



Charlotte County Government Annual Report 2009



Charlotte County, Florida

Open for Business



As we look back, 2009 has been a year of doing more with less. We have had to reassess and refine the way we do things, keeping service in mind.

Our County organization has rolled out the “Open for Business” program. Open for Business conveys our approach as an organization. It can mean several things—there is certainly a customer service aspect to it—but overall it is a mindset that when we provide programs and services, we do so in a way that is courteous and responsive and proactive. It is an approach to the way we do our work that’s as efficient and flexible as possible, so that we are open to listening to new ideas and possibly putting them into practice.

Open for Business is not saying yes to everything that comes across our desk or is presented to us, especially if it is inconsistent with the ordinances, rules and regulations, or in any way detrimental to the public interest. However, Open for Business is meant to instill an attitude that welcomes ideas for change, with a heavy emphasis on customer service and an understanding that we are here to serve the public’s needs in a positive manner.

—Roger Baltz, County Administrator

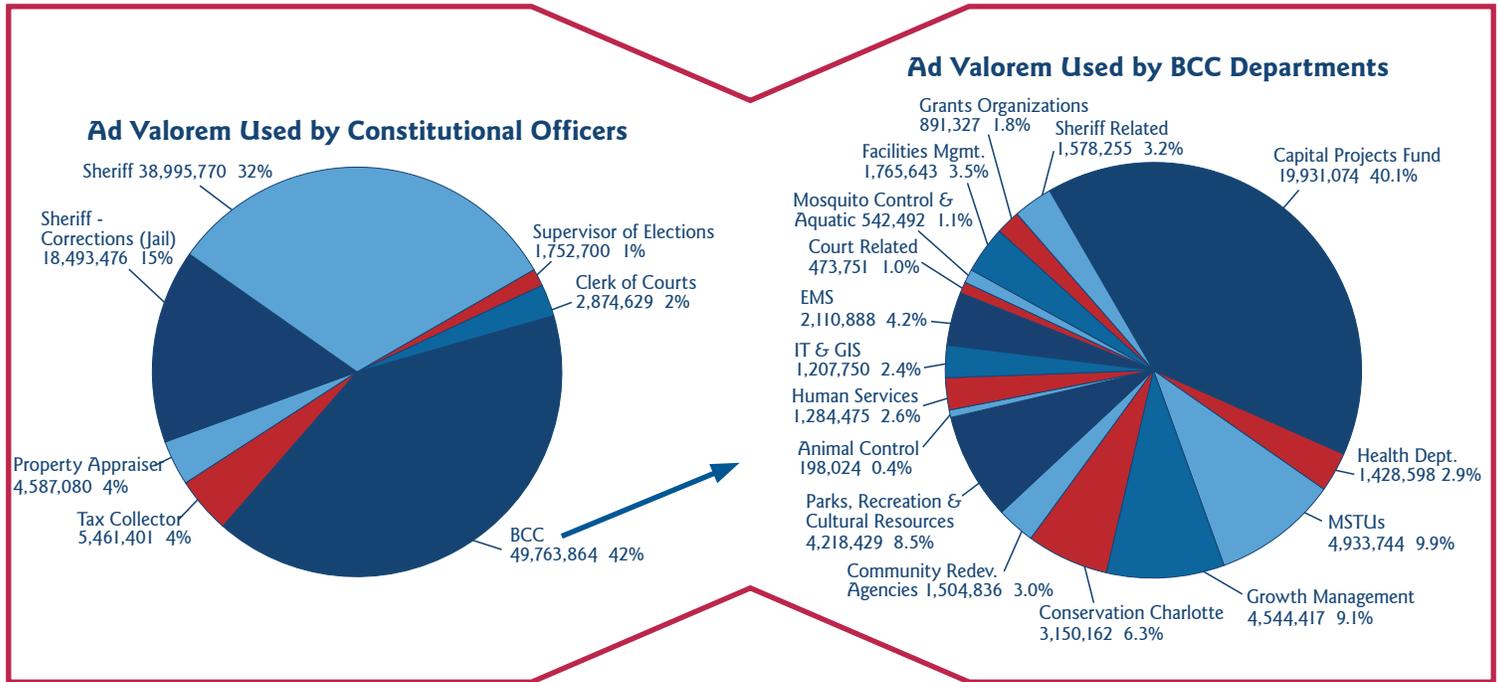
MOMENTS IN 2009



The improvements to Aqui Esta Drive began on February 27, 2009. The project included widening the existing lanes and adding paved shoulders and a sidewalk. The 18” fusible PVC water main directional bore (shown below) went subaqueous under the Venice Canal at a depth of approximately 30 to 35 feet.



