



POLK  
COUNTY

2023  
Profile



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

330 W. Church Street  
PO Box 9005  
Bartow, FL 33831-9005



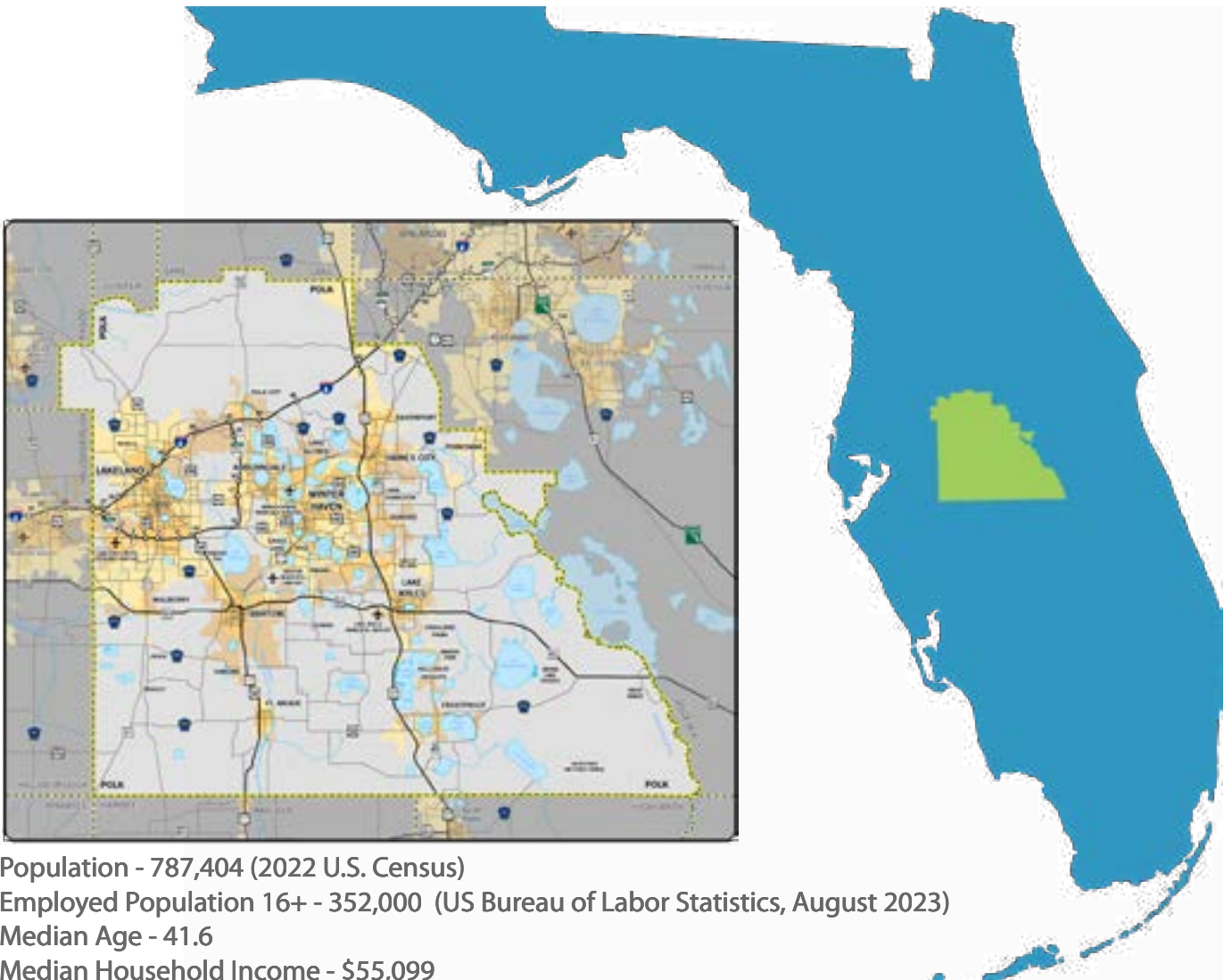
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“ **Mission:** We enhance the quality of life for people throughout Polk County. ”

