

**Florida's Charter
Counties**

Charter County	2011 Population	Year
Alachua	247,337	1987
Brevard	545,184	1994
Broward	1,753,162	1975
Charlotte	160,463	1986
Clay	191,143	1991
Columbia	67,528	2002
Duval	864,601	1968
Hillsborough	1,238,951	1983
Lee	625,310	1996
Leon	276,278	2002
Miami-Dade	2,516,515	1957
Orange	1,157,342	1986
Osceola	273,867	1992
Palm Beach	1,325,758	1985
Pinellas	918,496	1980
Polk	604,792	1998
Sarasota	381,319	1971
Seminole	424,587	1989
Volusia	495,400	1971
Wakulla	30,877	2008

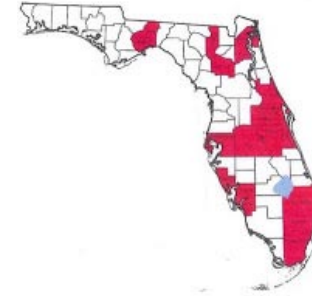
From:
Florida Association of Counties:
<http://fl-counties.com/charter-county-information>



**League of Women Voters
of Manatee County**

**Manatee County Citizen's Guide to Charter
Government**

2017



A guide to "Home Rule" for Manatee County

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What is Charter Government?

Charter Government, also called “home rule,” is a formal written document that describes the powers, duties, or rights in county government. Charters resemble state or federal constitutions. Charters and any amendments to them must be approved by the voters of the county.

Florida cities have had charters for many years; counties traditionally did not. Originally, counties were mostly rural. They were set up by the state, not by voters, and the state decided what powers were to be granted to county officials.

In 1968 Florida granted local voters throughout Florida the power to adopt county charters. The establishment of charter government was designed to create more flexibility, so that government structure can match up with local needs and preferences, and grant the county electorate a greater say in their government.

To date, there are 20 charter counties in Florida, ranging in population size from Wakulla to Miami -Dade. Collectively, these counties are home to more than 75 percent of Florida’s residents.

What are some of the differences between charter and non-charter counties?

In addition to more general powers of self-government, charter counties can structure their government in a charter approved by county residents and tailored to meet county needs, whereas non-charter counties must use a structure specified in state law and those options could only be changed by the Florida Constitution or legislature.

County charters can require an administrative code detailing regulations, policies and procedures, while state statutes do not require this code for non-charter counties. Counties can also make changes in its elections and officers.

What are some examples of changes made possible by charters?

Here are some examples of provisions that have been included in charters, or added to them by amendment referenda:

- ◆ Provide the right of citizen referendum and recall of elected officials for violations.
- ◆ Change the number of commissioners and number of single member or at large districts.
- ◆ Create stipulations for the makeup of county advisory boards.
- ◆ Create a county ethics ordinance, and an ethics board to review complaints.
- ◆ Set term limits and campaign contribution limits
- ◆ Make some appointed officials elected, or elected officials appointed.
- ◆ Make changes to rules, except for those in county comprehensive plans.

What are some challenges of being a Charter County?

- ◆ A new cost: county administrative support for its Charter Review Commission
- ◆ The increase of issues on ballots
- ◆ Some changes may not work out and will need to be repealed or revised
- ◆ The need for citizens to become more involved in their county government.

How do Florida counties obtain a charter?

Under FS Chapter 125.61, by resolution the County Commission may appoint a charter commission to draft a proposed charter. County charters can only be adopted upon a majority vote of the county voters. Local citizens and organizations can ask the county commission to appoint a commission, but if they refuse to take action, citizens can require the county to prepare a charter by petition, by collecting, then submitting to the county, a petition with the signatures of 15% of the registered voters in Manatee County, which would be about 35,000 signatures. The county will then appoint a Charter Commission, and a charter would be created and placed on the ballot.

Has any county repealed their Charter?

No. Some counties have repealed certain provisions -- such as Sarasota County's short-lived change to an appointed sheriff -- but none have repealed their entire charter to go back to the prior form of government.

Why hasn't Manatee adopted one yet?

Actually, Manatee came close to doing so in the late 1990's-early 2000's, and even drafted a charter. However, that effort was set aside after the county-cities issues at the time were resolved another way.

But given the incredible pace of growth in recent years, increased complexity and challenges to local governments, and a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, the time is right for citizens to ask the county to bring Home Rule to Manatee County. But Charter Government is not just about solving current problems. Charter is a better form of government. It provides the flexibility needed by a growing community, and it gives citizens a sense of partnership with their elected officials.

How can I help obtain Charter Government for Manatee County?

- ◆ You can ask our County Commissioners to adopt charter themselves, by resolution.
- ◆ You can download the LWV petition at: www.lwvmanatee.org/charterpetition.pdf. Have friends and family who are also registered to vote in Manatee County also sign the form, and mail it to the address on the form.
- ◆ If your group would like to host a LWV program on charter government, call 941-729-9248.

You can make a difference!