

Charlotte County Government Annual Report 2008

P R O G R E S S & P R E S E R V A T I O N





Charlotte County, Florida

Welcome to our annual report. Throughout these pages you will find information about what county government has done this past year. Even through the economic downturn, we completed projects, maintained public safety and looked to the future.



Prairie Creek Preserve

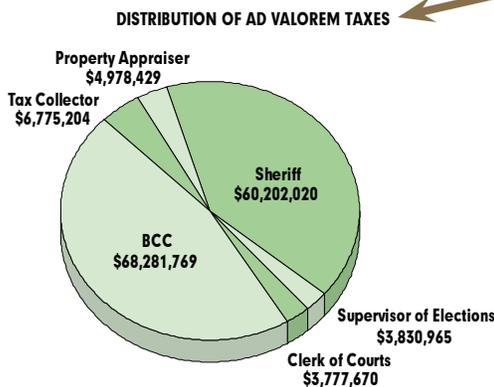


Sunrise Park



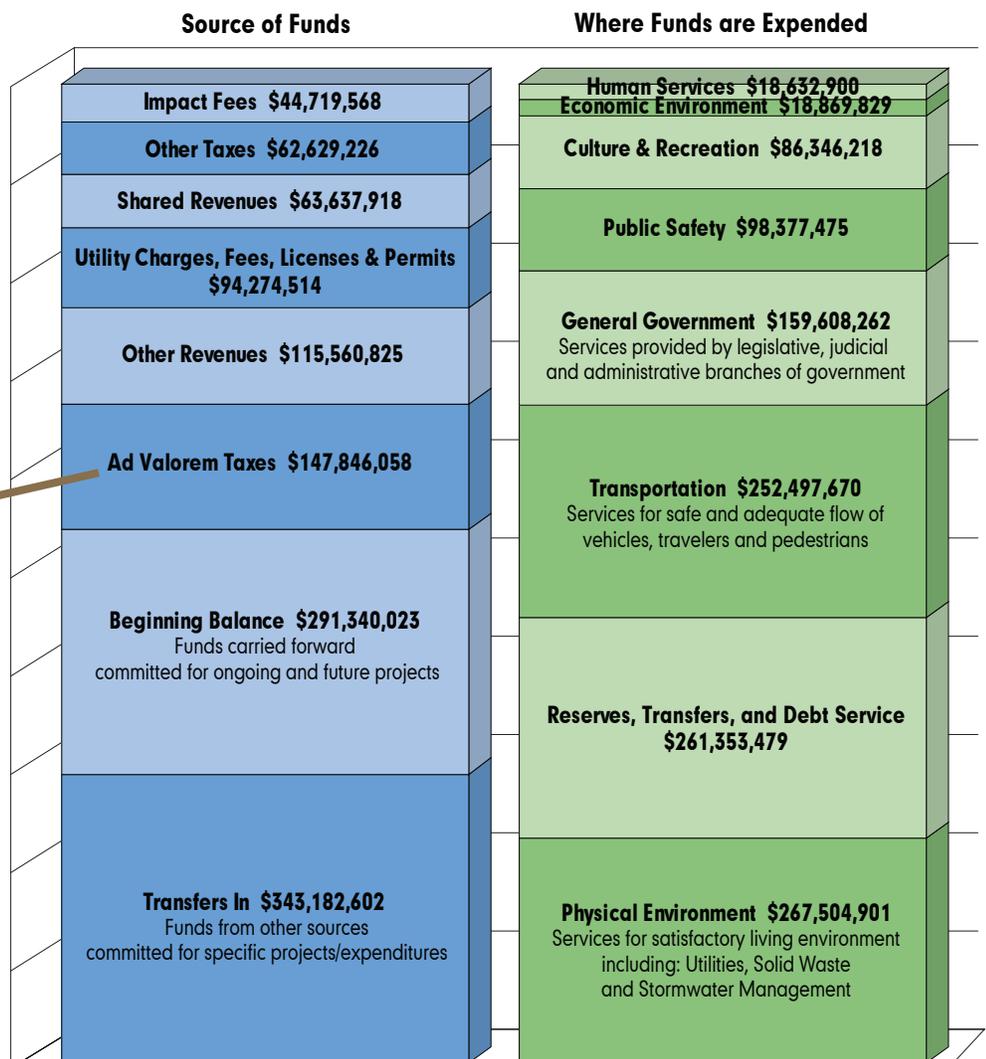
Don Pedro Island

Over the past year County staff spent many difficult hours managing the results of property tax reform and local economic conditions. Because of reduced property valuations and previous state legislative actions limiting revenues, our staff was extremely busy developing and delivering a balanced budget. Our Budget Department's efforts recognized with a national award for Outstanding Presentation for fiscal year 2007-2008 from the Government Financial Officers Association.



The budgeted grants revenue for fiscal year 2007-2008 was \$16,770,022 or 1.44% of the total budget.

COUNTY BUDGET FY 2007/08





A Safe and Secure Community

The sub-tropical paradise of Charlotte County is a great place to live, work and visit. Charlotte County Government strives to maintain the safety and character of our area. Public Safety is responsible for fire, ground safety of personnel, animal control and emergency management. An accountability system is in place, as well as a Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) team. Last year Animal Control road officers responded to 10,015 calls, and the Animal Control office issued 29,234 animal tags.

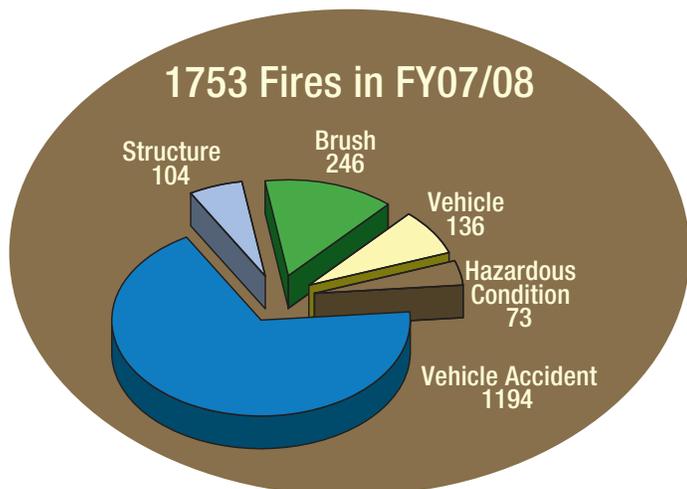