# About **POLK**



Population - 787,404 (2022 U.S. Census)

Employed Population 16+ - 352,000 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 2023)

Median Age - 41.6

Median Household Income - \$55,099

- Polk County represents 3% of the total population of Florida
- Ten million people and a workforce of 3.5 million are within a 100-mile radius of Polk County
- Polk County has six traditional colleges/universities, including the newest state university, Florida Polytechnic University. Combined, these institutions enroll more than 19,000 students

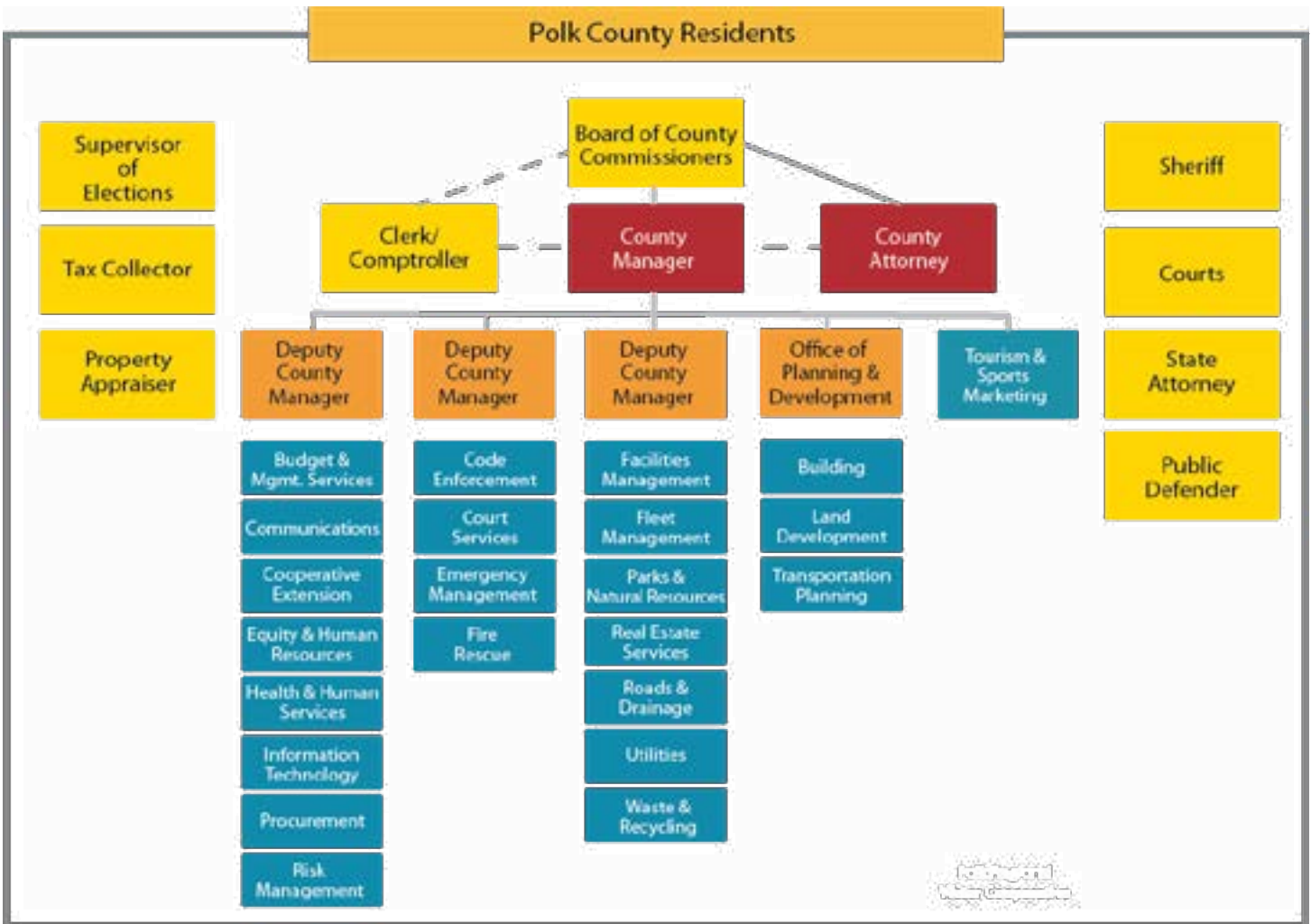
Total Square Miles - 2,011

Square Land Miles - 1,798

Square Water Area - 213

- Polk County is Florida's fourth largest county and is larger than the State of Rhode Island
- The county has 17 municipalities, the largest being Lakeland and the second being Winter Haven. Other municipalities include Auburndale, Bartow, Davenport, Dundee, Eagle Lake, Fort Meade, Frostproof, Haines City, Highland Park, Hillcrest Heights, Lake Alfred, Lake Hamilton, Lake Wales, Mulberry and Polk City.

# Our STRUCTURE



## Polk County Government...

- Provides fire protection and ALL ambulance services
- Coordinates emergency evacuations
- Enforces housing codes and regulations
- Determines land use and zoning
- Facilitates garbage and recycling collection
- Issues building permits
- Operates county landfill
- Administers affordable housing programs
- Provides health and welfare programs
- Preserves natural ecosystems
- Builds, resurfaces and maintains roads
- Assists in developing small businesses
- Supplies drinking water
- Minimizes mosquito population
- Produces Government television (PGTV)
- Builds and maintains parks
- Preserves wildlife
- Provides wastewater collection/treatment
- Stimulates economic development
- Reviews development construction plans
- Offers agricultural education programs
- Initiates countywide clean-up projects
- Recruits sporting events and promotes tourism
- Plans transportation to accommodate growth
- Maintains more than 12,500 street signs each year
- Monitors criminals who are on probation
- And much more!



# Charter Government

Polk County has a charter government authorized by the Florida Constitution. It may only be amended by a vote of the local registered voters. It is a means by which local control, home rule and citizen input are enhanced. A county charter is a written document defining the powers, structure and functions of the county. The charter acts as a “mini-constitution” for the people of Polk County.

County government is granted all home rule powers of self-government as approved by the local voters that are consistent with state law.

