



*Deadline Extended – Looking For a Few More Great Candidates*

— CITY MANAGER POSITION AVAILABLE —

Apply ASAP but no later than July 31, 2024

Welcome to Fernandina Beach, Florida! Incorporated in 1825, this quaint, seaside, north Florida community is home to a vibrant downtown historic district, beautiful beaches, scenic waterways, and a friendly, cosmopolitan population. Its downtown is characterized by numerous shops, attractive bed and breakfasts, many fine independently owned restaurants, a weekend farmers' market, and stately oak trees with their hanging Spanish moss. The natural environment is gorgeous, and residents take pride in their community, and its small-town feel.

Fernandina Beach's fame is at least partially attributable to its location on Amelia Island. Known as the southern jewel of the Sea Island chain of barrier islands that stretch from South Carolina to Florida, the Island has 13 miles of pristine, uncrowded beach and native wildlife. Its Appalachian quartz sand is a sandcastle builder's dream. Every winter the adjacent waters provide sanctuary to the migrating and rare North Atlantic right whales. This area is also where these 55-foot-long mammals give birth and nurse their young. The island's beaches are fertile nesting sites for multiple threatened and endangered turtles and shore birds including gopher tortoises, green sea turtles,



loggerhead turtles, least terns, willets and Wilson's plovers. Amelia Island is natural beauty at its best.

Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach often receive accolades, appearing on "Top 10 Lists," (i.e. the best islands, the best beach towns), and as a distinctive destination for its historic preservation. Locals and repeat visitors know the allure of this barrier island and its Victorian-era riverfront city. Fernandina Beach appeared first on a list of 17 southern American towns chosen as "Best Small-Town Getaways" by Southern Living magazine. Coastal Living magazine also listed Fernandina Beach in the top ten of their "Best Little Beach Town" category. Fernandina Beach is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was recognized as a Tree City of the World in 2023 and for its award-winning comprehensive plan 2030. The City is part of the National Main Street Program and was awarded the "Great Places in Florida" from the American Planning Association in 2015 for their downtown historic district.

Needless to say, one will not lack for things to do. All told, the Island and Fernandina Beach boast more than 70 independent restaurants ranging from fine dining to charming bistros. The local favorites provide a blend of ethnic influences with some of the freshest seafood available anywhere. Unfortunately, we just missed the Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival held annually in May.

The area is host to numerous events. To list but a few, January offers the Chamber Music Festival, February brings the Book Festival (which rivals any book festival in the Southeast), April brings the Fernandina Beach Songwriter Festival. The Sounds on Centre concert series is held the first Friday of the month from April through October in the waterfront area of Historic Downtown Fernandina Beach. May brings the Wild Amelia Nature Festival. The Dance Festival is in September, and October has the Northeast Florida Fair and the Jazz Festival. The Right Whale Festival occurs in November at the Main Beach Park. Also in November, the Amelia Island Open, an international pétanque tournament, is held alongside the harbor front. In December, Dickens on Centre transforms downtown Fernandina Beach into Victorian London and hosts characters costumed in 18th century garb, themed entertainment, visits from Saint Nick and a variety of vendors selling a variety of crafts

and seasonal wares. Finally, the Shrimp Drop festival occurs on December 31st to welcome a new year.

Fernandina Beach was established on January 1, 1825. To celebrate its impending 200th birthday, the City has collaborated with local organizations to bring a series of activities throughout 2024 which culminate with a City-wide party on January 1, 2025. A full calendar of events can be found on the City's website: [www.fbfl.us/200](http://www.fbfl.us/200) "[www.fbfl.us/200](http://www.fbfl.us/200)".

For motoring enthusiasts, The Amelia and the Amelia Cruizers Car Show will delight. The former is a posh event held in March on the lush greens at The Ritz Carlton of Amelia Island. There the 10th and 18th golf fairways are lined with millions of dollars' worth of gleaming, glitzy collector automobiles. Whether you like speed, flash or elegance, around 250 vehicles are showcased. Other events such as dinners, road tours, seminars, workshops, two auto auctions, and a silent charity auction accompany the show. The Cruizers Car Show, on the other hand, is a one-day event held in October where special collector vehicles are showcased along Centre Street in downtown Fernandina Beach.