Toledo Blade Boulevard was widened from a two-lane street to four lanes divided by medians from Hillsborough Boulevard to US 41.



Financial Health

The challenges of previous budget years continue to influence the budget development process. These challenges include:

1. tax reform
2. revenue shortfalls
3. budget cuts in personnel, operating and reserves
4. maintaining levels of services while decreasing costs
5. delaying or eliminating capital projects funded by ad valorem
6. finding efficiencies to provide a more effective County Government.

During the FY09/10 budget process, the County used Performance Based Budgeting practices to thoroughly examine the Charlotte County budget. This process included 20 plus workshops with the BCC. Although this process was a significant work effort on the part of the BCC and County Staff, the result was a \$16 million reduction from BCC departments. The reductions included department savings, the elimination of positions, and consolidation of programs and departments to achieve efficiencies. In addition, over FY08/09 and FY09/10, a total of \$12 million of Capital Improvement Projects were eliminated and \$15.8 million were delayed.

Revenue Shortfall

In 2009 Charlotte County was faced with decreased revenues not only in property tax but other areas, including telecommunications taxes, ½ cent sales tax, other state shared revenues, and franchise fees. The total combined revenue shortfall was projected to be \$42 million for FY09/10. However, to offset the effects of the revenue shortfalls, all BCC departments and the Constitutional Officers worked together to find solutions to the shortfall:

BCC Reductions	\$16,000,000
Constitutional Officers' Reductions	\$4,700,000
Capital Project Re-direction	\$15,000,000
FY 08/09 Department Savings	\$8,000,000

Fiscal Stabilization Reserves—Untouched

Part of the plan to meet the revenue shortfall was to use a portion of the Fiscal Stabilization Reserves that were set up during the FY 08/09 budget process. However, since we were able to make the reductions necessary to meet the shortfall through efficiencies and savings, the Fiscal Stabilization Reserves remained untouched. This reserve will aid in addressing the revenue shortfall from devaluations of property and other revenue sources in future years.

Economic Development

As part of the many incentives implemented in 2009, the BCC authorized the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to oversee the Recovery Zone Facility Bond Program (RZFB). The bond program is a financing incentive to local businesses (see **ARRA** below).

To promote new business, our Economic Development Office (EDO) assisted in the creation of the Southwest Florida Economic Development Partnership. This is a volunteer initiative of economic development executives from Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties working to regionally brand and market economic diversification.

The EDO partnered with regional economic development and workforce development organizations to identify job opportunities that could be created locally through business outreach by participating in a pilot business retention program.

The EDO is now developing its own business retention and expansion program, visiting local companies to provide resource assistance in training, job searching, and financing.

Green Philosophy & Sustainability

In May 2009, the Charlotte County Green Building Ordinance was approved by the BCC in an effort to promote the County as a more sustainable community. The voluntary program designed to encourage environmentally sensitive construction and development through incentives such as:

- Fast-track permitting.
- Marketing enhancement.
- Charlotte County Green Building Program support.
- Special Recognition to leading participants.



As part of the Green Building Ordinance, the Building Construction Services Department and the Economic Development Office hosted an Expo and Conference in November 2009 at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center.



At the Southwest Florida Green Futures Expo, various enterprises showcased their green and sustainable products. The Energy Options Conference provided an opportunity for community leaders, businesses, and economic development partners to participate in panel discussions on alternative energy, issues, trends, policies and market conditions. The conference included highlights of the many initiatives the County is doing to promote sustainability in the community.



The Green Futures Expo featured over 60 exhibitors and was well attended by more than 2000 visitors.



ARRA

Economic Stimulus funds are introduced into the economy via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Tax Act of 2009 (ARRA). This program will introduce a total of \$787 billion

into the economy, of which \$275 billion will be administered through State and Local governments. ARRA funds are primarily made available to State and Local governments through grants, loans, and bonds.

In 2009, we implemented the ARRA Recovery Zone Facility Bond Program, which allows us to offer \$12M in tax-exempt, low interest financing to local businesses that would not normally qualify for tax-exempt financing. In addition to implementing the Bond program, Charlotte County received more than \$6.25M in ARRA funding:

- \$2.2M for the purchase of 5 green buses & bus equipment
- \$3.2M for road and intersection improvements
- \$117,000 for a Community Services Block grant that enabled us to implement the following programs:
 - After school care so parents can work or attend work training classes
 - Financial literacy education
- \$740,000 in Criminal Justice Grants to fund components of the criminal justice system and create 2 jobs.



With the improvements complete at the newly renovated Rotonda Water Reclamation Facility (WRF), this facility has expanded to handle 2 million gallons of wastewater each day.

