping Stations	356
Connections	56,138
Average Daily Treatment (mgd)	7.1
Averaged Permitted Daily Capacity (mgd)	13.094

Public Access Reclaimed Water

Facilities	3
Connections	13,803
Average Daily Reuse Flow (mgd)	6.812
Average Daily Rescue Flow Permitted (mgd)	10.13

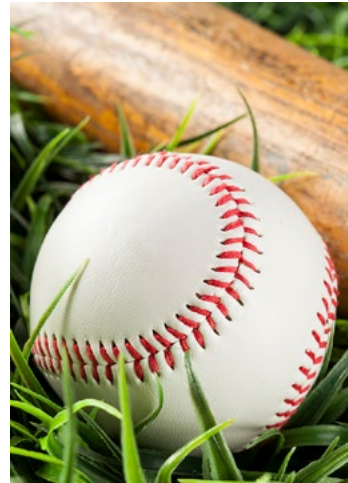
Source: Polk County Utilities Division

Annual Review FY 2020/21

County Parks

Regional Parks	6
Specialty Parks	52
Neighborhood Parks	28
Community Parks	16
Park Acres	3,863
Lighted Ballfields	83
Lighted Multi-purpose Fields	43
Boat Ramps	51
Boat Ramp Lanes	59
Docks	24

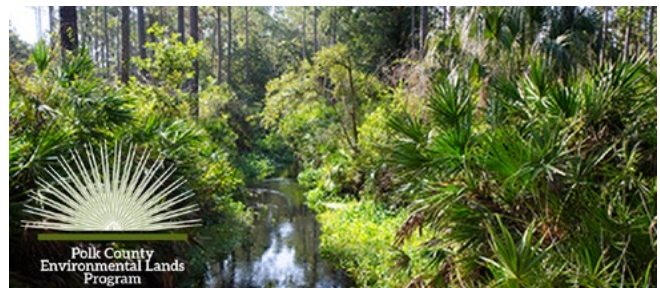
Source: Polk County Parks and Natural Resources Division



Environmental Lands

Acres Acquired	26,506.61
Land Acquisition Cost	\$111,557,643
Acquisition Partners	\$79,413,108
18 of 32 properties	
County's Land Acquisition Cost	\$31,333,393
Savings % to county from partners	72%
Cost of Land Sold to State	\$1,788,965

Source: Polk County Parks and Natural Resources Division



Public Works (September 2021)

Tons of Solid Waste disposed at Landfill*	640,136
Annual Collections per Household (three weekly)*	52
Households Serviced*	147,648
Annual Curbside Waste Pickups*	7,677,696
Cost per Pick-Up*	\$1.00
Street Miles-Center Lane**	2,711.9
Traffic Signs**	89,291
Sidewalk Miles**	463

Sources: *Polk County Waste & Recycling Division

**Polk County Roads & Drainage Division



Number of Libraries

	17
Library Materials	726,702
Annual Circulation	1,861,229
Registered Borrowers	484,138

Source: Polk County Library Cooperative



Polk County Trends & Issues

Polk County, along with the rest of the country, is emerging from one of the most difficult periods in recent history. For more than a year, the COVID pandemic dominated lives and impacted virtually everyone. Thankfully, infection rates have slowed dramatically, a preventative vaccine is available, and life is beginning to return to normal.

The projected economic uncertainty due to the pandemic never substantially materialized in FY 20/21 for Polk County. Tourism, which is a significant economic driver in Polk County, rebounded much more quickly than was anticipated.

The FY 21/22 budget reflects the Board's philosophy of preserving a strong financial position by maintaining healthy fund reserves and providing programs and services that meet the County's community expectations at the lowest possible cost.