A haven for outdoor enthusiasts, biking, hiking, kayaking, boating, paddleboarding, pickleball, and surfing are popular. The City has a public marina and the fishing in the area is outstanding. For the golfer, the City's own Golf Club has 27 holes. Private clubs in the City provide another 36 holes and two public courses offer another 46 holes. On the rest of the Island are five additional golf courses. A Lighthouse Driving Range powered by Toptracer is located at the Fernandina Beach Golf Club. The City's Parks and Recreation Department offers outstanding facilities and programs.

Spanning over 300 acres through the City's center, the Egans Creek Greenway is a popular destination for residents and visitors seeking to observe wildlife and experience the natural beauty of the City's salt marsh and maritime forest ecosystems. Fort Clinch was built in the 19th century and is located on a peninsula near the northernmost point of Amelia Island and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Cumberland Island is visible from Fort Clinch and is the perfect destination for solitude and exploring the great outdoors. The large barrier island is largely untouched and wonderfully preserved in its natural state with 17 miles of uninterrupted beaches.





Florida has been called a “birder’s paradise.” With reportedly over 470 bird species, Florida has the third largest number of different species of all US states. Amelia Island is the gateway to the east section of the Great Florida Birding Trail, part of the 2,000-mile-long trail.

If you have a family, the City has a low crime rate, and the schools are A rated! The Nassau County School District is the second highest rated school district in the state of Florida. Within the City are two elementary schools, a middle school and high school. The private St. Michael’s Academy is also located in Fernandina Beach. For higher educational opportunities, you will need to travel to the Jacksonville area where there are many. In addition to a number of private colleges and specialty schools, Jacksonville hosts Florida State College at Jacksonville and the University of Northern Florida.

Local medical facilities are highly regarded and led by Baptist Medical Center Nassau which has 24-hour emergency care as well as 24 different specialty and associated clinics. Housing within the city limits is expensive and can range from \$665,000 (in a neighborhood) to \$1.95 million (near the Ocean).

If you like to travel, Fernandina Beach is an easy place to get to and from. It is located 15 miles east of Interstate 95. Just 27 miles south is the Jacksonville International Airport, a jumping off point to virtually anywhere in the world. Metropolitan Jacksonville provides a myriad of entertainment including theater, symphony and sports, including the NFL’s Jacksonville Jaguars.

Two plus hours further are the attractions of Orlando with Disney World, Universal Studios, Sea World and innumerable other attractions. If you like to cruise, the Port of Jacksonville offers

a limited number of cruises. the second largest cruise port in the world in terms of passenger volume, is just three hours south of the City.

But what really makes the City special is its residents. They are warm and welcoming. Newcomers will quickly feel at home and are readily integrated into the community. It is also easy to get involved in city and community activities. Once you have moved here, you will quickly be adopted as one of their own. They place a high value on the ecosystem and seek to protect the area’s natural beauty as well as its historic character. The residents’ commitment to preserving and protecting the City’s sensitive natural habitat is evidenced by the City establishing and maintaining a Land Conservation Trust Fund to acquire lands for conservation.

All in all, Fernandina Beach is simply a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. It is easy to reach and impossible to forget!

HISTORY

First inhabited by the Timucuan Indian tribe, Fernandina Beach and Amelia Island have known eight different flags to fly over it since France claimed it in 1562. Just three years later, the Spanish began their first occupation.

The third flag aloft was the British, raised by James Oglethorpe in 1763. He claimed the area for England and named it after King George II’s daughter, “Amelia”. The British occupation lasted until 1783, when the Spanish laid claim to Florida once again. During the second Spanish occupation, the area known as “Old Town” was given its name, Fernandina, in honor of King Ferdinand of Spain. Although Spanish, at the beginning of the 1800s, Old Fernandina was thriving due to its proximity to the United States.

Fernandina was also a haven for smuggling and slave-trading at the time, and that led to trouble with the neighboring United States. Due to insurrections, multiple flags flew overhead in this era, the first two were the Patriots’ flag in 1812 and Green Cross of Florida in 1817. Later in that year, a pirate named Luis Aury raised the Mexican flag unbeknownst to the Mexican government. From 1821 onward, the United States flag flew except for a brief period during the Civil War.