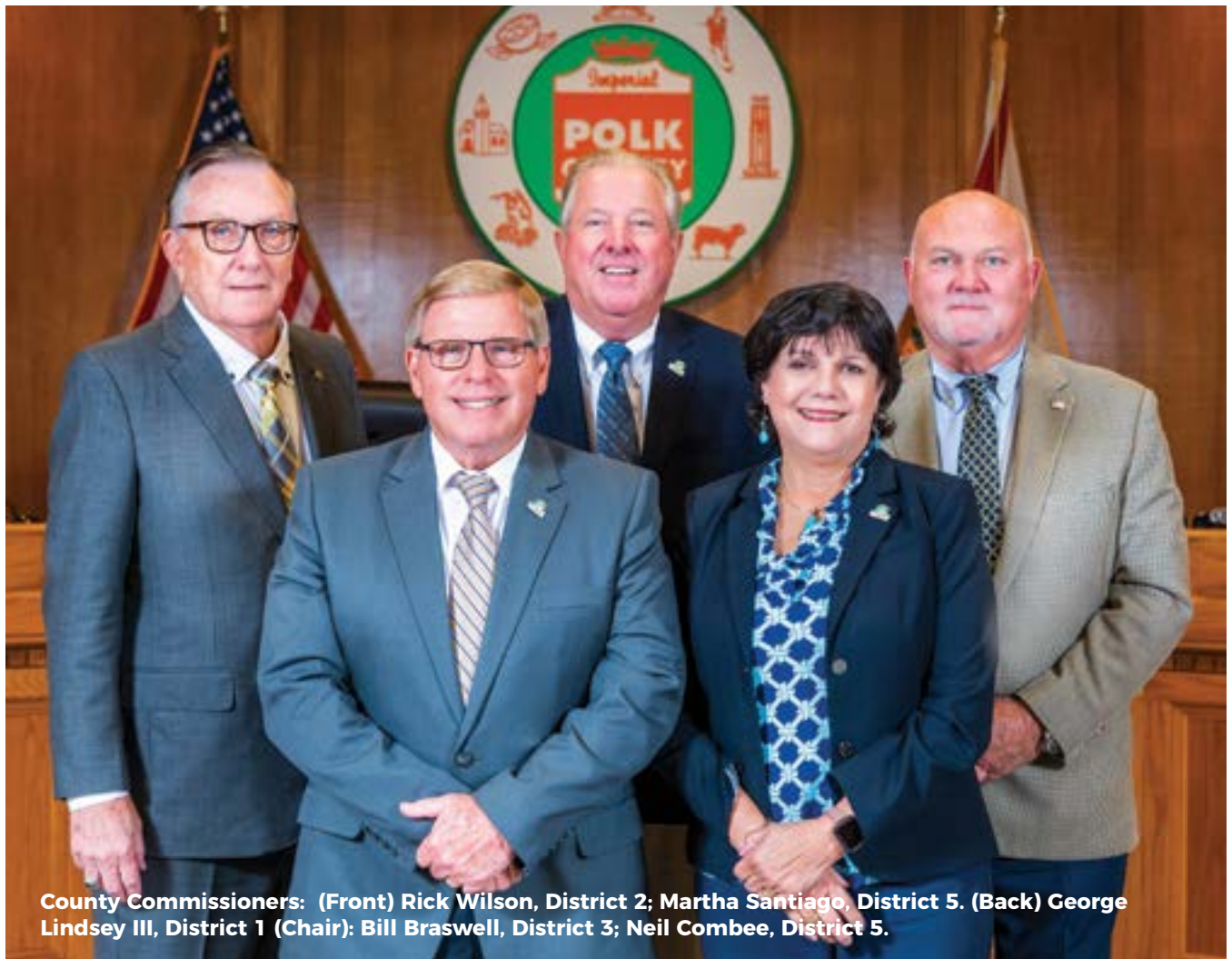
Some of the key provisions of the Charter:

- Requires that candidates for County Commission reside in the district in which they are running at the time that they qualify for office, in addition to maintaining residency after being elected

- Ordinances and charter amendments can be proposed by petition of the voters
- Members of the County Commission and the Constitutional Officers may be recalled from office in accordance with state law and the Governor retains the right to suspend or remove any county official from office

The Charter does not affect city governments. It is not a form of annexation or consolidation. It does not affect the powers or duties of the Constitutional Officers or the School Board.

The State Legislature is the only governing body with the power to create, abolish or consolidate counties. A county cannot change its form of government, such as combining city and county governments, without a referendum.



**County Commissioners: (Front) Rick Wilson, District 2; Martha Santiago, District 5. (Back) George Lindsey III, District 1 (Chair); Bill Braswell, District 3; Neil Combee, District 5.**

# Constitutional Officers

Clerk of the Courts  
Stacy Butterfield



Property Appraiser  
Marsha Faux



Tax Collector  
Joe Tedder



Supervisor of Elections  
Lori Edwards



Sheriff  
Grady Judd



## Board of County Commissioners

The Board of County Commissioners is the governing body of Polk County. Each commissioner is elected by a countywide vote to a four-year term. In the November 2018 election, the Polk County Charter was amended to limit the number of terms to three consecutive four-year terms.

Each of Polk County’s five commissioners represents a county district and must reside in his/her district. Commissioners from districts one, three and five are elected in Presidential election years; districts two and four are elected in the intervening years.