Education is a vital component of Public Safety. In 2008, over 29,400 individuals were reached through 81 events and 250 educational programs provided by Fire/EMS staff. Emergency Management personnel educated thousands of people on emergency and disaster preparedness through their annual Hurricane Caravan, community and school programs. Emergency responders also received education through two major training exercises: a full scale scenario of a crashed airplane at the Charlotte County Airport and an active shooter scenario held at Edison State College.



Emergency Management services include disaster response mitigation, preparedness response and recovery. Emergency Management, in conjunction with other county departments, safeguards the life and property of Charlotte County residents by developing a comprehensive emergency plan in case of a disaster. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated twice in 2008: a full activation for Tropical Storm Fay and a reduced activation for Hurricane Ike. Fire/Emergency Medical Services strives to protect the public health and safety by providing fire protection, fire suppression and the County-wide Advanced Life Support (ALS) emergency ambulance service.

Building Construction Services offers a supportive role in public safety by enforcing the requirements for all construction in unincorporated Charlotte County. The department also maintains the standards specified in all building and zoning codes.



Code Compliance

Code Compliance

Our Code Compliance division is kept busy responding to zoning code violations. Of the 5,900 Action Orders recorded this past year, the largest category was 1,043 complaints for tall grass. In addition to complaints investigated there were 5,599 commercial inspections completed and 237 inspections for sign permits. The division prepared 1,030 building and zoning code violation cases for the Code Enforcement Board. Fortunately, staff was able to work with the violators and only 554 cases were actually presented to the Code Enforcement Board for action.