In 1853, the City’s activity moved south to take advantage of the new Florida Railroad. By 1857, the City had developed into a thriving community attracting free-booters, pirates and smugglers. By 1875, Fernandina had become a major Florida port. Shipping boomed with exports of lumber, phosphate, and naval stores. Tourists flocked to the City to stay in elegant hotels and to enjoy the amenities of the beach and nature that the island offered.

However, around the turn of the 20th century, tourism began to move further south and prosperity slowed. Old Victorian homes and buildings were not replaced but repaired. This situation left the City a wonderful heritage including a 50-block area of downtown which is listed on the National Register of Historic

Table I: Fernandina Beach Demographics

Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
White	82.7%	0 to 14	9.1%
Black	7.8%	15 to 24	7.5%
Asian	0.9%	25 to 44	17.2%
Native American	0.5%	45 to 64	32.7%
Two or More Races	8.1%	65 to 84	31.5%
Total	100%	Over 85	2.0%
Hispanic Ethnicity	11.5%	Estimated Population: 13,052	

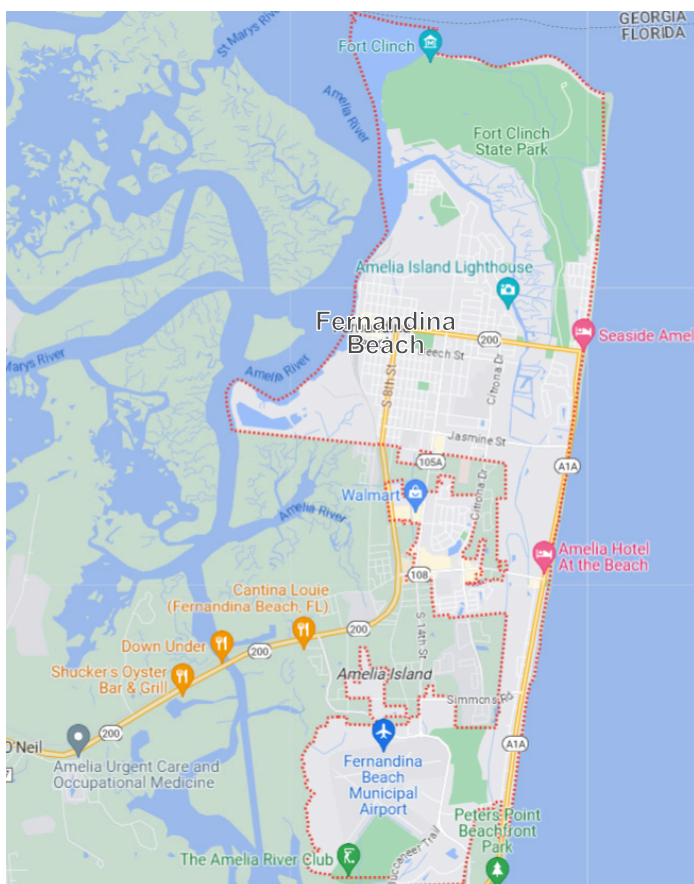
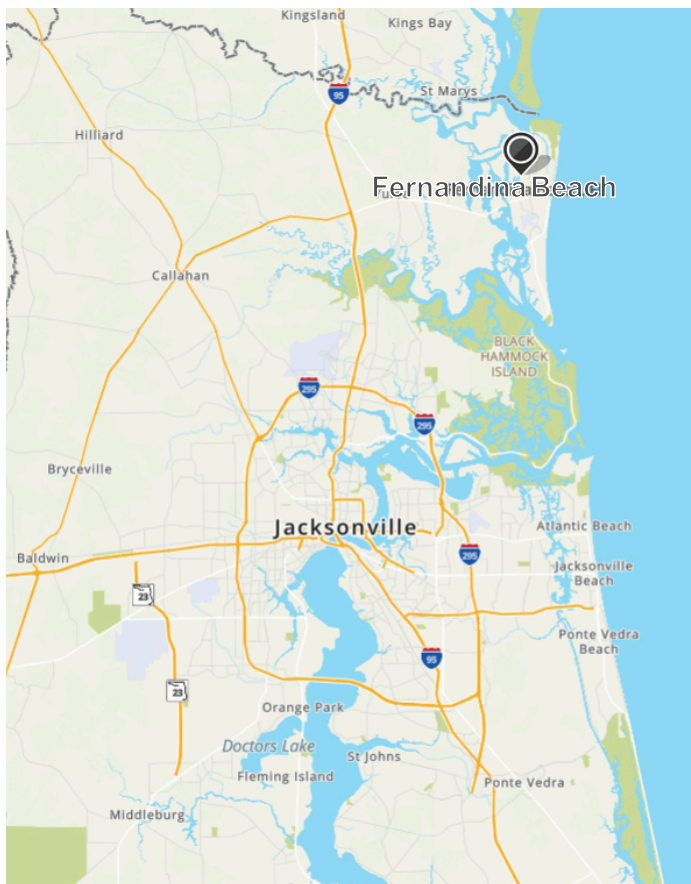
Educational Achievement (Over Age 25)	
High School or Higher	95.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	45.5%

