

WHAT IS A COUNTY CHARTER?

A charter is like a “miniconstitution” for a county. All Florida municipalities have charters. They spell out the powers, duties and structures of government.

Counties in Florida traditionally were viewed as arms of State government. When they were set up during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, counties did not have charters. Back then, counties were mostly rural. They performed a limited number of government functions, and largely were controlled by the State Legislature.

Florida has changed dramatically during the last several decades. County governments now provide many municipal-type services in addition to performing traditional responsibilities.

The Florida Constitution was amended in 1968 to extend full powers of home rule to Florida counties whose voters choose to adopt charters. Nineteen of Florida’s 67 counties have a charter. Collectively these counties are home to more than 75 percent of Florida's residents. Often times State law differentiates the powers of charter counties and non-chartered counties when conveying the intent or applicability of laws.