Capital Improvement Projects

Among the Charlotte County Utilities (CCU) projects completed in 2009 were the Rotonda Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) improvements. The WRF improvements upgraded the capacity from 625,000 gallons per day to 2 million gallons per day (MGD) and the facility now uses new membrane bioreactor technology (MBR). MBR technology consists of a membrane filtration system similar to the reverse osmosis water treatment process used in water plants, with the ability to provide a high quality reclaimed water product and use a smaller footprint than traditional wastewater treatment facilities. The WRF also has the capability of further expansion, when needed, for a full capacity of 3 MGD.

One of the Public Works Department's projects in 2009 was the Coral Creek Bridge Replacement project. The new bridge on CR 771 over Coral Creek in Placida enhances recreational access by increasing the span between the bridge supports and adding about one foot of additional clearance for boaters. The project also eliminates the sharp curve at the junction of CR 775 and CR 771. Construction of the new bridge began in September 2009 and is scheduled for completion in mid-October 2010.



Coral Creek Bridge project in progress.

2009 Sales Tax Projects

The designs for three road projects went out to bid in 2009: Edgewater Boulevard, Placida Road/CR 775, and Burnt Store Road. For the Midway Boulevard improvements project, the construction went out to bid. The sidewalk sales tax projects are divided into two groups—group 1 design contract was awarded, and group 2 design went out to bid.



A great achievement, the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply reservoir was completed and is shown here in late September 2009, holding 3.5 billion gallons of water.

A Few CCU Accomplishments in 2009

- Won First Place in AWWA Region X Best Tasting Water contest.
- Installed central sewer system in Charlotte Harbor CRA.
- Added a hydrant location layer to County GIS system.
- Implemented a Voice Response System to take customer payments by phone.
- Replaced 4 bridge crossing water mains (440 LF total), and replaced water infrastructure at 12 canal crossings.

Quality of Life

Charlotte County is a tranquil coastal area, rich with historic and outdoor areas for residents and visitors alike.

Punta Gorda Library

Built in 1974, the Punta Gorda Library was expanded in 1998 with no further expansion on the site possible. However, renovations were eventually required to address current needs.



The Punta Gorda Library

The first phase focused on changing area functions, including the reference area, children's room, and computer lab. Surplus PCs were added to reduce wait times and two PCs were dedicated to job searches, test taking, and e-Government services. The second phase involved moving book collections. In the final phase of the renovation, badly stained carpeting and the adult shelving was replaced, and the circulation area was reconfigured to use less floor space.

Great Bay and Sound Scallop Search

The Sea Grant program organized the first Great Bay and Sound Scallop Search to judge the health of the bay scallops in area waters. The event had 114 volunteers helping in 33 groups, with thirty groups had power boats and three teams were in canoes and kayaks. Using GPS coordinates, areas



were squared off for the volunteer counters. Bay scallops can reach up to 3 inches in diameter.

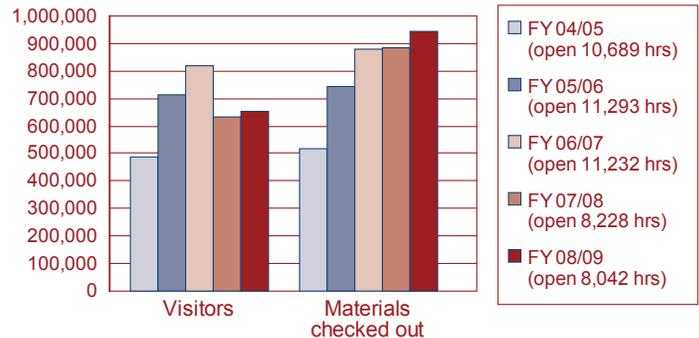


Inaugural Year for the Rays and Crabs

The 2009 inaugural season for the Tampa Bay Rays Spring Training was a huge success, with a total attendance of more than 100,000 people—a new franchise record for single-season home attendance. The six-week season translated to a boost in business in Charlotte County.

The Charlotte Stone Crabs had a banner inaugural season, winning the Florida State League South Division series. During the 22-week season, the Stone Crabs led the league in attendance with 171,314 fans, drawing almost 400 more fans per game than the second place team.

Library Visitors & Circulation FY 04/05 – FY 08/09



Operating hours at Charlotte County Libraries were reduced for the fourth year in a row, yet the number of visitors increased and more materials were checked out.

Charlotte County Family Services Center

- Served 25,090 clients between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009
- Painted and landscaped 4 homes in the neighborhood revitalization area through the Paint Your Heart Out program.
- Provided eligibility screening for Parks & Recreation summer camp and swimming lesson scholarships
- Had 53,273 volunteer hours donated to the community as a result of the Center's programs and services.