Other Statistics	
Median Age–Fernandina Beach	56.7
Median Age–U.S.	38.8
Median Household Income–Fernandina Beach	\$80,260
Median Household Income–U.S.	\$70,784
Poverty Rate	10.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 1: Location of Fernandina Beach, FL



places. In the early 1900s, the modern shrimping industry was founded in Fernandina. Shrimp, oyster, and crab canneries thrived along with boat-building and net-making businesses. The late 1930s brought two paper mills eager to take advantage of the local lumber and the port. These industries created a family-oriented community where hard work and civic involvement are the cornerstones of Fernandina Beach even to this day.

Fernandina Beach was rediscovered by the wider world in the 1950s. Since then, the growth has been dramatic and fueled by tourism. Today, two nearby paper mills bracket the City and use the Port of Fernandina and rail lines to ship their goods from the island to their destinations.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Table I on page 6, provides an overview of the demographics of Fernandina Beach's permanent population. In some ways, however, it is a bit misleading. 40% of the City's 6,500 residential properties are not homesteaded (meaning the owner does not spend more than 180 days annually in them). It is believed these owners are, on average, older and more affluent than the medians presented. Additionally, as a significant tourist attraction, Amelia Island experiences approximately 1,000,000 annually who spend a night on the Island in hotels, some other accommodation, or with family and friends. Then there are the 1.5 million annual visits by day trippers. Many of these visitors add to the demands on City services and stress to the ecosystem, while their contribution to City revenues is relatively small.

## GEOGRAPHY

Surrounded by water on three of its four "sides", Fernandina Beach is the most northeastern point in Florida. It is located in Nassau County and was the county seat until the offices moved to nearby Yulee. To the north, across the Amelia River, lies Georgia and the internationally known Cumberland Island National Seashore. To the east is the Atlantic Ocean and to the south and west (across the Amelia River and Intracoastal Waterway) lies unincorporated Nassau County. The City covers 14 square miles, all of which is land and the average elevation is 24.93 feet above sea level. Please see the map of the island.

Table II: Principal Employers, Fernandina Beach, FL

Employer	Industry	Employees
Nassau County School District	Education	1,576
Nassau County Government	Government	448
WestRock CP, LLC	Manufacturing	564
Baptist Medical Center Nassau	Healthcare	421
RYAM	Manufacturing	323
City of Fernandina Beach	Government	227
Publix	Retail	180
Walmart - Fernandina Beach	Retail	125
Florida Public Utilities	Utilities	60
Winn Dixie	Retail	50

Source: Fernandina Beach, FL 2022 CAFR

## CLIMATE

Fernandina Beach has a “humid subtropical” climate. The summer months are humid, and the average high temperature is 90°F with lows around 75°F. Winters are more pleasant with the average high temperatures being in the mid to high 60s with lows in the high 40s. Rainfall is relatively evenly spread throughout the year, although summers are usually somewhat wetter than winters and with much of the rainfall coming from thunderstorm activity. Snow is an exceedingly rare event here.

Due to its location, being tucked away from the Gulf Stream, hurricanes are also quite rare in the region. In fact, the last storm causing any significant damage was Hurricane Dora in 1964.