In November, a chairman and vice chairman are elected by the members of the County Commission. The board selects committee chair/liaisons who, in turn, work with the county manager and staff to establish Board policies in specific focus areas, such as tourism, community outreach and legislative issues. They also select residents to serve on a variety of commissions, boards and councils.

### Duties

The Florida Constitution and Chapter 125 of the Florida Statutes authorize the Board of County Commissioners to exercise all powers not prohibited by law. This includes levying taxes, distributing tax monies through budgeting and appropriations, constructing and maintaining roads and bridges, providing health and welfare services, managing all county-owned property, and providing supervision

of all county functions and services. County taxes support many of the activities and services of county government, including the justice system, the sheriff, circuit and county court.

The Board meets the first and third Tuesday of the month in the Boardroom of the Administration Building in Bartow. Florida’s “Government in the Sunshine” law requires that all county government business takes place in public meetings and the public be given adequate notice of such meetings. The Board’s agenda is posted before each meeting and is available on the county’s website at [www.polk-county.net](http://www.polk-county.net). Meetings are also televised by PGTV and can also be viewed on the internet at the county’s website.

### County Manager

The Board of County Commissioners hires the county manager who is responsible for all the divisions within the county commission, except for the County Attorney’s Office, which answers directly to the Board. The county manager serves as the budget officer and selects, employs and supervises county personnel. In FY 23/24, the county will employ about 2,258 people.

### Advisory Groups

Advisory groups play a critical role in Polk County government. State law created some groups, the BoCC created others as advisors in specific areas. County residents are encouraged to participate by expressing a desire to be appointed to these groups or make recommendations for appointments.

# Annual Review **FY 2022/23**

September 2023

## Fire Rescue Services

Stations	44
Employees (Full-Time)	618
Assist Outside Agencies	776
Citizen Assist/Service Call	4,210
Fire Alarm	2,230
Fire Call	1,158
Hazardous Conditions	931
Medical Calls	93,916
Other	14,189
Rescue Call - Special Detail	83
Special Detail	48
Technical Rescue	266
Traffic/Transportation Incidents	6,312
<b>Total</b>	<b>124,119</b>

Source: Polk County Fire Rescue

## Law Enforcement-Sheriff

Employees (Total)	1,831
Sworn	727
Certified	369
Civilian	735
Total Crimes in Polk County	5,006
Marine/Agricultural Calls for Service	2166
Calls for Police Service (911)	312,563
Traffic Crashes Investigated	8,698
Calls for Animal Control	15,739
Daily Average Jail Population	2,939
Jail Bookings	23,600

Source: Polk County Sheriff's FY 23/24 Strategic Plan and Budget

## Public Works

### Waste and Recycling

Tons of Solid Waste disposed at Landfill*	799,383.12
Annual Collections per Household (three weekly)*	52
Households Serviced*	158,914
Annual Curbside Garbage Pickups*	8,263,528
Disposal Cost per Pick-Up*	\$1.00

### Roads and Drainage

Street Miles-Center Lane**	2,710.5
Traffic Signs**	89,291
Sidewalk Miles**	474

Sources: \*Polk County Waste & Recycling Division

\*\*Polk County Roads & Drainage Division

## Water/Wastewater Utilities

### Water

Plants	30
Connections	80,142
Average Daily Flow Pumped (mgd)	20.757
Average Daily Flow Permitted (mgd)	31.488

### Wastewater

Wastewater Facilities	8
Pumping Stations	372
Connections	61,872
Average Daily Treatment (mgd)	10.106
Averaged Permitted Daily Capacity (mgd)	14.109

### Public Access Reclaimed Water

Facilities	3
Connections	16,566
Average Daily Reuse Flow (mgd)	8.867
Average Daily Rescue Flow Permitted (mgd)	13.00

