

## Florida's Charter Counties

In 1968, the electors of Florida granted local voters the power to adopt charters to govern their counties. Charters are formal written documents that confer powers, duties, or privileges on the county. They resemble state or federal constitutions and they must be approved, along with any amendments, by the voters of a county.

According to several Florida constitutional scholars, the establishment of charter government was designed to remove the resolution of local problems from the state legislature's busy agenda and to grant the county electorate greater control over their regional affairs.

To date, there are 20 charter counties in Florida. Collectively these counties are home to more than 75 percent of Florida's residents.

County	Year Charter Adopted	# of Municipalities	Population*	Administrative Structure	Districting Scheme
Alachua	1987	9	260,003	Council-Manager	5 At-large
Brevard	1994	16	575,211	Council-Manager	5 Single
Broward	1975	31	1,873,970	Council-Manager	9 Single
Charlotte	1986	1	172,720	Council-Manager	5 At-Large
Clay	1991	4	208,549	Council-Manager	5 Single
Columbia	2002	2	68,943	Council-Manager	5 Single
Duval	1968	5	936,811	Strong Mayor	Mixed (14S/ 5A)
Hillsborough	1983	3	1,379,302	Council-Manager	Mixed (4S /3A)
Lee	1996	5	698,468	Council-Manager	5 At-Large
Leon	2002	1	287,899	Council-Manager	Mixed (5S/ 2A)
Miami-Dade	1957	34	2,743,095	Strong Mayor	13 Single
Orange	1987	13	1,313,880	Strong Mayor	6 Single
Osceola	1992	2	337,614	Council-Manager	5 Single
Palm Beach	1985	38	1,414,144	Council-Manager	7 Single
Pinellas	1980	24	962,003	Council-Manager	Mixed (4S/ 3A)
Polk	1998	17	661,645	Council-Manager	5 At-Large
Sarasota	1971	4	407,260	Council-Manager	5 At-Large
Seminole	1989	7	454,757	Council-Manager	5 At-Large
Volusia	1971	16	523,405	Council-Manager	Mixed (5S/2A)
Wakulla	2008	2	31,909	Council-Manager	5 At-Large

\*Population Estimates for Florida Counties, Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, April 2017

# BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHARTER AND NON-CHARTER COUNTIES

March 2008

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## NON-CHARTER

- ❖ Structure of county government specified in State Constitution and State Statutes. Only amending the State Constitution or State law can change structure.
- ❖ Counties have powers of self-government as prescribed by the State Legislature.
- ❖ State Statutes do not provide for initiative or referendum, or recall of county officers.
- ❖ State Statutes do not require an Administrative Code.
- ❖ County cannot levy a utility tax in the unincorporated area.

## CHARTER

- ❖ Structure of county government specified in Charter as approved by the electorate. Structure can be tailored by the local electorate to meet the needs of the county.
- ❖ Counties have all powers of self-government unless they are inconsistent with the Constitution or State law.
- ❖ County charter may provide for initiative, referendum and recall at the county level.
- ❖ County Charter can require an Administrative Code detailing all regulations, policies and procedures.
- ❖ County Charter can provide that a “municipal utility tax” is levied in the unincorporated area.