Charlotte County Fire/EMS opened Fire Station 11 in Harbor Heights in August. Station 11 was destroyed in 2004 by Hurricane Charley and is the final station to be rebuilt due to the hurricane.





Bayshore Live Oak Park

The Charlotte Harbor area saw progress in redevelopment with the new Chester Roberts Park, new Welcome signage along US 41, installation of low pressure sewers, and the opening of Bayshore Live Oak Park.

New Companies, More Jobs

These and other companies opened for business in Charlotte County last year, bringing over 400 jobs to the community:

- ADT
- A Plus Laundry
- Arcadia Aerospace
- Green Scapes
- Sherwin Williams
- South Eastern Freight

Enterprise Charlotte Airport Park (ECAP)

With direct access to I-75 and a central location between Fort Myers and Sarasota, the ECAP is shaping up to be Charlotte County's industrial hub.

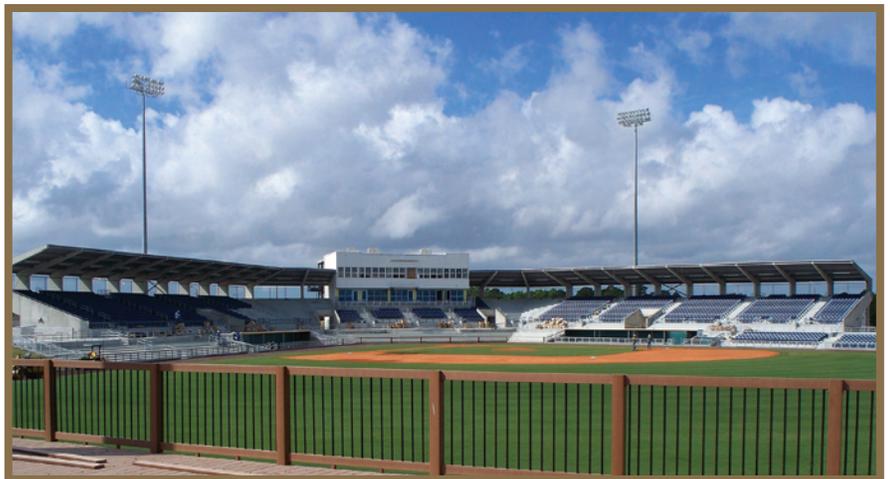


A Beautiful and Enriching Place to Live

Charlotte County is a beautiful and enriching place to live. It retains its quaintness with reflections of the original fishing village it once was, complete with cottages and a relaxed attitude. It is lively, with an airport, sports park, and a pleasant mixture of Mom and Pop shops and national chains. It is scenic, with views of Charlotte Harbor, citrus groves, cattle ranches, environmental preserves and wetlands. It is vibrant and alive with activities for the young and old.

Economic Development works proactively with county and state incentive programs, site selection and fast-track permitting for existing businesses in Charlotte County, as well as working with new businesses considering a location in Charlotte County. The Redevelopment Division is working to promote reinvestment into designated areas by the private sector.

Our Tourist Development Bureau's mission is to broaden the local tourism industry and to increase awareness about Charlotte Harbor and the Gulf Islands as a vacation destination. It coordinates a County-wide program for the area's travel and tourism industry and implements its marketing, advertising and public relations programs as approved by the Board of County Commissioners. 2008 saw over 10,000 people either participate in or observe special events in our area such as the annual Charlotte Harbor Kayak & Wildlife Festival, the TriAmerica National Triathlon and the Florida AAU Fall State Gymnastics Championships. The annual Oh Boy! Oberto Redfish Cup was taped for national broadcast on ESPN.