Source: Polk County Utilities Division



## Parks & Natural Resources

Regional Parks	6
Specialty Parks	52
Neighborhood Parks	28
Community Parks	16
Park Acres	3,860
Lighted Ballfields	87
Lighted Multi-purpose Fields	44
Boat Ramps	51
Boat Ramp Lanes	59
Docks	24
Acres Acquired	26,892
Land Acquisition Cost	\$111,962,673
Acquisition Partners	\$79,413,108
18 of 32 properties	
County's Land Acquisition Cost	\$31,720,433
Savings % to county from partners	72%
Cost of Land Sold to State	\$1,788,965

Source: Polk County Parks and Natural Resources Division

## Top Employers

Employer	Employees
Publix Super Markets	15,361
Polk County Public Schools	13,459
Lakeland Regional Health	6,942
Walmart	5,523
Amazon	5,500
Geico	3,800
BayCare	2,614
<b>Board of County Commissioners</b>	<b>2,258</b>
City of Lakeland	2,000
Polk County Sheriff's Office	1,830
Watson Clinic	1,797
Mosaic	1,707
Legoland	1,500+
Advent Health	1,497
Polk State College	1,250
Southeastern University	1,072

## Libraries

Number of Libraries	17
Library Materials	740,585
Annual Circulation	1,838,411
Registered Borrowers	495,505

Source: Polk County Library Cooperative

## BoCC Position Counts

	Employees	Population	Employees per 1000 Population
FY 2007/08	2,273	591,659	3.84
FY 2010/11	1,942	602,095	3.23
FY 2015/16	1,918	634,638	3.02
FY 2020/21	2,134	725,046	2.94
FY 2022/23	2,251	753,520	2.98
FY 2023/24	2,258	787,404	2.86

# Polk County Trends & Issues

It has been more than 15 years since Polk County has seen new construction fueled by a robust economy like we have in the past three years. Through good fiscal management, the county is well-positioned to manage this growth, create a positive atmosphere for economic development and provide services to our residents that ensures a comfortable quality of life in Polk.

Data released by the U.S. Census and the Central Florida Development Council shows that Polk County is now the

fastest growing county in Florida and fifth in the United States, averaging about 88 people a day moving into the county.

Polk County's overall economic health remains strong, but inflation continues to threaten Florida's vibrant economy. Inflation, high fuel prices, ongoing supply chain disruptions and labor shortages are affecting the county employee's workloads and delaying capital project milestones and completion.

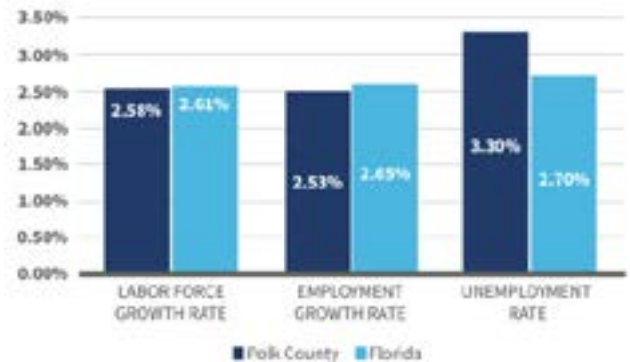
## Key Trends

Seven key trends exist which represent challenges and opportunities for Polk County Government. These trends drive more specific challenges. Understanding these trends is critical for developing effective strategies. Trends include:

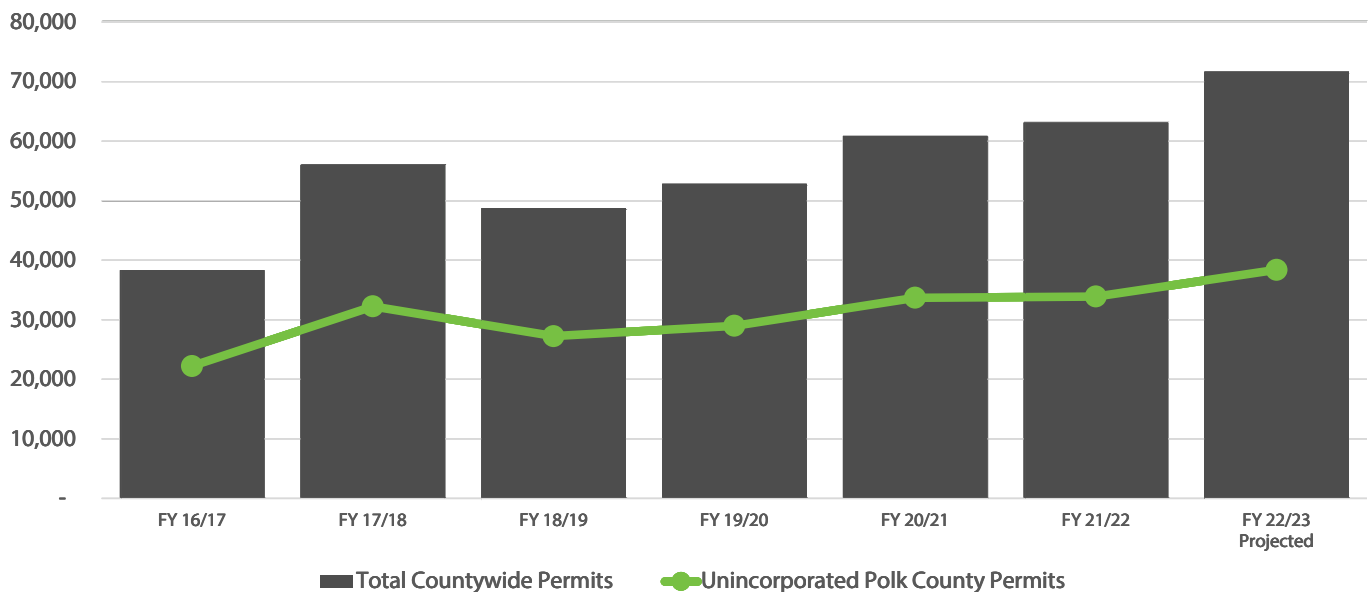
- *Urbanization and Population Growth*
- *Revenue Growth*
- *Limitations on Revenue Options*
- *Cost of Operating Government*
- *Rising Costs to the Public*
- *Competition for a Skilled Workforce, and*
- *Leadership Transitions*

## Polk County's Work Force

Labor Market Statistics (May 2023)