## COMMERCE

As one might expect of an historic beach community much of Fernandina Beach’s economy is supported by tourism and the service sector is its largest employer.

Of particular note are the two large paper mills along the Amelia River and between which Fernandina Beach’s historic district is sandwiched. RYAM produces 155,000 metric tons of softwood

cellulose at their Fernandina Beach dissolving sulfite mill. These high purity wood pulps are used in manufacturing photographic film, cigarette filters, whipped topping, eyeglass frames, vitamins, rayon fabric, kidney dialysis filters, toothpaste, and ice cream.

WestRock CP is the second largest American packaging company. Its Fernandina Beach facility produces both linerboard and corrugating medium which are used together to make new containerboard for packaging and other uses.

## THE GOVERNMENT

Fernandina Beach’s Vision Statement reads, “The City of Fernandina Beach is a historic barrier island community that maintains its small-town quality of life by protecting its rich array of natural, cultural, and historic resources. Serving as an environmental steward, the City will maintain a strong and resilient economy through a commitment to sustainable development practices.”

The form of government is the Commission/Manager. Commissioners are elected at large for staggered four-year terms with elections coinciding with the national elections. The Mayor is elected by the public but must be a currently serving commissioner. Thus, he/she serves the last two years of his/her commission term as Mayor. Commissioners are limited to two terms, after which they must sit out for three years before they can run again. The tenures of the current Commissioners range from 18 months to over seven years.. Commissioners all care about their community and while they differ on approach, all want the best for their city.

Fernandina Beach provides all the typical city services: Police, Fire-Rescue, Parks & Recreation, Airport, Marina, Golf course, Utilities (Water, Wastewater, Stormwater), Public Works Operations (Facilities, Fleet, Sanitation, Maintenance); Planning & Conservation; Building; Code Enforcement; as well as several



Administrative Departments (Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology). It also, however, owns and is responsible for the operations of an airport, beaches, a cemetery, a marina, and a public golf course. The City employs 234 full-time, 75 part-time in addition to seasonal employees. The largest departments in terms of full-time employees are Police (42 employees) and Fire/ Rescue (38 employees). Oasis Marina, LLC., operates the Marina under a contract with the City. Fernandina Beach's General Fund budget for 2023-2024 is \$28,165,427 and its total budget is \$187,567,972.

The City has three unions. The Northeast Florida Public Employees Union, Local 630 of the Laborers International Union of North America, AFL, CIO, CLC represents approximately 80 general labor employees and some administrative staff. Police Officers, Police Sergeants and Police Lieutenants are represented by the Coastal Florida Police Benevolent Association while Firefighters, Paramedics, Engineers, Fire Lieutenants and Fire Captains are represented by the Organized Firefighters of Fernandina Beach, Local 2836, of the International Association of Firefighters.

## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Fernandina Beach's challenges are not unique for a coastal community located on a fragile barrier island. First and foremost, residents are concerned about development. Most realize the City will change. The question is how and to what degree. Some residents would like the City to retain its current character and protect the functional beauty of its beaches, tree canopy and salt marshes. Others are open to redevelopment. The challenge is to balance these competing interests in a manner consistent with the Vision Plan.

The second challenge is resource allocation, and it has two components. The first is answering the question, "Are we doing the right things the best way possible, and are our staff properly allocated". The other component is the City's infrastructure. With a few exceptions, most of the City's facilities need renovation, reconstruction, or at least updating. For example, the City Hall was built in 1904. It was renovated in 1956, 1971, and 1995. In August 2021, the City Engineer estimated the cost of bringing the City Hall into compliance with code requirements would be

\$2.8M. Earlier that year, a separate, third-party study recommended building an annex to the City Hall at a cost of \$13 million. Additional infrastructure needs include, among others, the refurbishment and upgrade of the Front Street / downtown flood protection system, the downtown sidewalk and lighting renovation, beach walkover replacement, renovation (or replacement) of the City's two community centers, marina upgrades (both bathroom replacement and regular dredging), and numerous stormwater upgrades. It is estimated that the total cost will approach \$50 million. What is needed is a long-term plan that considers all the needs, factors in funding, and schedules the work in a manner that protects the City facilities with minimal financial impact on the businesses and residents. One possible solution would be to move or combine some of the existing structures. An important aspect of the process will be raising awareness of the plan once it is developed and moving it forward expeditiously.