The major facelift and reconstruction of the Charlotte Sports Park was completed this year, creating a gleaming, family-friendly venue. The Sports Park will be the spring training home for the Tampa Bay Rays, 2008 American League Champions. The new Charlotte Stone Crabs team, a member of the Florida State League and Ripken Baseball, will play its regular season at the Sports Park. Visit the team websites raysbaseball.com or stonecrabsbaseball.com

Charlotte County's Human Services Department identifies community needs, seeks resources to satisfy unmet needs, builds community partnerships, and provides information, education and outreach to the public. These services are accomplished by the divisions of Housing Services, Senior Services, the Family Services Center, Social Services, Transit, Veteran Services, and the 2-1-1 call center. 2-1-1 provides telephone



assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for health and human services within Charlotte County.

Charlotte County Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources provides quality programs and facilities for residents and visitors. Recreation and leisure activities, libraries and services, historical activities, parks and open space are an integral part of our community. There are seasonal and annual programs for many interests and ages at a variety of facilities. In 2008 the changing exhibit at the Historical Center featured nearby Little Salt Spring and a tribute to local baseball heroes. The County pools offered instruction, recreation and events including the annual April Pools Day festivities and Lighting Mile Swim. Weekly nature walks were offered throughout the year at the County environmental parks, and the Summer Safari Camp entertained area children through the summer school break.



The \$19.7 million Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center was completed ahead of schedule and under budget. The 43,500 square foot building includes a large 20,000 square foot meeting space, which fits 112 booths or over 1,500 theater-style seats.

A Sampling of Charlotte County Human Services

2008 Stats for 211 Calls

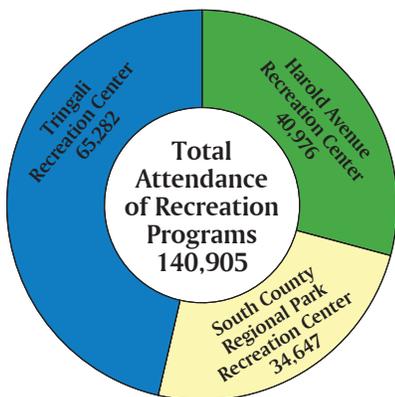
Total Calls: 19,199
Total needs met: 26,210

Transit Ridership Increased 2.7%

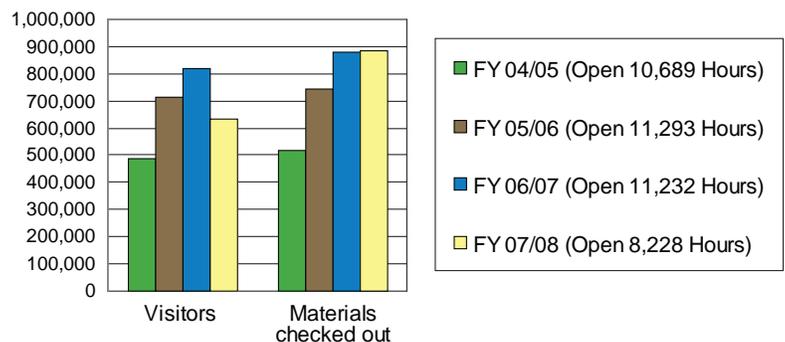
Dial-A-Ride up 4.625%
Sunshine Ride up 1.95%

Family Services Center Helps Youth

The Family Services Center completed its first full year as lead agency for the Neighborhood Accountability Board. In partnership with the state's Department of Juvenile Justice, the program served 78 court-involved youth. 93.51% successfully completed the program and remained crime free for six months.



Library Visitors & Circulation FY0405-FY0708



Although reduced operating hours resulted in less visitors to Charlotte County Libraries, more materials were checked out last year than ever.



The voter-approved Conservation Charlotte Land Acquisition Program purchased 2500+ acres of environmentally-sensitive lands to preserve and protect our area habitats.



The 1928 Charlotte County Courthouse was re-opened on February 26, 2008 after a \$6 million rehabilitation. The original look was restored with the exception of the rear entrance where a chair lift has been installed to meet ADA requirements. The main office of the Supervisor of Elections is on the first floor and court offices occupy the second floor.

