

DESCRIPTION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Located midway along the west coast of Florida, the county's boundaries embrace 1,048 square miles of land and 24 miles of inland water for a total of 1,072 square miles.

With the largest bay in Florida opening to the Gulf of Mexico, the coast spans 76 miles.

The unincorporated area encompasses 929 square miles or more than 87% of the total county area. The municipalities of Tampa (the County seat), Temple Terrace and Plant City account for the remaining 143 square miles. According to the latest estimates from the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission, the county's total population as of April 1, 2000 was 1,001,910 of which 654,060 or 65% live in the unincorporated area.

UNDER FOUR FLAGS

Hillsborough County takes its name from the British Colonial Secretary of 1772. The Spanish first mapped and explored the area in the early 16th century. Between 1559 and 1819, the area now called Florida was under the rule of four nations: Spain, France, Great Britain and, finally, the United States. The United States purchased Florida from Spain in 1821 for \$5 million. In 1845, it was granted statehood.

On January 25, 1834, the U.S. Legislative Council for the Territory of Florida approved an act organizing Hillsborough as Florida's 19th county. Its area then was 5.5 million acres and included the present counties of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Polk, Pasco, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands. The civilian population in 1834 was less than 100.

Hillsborough County's Board of County Commissioners held its first meeting on January 25, 1846. The pay for members was set at \$2 per day when in session. County taxes collected for 1846 totaled \$146.69.

The County's first courthouse was a frontier cabin burned by indians in 1836. In 1847, Capt. James McKay built a two story courthouse at a cost of \$1,358. A third structure was erected in 1855 and was used until 1891, when a red brick, domed structure mimicking the architecture of the Tampa Bay Hotel was built, occupying a square block in downtown Tampa. The facility included a popular alligator pool. This is the structure depicted on today's County

seal. The current courthouse was built in 1952 and a new county government administration building, called County Center, opened in 1994.

COUNTY ECONOMY

Hillsborough County has a diversified economic base including a large service sector, a large manufacturing sector and a thriving retail trade sector. According to the latest information, the four largest employers in the public sector are the Hillsborough County School Board followed by Hillsborough County government, the University of South Florida, and MacDill Air Force Base. Major private sector employers are GTE Data Services (telecommunications), St. Joseph's Hospital (medical facility), Publix Food Centers (supermarkets), Tampa Electric Corporation (electric utility), Busch Entertainment Corporation (theme park), Nationsbank (banking services), Kash 'n Karry Food Centers (supermarkets), Tribune Company (newspaper publishing), and USAA Insurance Company.

The Port of Tampa serves as the closest port in the United States to the Panama Canal. It is also the largest tonnage port in Florida and the tenth largest port in the United States with respect to annual tonnage. Ninety-eight percent of the cargo moving through the port is bulk-phosphate, phosphate chemicals, rock, coal and petroleum products. The Garrison Seaport Center, a \$300 million cruise terminal and entertainment complex, is in the midst of development at the Port of Tampa. The project includes the Florida Aquarium, two new state-of-the-art cruise terminals, a restaurant, and retail shops. This is helping to spur re-development in the adjacent area known as the Channel District.

Another significant element of the economy is agriculture. The county's total agricultural production ranks fifth in the state. It is the nation's top producer of winter strawberries and tropical fish.

Tourism is another major component of the economy. The number of tourists visiting Florida is expected to continue growing. Busch Gardens of Tampa is one of the leading tourist attractions in the nation. There are numerous attractions in Hillsborough County such as the Florida Aquarium; the County's Museum of Science and Industry; the Lowry Park Zoo; the 1999 World Champion New York Yankees spring training facility; and the Ice Palace Arena in downtown Tampa for the National Hockey League team, the Tampa Bay Lightning. The area's professional football team, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, moved into the new Raymond James Stadium in September 1998.

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GOVERNING HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY - BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Hillsborough County is a political subdivision of the State of Florida guided by an elected seven-member Board of County Commissioners. Through partisan elections, three are elected to represent the entire county as a district and four are elected to represent single-member districts. Under a Charter Ordinance effective May 1985, the Board is restricted to performing the legislative functions of government by developing policy for the management of Hillsborough County. The County Administrator, a professional appointed by the Board, and his staff are responsible for the implementation of those policies.

The Board of County Commissioners is responsible for functions and services delivered throughout the county including municipalities and for municipal services to residents and businesses in the unincorporated area. The countywide responsibilities include such services as local social services, health care for the medically indigent, animal services, mosquito control, consumer protection, and a regional park system. Its responsibilities to the residents and businesses in the unincorporated area include, for example, fire protection, local parks, emergency medical services, planning, zoning, and code enforcement. Sixty-four percent of the county's total population live in the unincorporated area of Hillsborough County.

ROLE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

The Board of County Commissioners appoints the County Administrator. He is responsible for carrying out all decisions, policies, ordinances and motions of the Board.

The departments under the County Administrator are responsible for providing road construction and maintenance, solid waste disposal, parks and recreation, emergency services and water and wastewater treatment for residents of unincorporated Hillsborough County. The departments also are responsible for providing social services and public assistance to residents countywide.

These departments are grouped into three offices: Management Services, Community Services, and Human Services. The Office of Management Analysis, the Office of Neighborhood Relations, and the Office of Public Affairs are three additional offices that report directly to the County Administrator.

COMMISSIONERS SERVE ON OTHER BOARDS

The Board of County Commissioners also serves as the Environmental Protection Commission. Individual Board members serve on various other boards, authorities, and commissions, such as the Hillsborough Area Rapid Transit Authority, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority, Aviation Authority, Expressway Authority, Sports Authority, Board of Criminal Justice, Arts Council, Drug Abuse Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Planning Organization, Council of Governments and the Committee of 100 of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

In addition to the members of the Board, citizens also elect five Constitutional Officers: Tax Collector, Property Appraiser, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Sheriff, and Supervisor of Elections. The Board funds all or, in some cases, a portion of the operating budgets of these Constitutional Officers. The Constitutional Officers maintain separate accounting systems and expanded budget detail information.

OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Based on the degree of budgetary authority, taxing authority, the ability to obligate funds to finance any deficits and the ability to fund any significant operational subsidies, several other governmental entities also have their budgets reviewed and approved by the Board of County Commissioners: the Environmental Protection Commission, the Civil Service Board, the Planning Commission, the Legislative Delegation, and the Law Library Board. The budgets of these offices and the Constitutional Officers are included in this document to the extent of funding by the Board of County Commissioners.