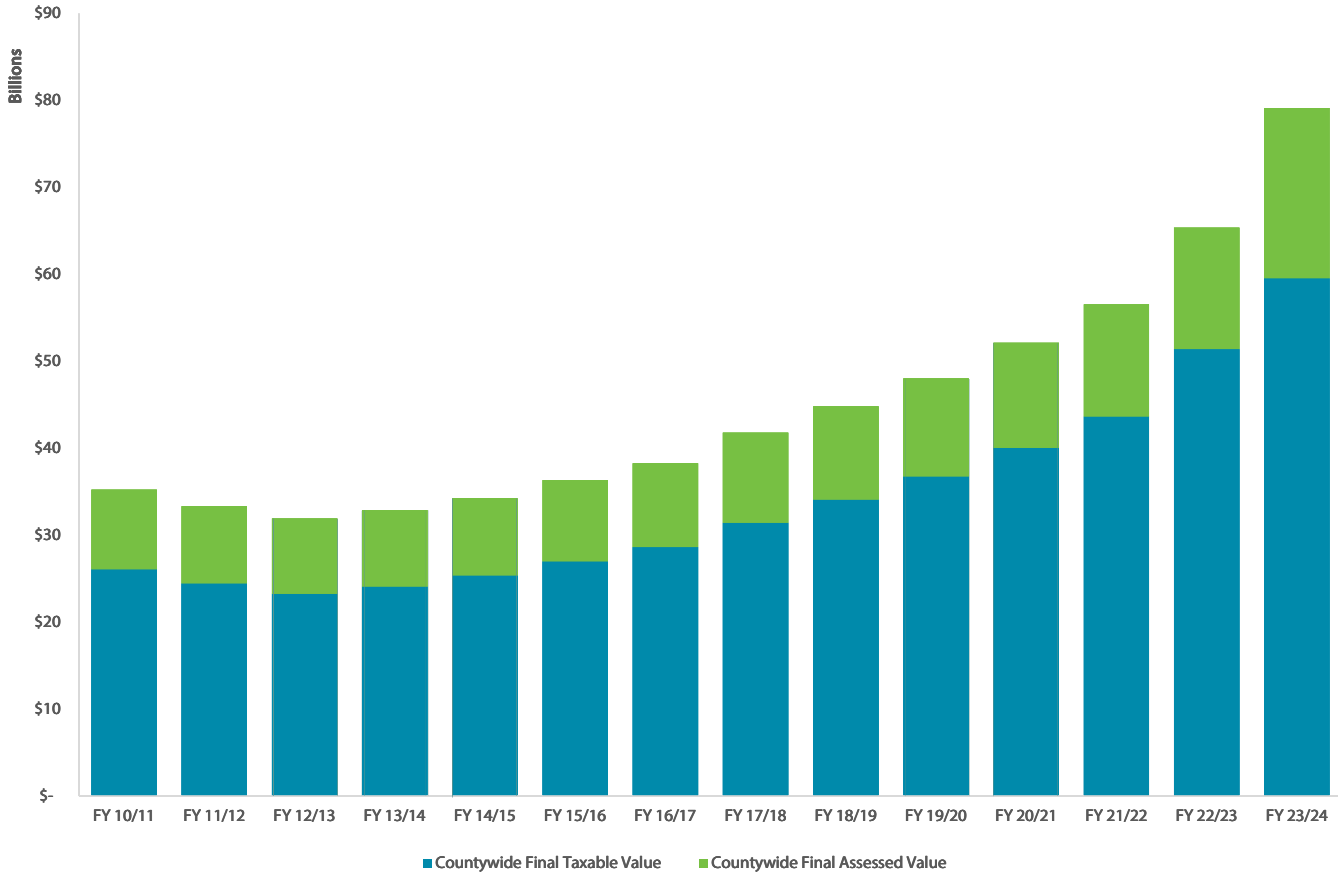


## Total Building Permits Issued Countywide





# Countywide Assessed & Taxable Values



	Population*	Square Miles**	2023 Tax Rolls Taxable	
			Values***	% of Change
Auburndale	18,579	24.3	\$ 2,235,826,701	16.55%
Bartow	19,888	52.5	\$ 1,159,362,873	18.25%
Davenport	13,485	4.6	\$ 1,052,595,883	37.57%
Dundee	5,998	12.2	\$ 350,962,230	12.02%
Eagle Lake	3,391	4.4	\$ 246,042,835	50.68%
Fort Meade	5,193	8.5	\$ 183,755,664	10.02%
Frostproof	2,998	19.3	\$ 207,322,012	11.77%
Haines City	33,629	24.4	\$ 2,811,517,880	28.04%
Highland Park	246	1.1	\$ 17,829,241	15.33%
Hillcrest Heights	243	8.7	\$ 19,855,923	4.26%
Lake Alfred	7,107	13.3	\$ 426,744,507	37.39%
Lake Hamilton	1,560	4.3	\$ 137,666,085	19.11%
Lake Wales	16,774	21.3	\$ 1,157,265,308	8.96%
Lakeland	120,107	75.1	\$ 10,677,723,600	12.73%
Mulberry	4,135	7.5	\$ 347,398,007	20.48%
Polk City	2,956	5.1	\$ 252,619,657	10.42%
Winter Haven	55,024	41.1	\$ 4,265,767,321	15.24%
Unincorporated Polk	476,091	1,683.3	\$ 34,719,880,852	15.01%

\* Population Source: 2022 US Census  
 \*\* Polk County Information Technology Division  
 \*\*\* 2023 Polk Property Appraiser Tax Rolls