Preserving the Surroundings

The environment and character of Charlotte County attracts many residents and visitors to the area. To sustain that character both the Growth Management and Environmental & Extension Services Departments provide essential programs and services.

Growth Management is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the County's zoning regulations and the preparation and implementation of the County's comprehensive plan. In 2008, the updating of the ten year old comprehensive plan got underway with an interactive process call Smart Charlotte 2050. To participate visit the county's website CharlotteCountyFL.com and click the Smart Charlotte 2050 icon. The county's Land Development Regulations are also under review. The end result will be a blueprint for growth that will span the next several decades.

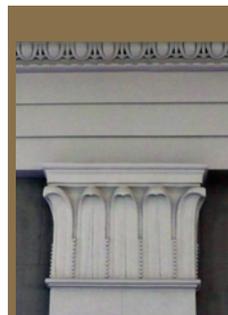
Environmental & Extension Services is dedicated to improving the environment and protecting the health, safety, welfare of Charlotte County residents. The largest undertaking this past year by the department was the garbage pick-up schedule change. In October, unincorporated areas of the county began Once-A-Week garbage pick up. This program is estimated to bring a savings of \$1.26 million in the first year. The West Charlotte Mini-Transfer & Recycling Station re-opened in July after improvements to the facility that resulted in reduced operating costs and increased storage and access capabilities.

Composting Program

Environmental & Extension Services partnered with Charlotte County Utilities to create a Florida Department of Environmental Protection-approved composting program at the Zemel Road Landfill. By combining yard waste mulch with biosolids, from the wastewater treatment process, the resulting compost can be used by the Landfill. This endeavor is saving the utility in hauling costs and providing the Landfill with required cover material.

Mangrove Restoration Has Begun

Charlotte County's Sea Grant Agent was recognized internationally for the Red Mangrove Restoration Project. With over 1165 volunteer hours to date, the mangroves along the shoreline of Charlotte Harbor are being restored from the destruction caused by Hurricane Charley.



Historical buildings in Charlotte County include the Courthouse, the Cookie House, and the Placida Bunk House. Learn more about Charlotte County history by visiting the Historical Center at 22959 Bayshore Road or call 941.629.PAST (7278).



The new Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) is another quality of life improvement. The ATMS monitors the roadways and allows for a lightning-fast response time to traffic issues and accidents.

Count on Public Works

- Paved 116.8 miles of roads
- Placed 111,464 tons of asphalt
- Rejuvenated 68.4 miles of roads
- Maintained 250 miles of striped roads
- Maintained 80,000 signs, 103 traffic signals, and 1,800 roadway lights
- Maintained 600 marine navigation aids
- Opened 3,186 work orders
- Maintained 1,709,539 SF of road drainage swale (line & grade)
- Cleaned out 154,641 SY of primary ditch drainage (major outfall)
- Cleaned out 2,965 culverts
- Installed 15,491.5 LF of small pipe
- Installed 1,596 LF of large pipe
- Maintained 6,900,925 SF of primary ditch

Count on CCU

Among many tasks that Utilities accomplishes each year is the maintenance of:

- 252 wastewater lift stations
- 138 service area square miles
- 4,300+ fire hydrants
- 12,500+ valves

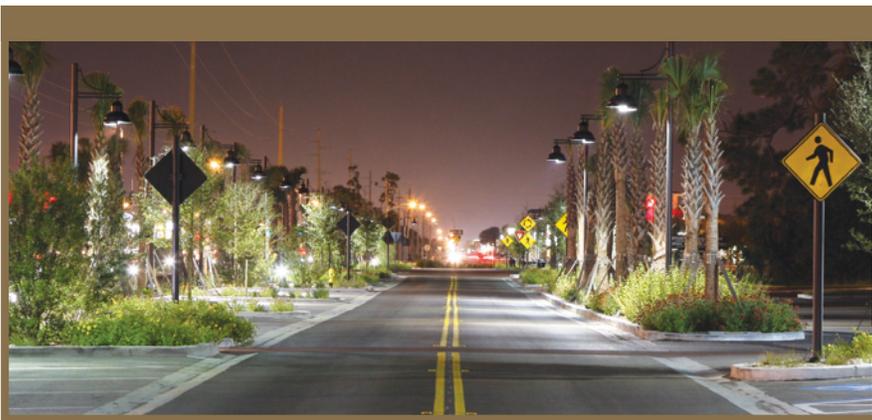
Maintaining and replacing an aging infrastructure is a big challenge. Charlotte County has more than 800 miles of wastewater collection mains and over 1,400 miles of water mains. That is more miles of water mains than Boston, MA or Pittsburgh PA.