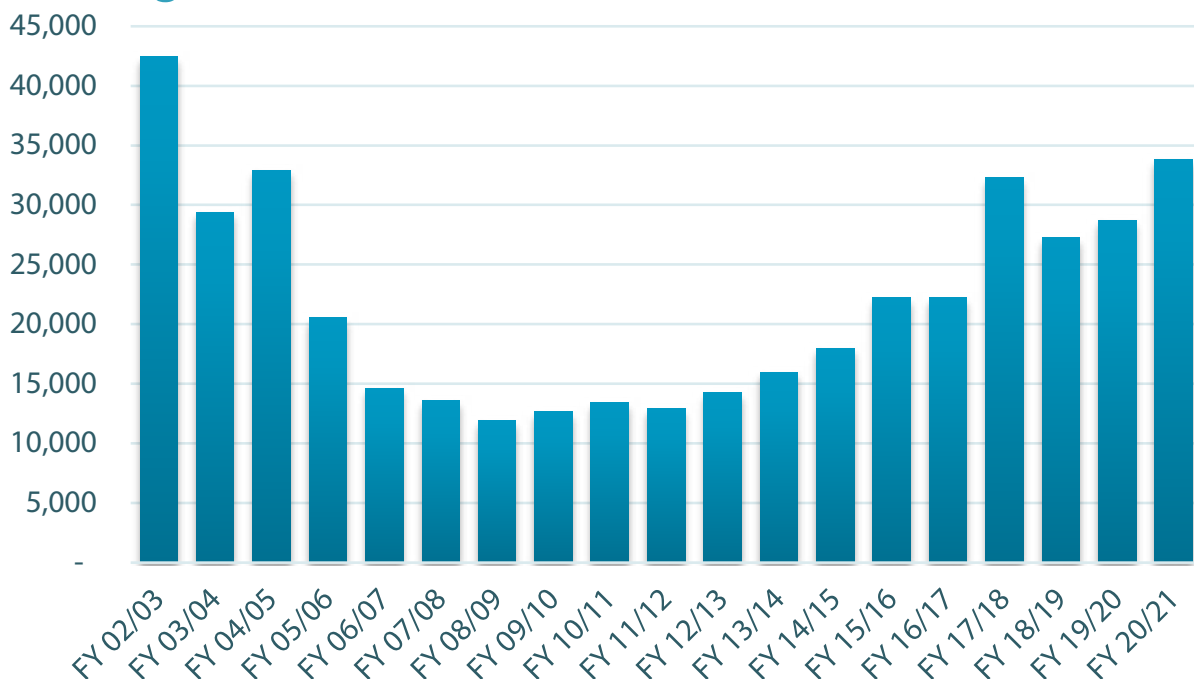
The Board continues to determine policy direction to address Polk's rapidly growing population and urbanizing environment. Board priorities are to assure residents a safe community, improved transportation mobility, higher wage jobs in a vibrant economy, and an even better quality of life.

Seven Key Trends

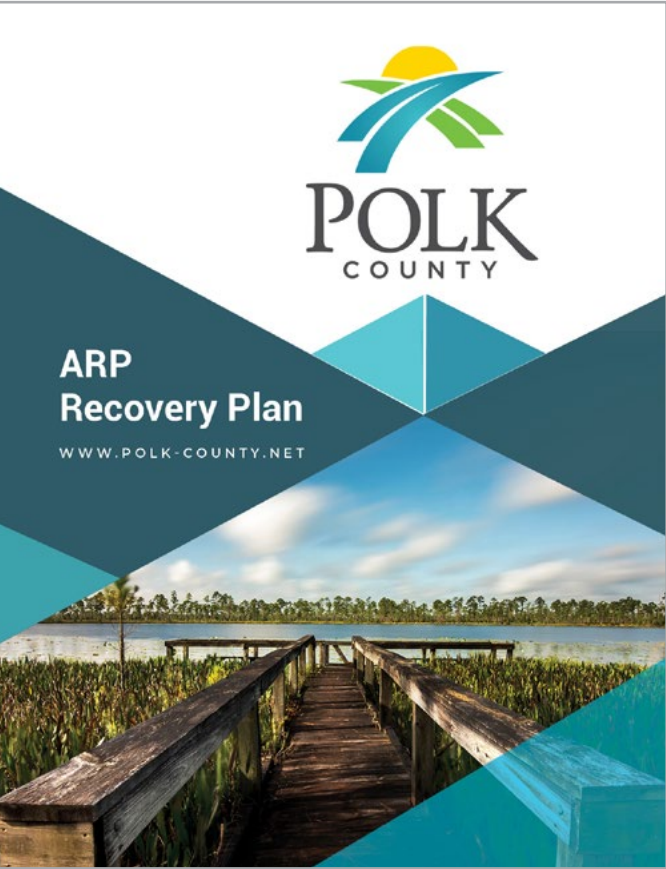
Seven key trends exist which represent challenges and opportunities for Polk County Government. These trends drive more specific challenges. Understanding these trends is critical for developing effective strategies. Trends include:

- *Urbanization and Population Growth*
- *Revenue Growth*
- *Limitations on Revenue Options*
- *Cost of Operating Government*
- *Rising Costs to the Public*
- *Competition for a Skilled Workforce*
- *Leadership Transitions*

Building Permits Issued



American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act



For more than a year and a half, the world has been battling a pandemic that created a health and economic crisis affecting millions of Americans. In March 2021, Congress signed into law the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act to deliver relief to families, businesses, and government organizations impacted by the pandemic.

Polk County received a \$140.8 million appropriation to support urgent COVID response efforts to control the spread of the virus, replace lost public sector revenue, support economic stabilization for the County, and to address necessary investments in water, sewer, stormwater, and broadband infrastructure. The Board, working with community stakeholders, nonprofit organizations, and County staff, created a strategic spending program to determine the best use of the ARP funds. This plan remains fluid as the Board works to allocate funding for community and public health programs and infrastructure projects.

Ongoing community engagement, Board oversight, allocations, and evaluation will occur throughout the life of this funding. All funds must be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

Priority Category	Projects	Investment
Government Infrastructure	Stormwater - Parks and Natural Resources	\$18,815,000
	Stormwater - Roads and Drainage	\$23,557,000
	Water & Wastewater - Utilities	\$37,680,000
	Facilities Capital Projects	\$ 2,610,000
County Impacts and Mitigation	Government Services	\$46,200,000
	Public Health	\$ 1,000,000
	Broadband Infrastructure	\$ 250,000
Community and Public Health	Programs to be Determined	TBD
Small Business Assistance	Economic Stabilization	TBD

Countywide Assessed & Taxable Values



	Population*	Square Miles**	2021 Tax Rolls Taxable Values***	% of Change
Auburndale	17,120	22.6	\$1,552,126,393	14.29
Bartow	20,257	52.4	\$840,106,490	5.54
Davenport	6,479	3.9	\$545,445,314	26.34
Dundee	5,186	11.6	\$249,320,207	13.24
Eagle Lake	3,072	4.2	\$128,632,000	15.13
Fort Meade	6,257	8.5	\$148,525,072	8.58
Frostproof	3,273	19.1	\$156,874,608	8.63
Haines City	24,164	21.1	\$1,697,450,785	17.99
Highland Park	264	1.1	\$14,246,455	8.02
Hillcrest Heights	355	8.7	\$17,051,124	6.88
Lake Alfred	6,257	13.0	\$257,618,608	9.06
Lake Hamilton	1,485	4.1	\$97,377,471	5.03
Lake Wales	16,759	20.2	\$887,970,261	7.58
Lakeland	115,566	75.0	\$8,242,251,721	10.69
Mulberry	4,192	7.1	\$249,236,779	4.09
Polk City	2,422	5.1	\$194,832,713	6.73
Winter Haven	44,955	40.8	\$3,055,022,517	8.29
Unincorporated Polk	446,983	1,692.5	\$25,309,996	8.65

* Population Source: 2020 US Census

** Polk County Information Technology Division

*** 2021 Polk Property Appraiser Tax Rolls