South Gulf Cove Park (above), South Gulf Cove Boat Ramp (below)



South Gulf Cove Park

Set along the Santa Cruz Waterway, South Gulf Cove Park includes a picnic pavilion, playground, basketball court and walking paths. The South Gulf Cove Boat Ramp, opened in 2004, is also located in the park. The 4.91 acre park was developed with funds from West County park impact fees. The project has had tremendous public support from the South Gulf Cove community, including the Conservancy & Community Trust of South Gulf Cove, Inc., South Gulf Cove Homeowners Association and the South Gulf Cove Advisory Committee.



Public Safety

The Fire/EMS department provides several programs that are mostly funded by community partnerships. Some of these programs are also self-supporting fundraisers:

- Red Dot Program
- Lil' Bit's Child Seat Safety Program & Check Point Schedule
- Flicker of Life
- Safe Sitter
- Address Sign Program
- ...and many others.

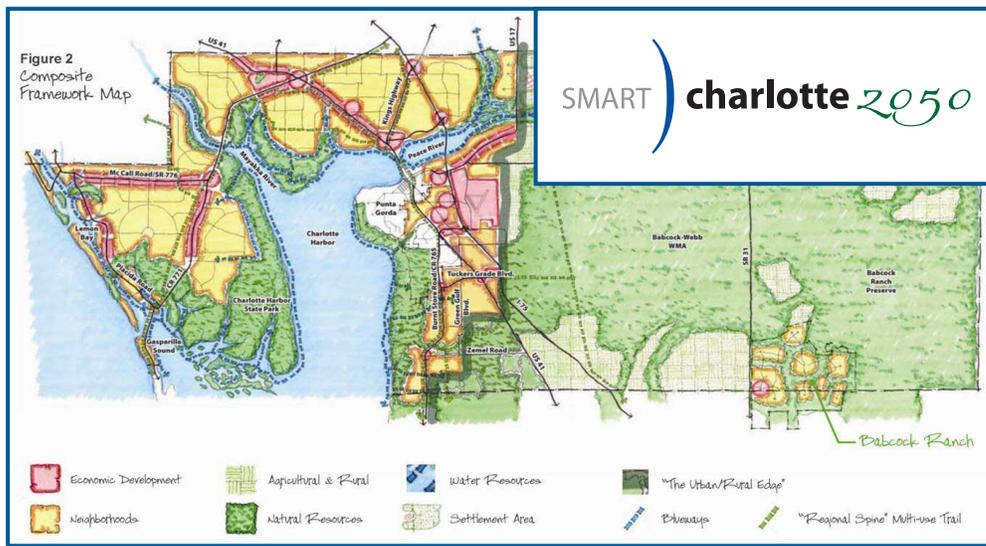
Charlotte 2-1-1 Needs Met During 2009



Abuse/Emergencies, 170	Hurricanes, 6
Children & Families, 1305	Incarceration, 29
Community, 2285	Insurance, 320
Employment, 581	Legal, 802
Environmental, 376	Mental Health, 372
Financial, 2855	Public Safety, 151
Food, 1309	Senior Services, 622
General Topics, 2083	Special Projects, 545
Government, 1566	Substance Abuse, 273
Health, 2267	Transportation, 644
Housing, 2367	Veterans, 119



The Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center had a busy year hosting over 40 events including concerts, expos, banquets, fairs, and boat shows.



SMART) **charlotte 2050**

The Comprehensive Plan

Every 7 years, the State of Florida requires that Charlotte County perform a complete assessment of its growth management plan. This complex process, called the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process, is so regulated that it often produces checklist results rather than a comprehensive assessment of citizen's vision for future growth. The EAR is required in 2010. To ensure that the comprehensive growth management plan, called the Comprehensive Plan, represents the vision of our citizens and that the Plan's regulations are easy to use, Charlotte County undertook an early assessment of the Plan.

In 2009, the County implemented the "Smart Charlotte 2050 Plan" process. This grass root effort successfully identified a new vision for the County's growth and development. Citizens participated in unprecedented levels through a new, innovative web-based technology allowing citizens to review and comment on draft regulations online. The award-winning process received the highest praises for openness and ease of access to the planning process. The Smart Charlotte 2050 Plan remains online as a model of public dialogue and openness. The site may be viewed by going to www.smartcharlotte2050.com and clicking on the "Direct to Plan" icon.

Stay Informed

Keeping up with local government activities is easy through our television station and website. CCTV-20 is the government cable TV station on Comcast (channel 20 or 97). The County's website, www.CharlotteCountyFL.com, provides access to information such as: agendas, forms, publications, and much more. In conjunction with CCTV-20, live broadcasts of Board meetings and Video-on-Demand of other meetings, can be viewed on the website at your convenience.



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