Improving the Infrastructure

The infrastructure of Charlotte County is a work in progress, providing Charlotte County with clean water to drink, a healthy wastewater system, effective stormwater drainage, and safe roads and bridges.

Charlotte County Utilities (CCU) provides water, sewer and reclaimed water to residents in the unincorporated areas of Charlotte County. The department's policies and rates are established by the Board of County Commissioners. As a governmental enterprise, the utility is funded solely from the revenues generated for service. CCU purchases its water from the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority of which the County is a voting member. CCU owns and operates a reverse osmosis water treatment plant on Burnt Store Road, near the Charlotte/Lee County line, as well as four water reclamation facilities (wastewater treatment plants) in the County. The Burnt Store facility was awarded for its Outstanding Operation and Maintenance for medium sized facilities by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in 2008.

Public Works maintains roadways, bridges, waterways and drainage infrastructure within unincorporated Charlotte County. The department also maintains County vehicles and construction equipment through its Fleet Management division. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a collective group that promotes coordination of local, state and federal transportation planning and programs, and it ensures eligibility for federal transportation funding. Its member organizations include Charlotte County, the City of Punta Gorda and the Charlotte County Airport Authority.



Construction of the US 41 Revitalization area was completed and includes an environmentally and pedestrian friendly layout. Infrastructure was upgraded with sewer and water lines, design standards include new signage and drought tolerant landscaping. This project was paid for with Sales Tax, Gas Tax, and Native Tree Fund revenues.

Cemeteries are another facet of infrastructure. Charlotte County is responsible for Indian Spring Cemetery in Punta Gorda, Lt. Carl Bailey Cemetery in Cleveland Heights, and Hickory Bluff Cemetery in Charlotte Harbor.

Keeping Up with Charlotte County Government



Staying informed and keeping current on 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, CharlotteCountyFL.com, provides access to all kinds of information: meeting agendas, forms, publications, and much more. In conjunction with CCTV-20, live broadcasts of Board meetings and Video-on-Demand of other meetings, as well as original programs can be viewed on the website at your convenience.

Get Involved - Volunteer!

One of the best ways to stay informed is to become involved. Whether through a board appointed committee or at one of the many facilities throughout the County, volunteers are always in the know. Visit CharlotteCountyFL.com and click Press Releases in the links on the left. The most recent Request for Volunteers lists the open positions. Other opportunities for volunteers include Master Gardeners, library volunteers, and Human Services.

Explore CharlotteCountyFL.com!

Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners



Bob Starr
District 1



Adam Cummings
District 2



Robert Skidmore
District 3



Richard Loftus
District 4



Tricia Duffy
District 5



The annual Government Day at the mall connects citizens and visitors face-to-face with various County departments.

Information by Request

CHARLOTTE ALERT

New in 2008, Charlotte Alert is a mass notification system that helps residents, businesses, and visitors stay connected to Charlotte County Government. Charlotte Alert sends messages about issues, activities, and publications:

- County Events • Meeting Notifications
- Road Closures • CCTV-20 Schedule
- Public Safety • Newsletters

To receive Charlotte Alerts, visit our website (CharlotteCountyFL.com) to create a Charlotte Alert account and choose which messages you'd like to receive.

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Produced by Charlotte County Government.