The City also hopes to improve its relationship with Nassau County and to partner with it to optimize the use of resources. One example is the Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) for Amelia Island Residents, which is earmarked for beach renourishment. However, when the Amelia River is dredged, the collected sand is used for beach renourishment which means that the Island may not need to use all the funds allocated to renourishment. The City is working with Nassau County in hopes of amending the MSTU so that once the fund hits its minimum and maximum levels, any additional funds can be used for other beach improvements.

The City-owned Golf Course and Marina are both currently operating in the red. Finding ways to make them self-sustaining, and perhaps even profitable, will benefit the community and free up funding for other areas.

Finally, parking downtown and near the beach is another challenge. There is simply not enough convenient parking for residents and tourists. Further, the area is already built out. As Fernandina Beach's popularity grows, the City will need to find creative solutions to address this situation.



## THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City Commission is seeking an outstanding achievement-oriented leader and manager with a demonstrated track record. The Commissioners are looking for someone to work with them as a partner, a supporter and a trusted advisor while recognizing he/she is their employee. The individual will ensure the Commissioners are all treated equally, receive the same information at the same time and that there will be no surprises. The ideal candidate will help the Commission to find creative solutions to the challenges it faces. At the same time, he/she will need to be able to speak up diplomatically when something is not realistic or achievable – of course, after thoroughly researching every reasonably possible option and avenue.

The ideal candidate will be a consensus and a team builder – someone who knows how to balance competing points of view and find common interests. Working collaboratively to solve problems and execute plans in a timely and efficient manner will be critical to the new manager's success. The best candidate will recognize the importance of community support.

Personally, he/she will be approachable, receptive, open, honest, intelligent, upbeat, friendly, outgoing, organized, ethical, transparent, and positive – someone with a can-do attitude and is visionary yet practical. The manager will have excellent communications skills and know how to relate to a wide variety of groups. He/she will engage with the public and be visible in the community.

Customer service will not be just a catchy phrase with the next manager but rather, along



with integrity, a core principle and a way of life. She/he will be someone who leads by example and encourages the staff to find ways to get to yes. Where that is not possible, the resident will be provided with a prompt and respectful explanation of why what he/she wants cannot be done.

The manager will also be someone who is analytical and, while respectful of the past and of current processes, always asking if there is a better and more cost-effective way to conduct business and to solve problems. Analytical skills, as well as a knowledge of how to utilize information technology to optimize process and inform the public, will be very important.

Internally, the manager will delegate and encourage an environment where creativity will flourish. The individual will recognize talent, mentor that talent and be confident enough to then step back and let staff members do their jobs. The ideal candidate will give assignments and set broad performance parameters but will also expect results and to be kept informed. He/she will not hesitate to hold employees accountable, while also recognizing that no one is perfect and that not every seemingly great idea will be a success. Working with the staff and the public, the individual will be consistent, cheerfully persistent, and energetic.

In terms of specific skills, the individual will have demonstrated success in finance, management, economic development and redevelopment, police, fire, water and sewer systems, budgeting, strategic planning, and emergency management. Knowledge of and experience with intergovernmental relations will be important to the individual's success. The proven ability to manage multiple projects from conception to completion, on-time and within a budget, will be an important skillset for the next manager.

The position requires a bachelor's degree in business administration, public administration, public policy or related field and seven to ten years of increasingly responsible experience as a senior level government executive. A master's degree is preferred. Per the City Charter, the City Manager must be a member in good standing of a professional organization such as the International City/County

Management Association prior to appointment or within six months after appointment. Experience working in Florida and/or managing a coastal community is a plus.

The Commission plans to make a commitment to the candidate and hopes the selected individual will make a long-term commitment to the City. By working together, the new City Manager and the Commission can maximize what can be accomplished for the City.

## COMPENSATION

The salary range is \$190,000 to \$225,000. The City Manager may participate in a deferred compensation plan. The City Manager may also participate in other employee benefits (health, dental, vision, life) at the same contribution rate as employees.

## RESIDENCY

Residency within the City limits is required within 90 days of becoming the City Manager.

## INTERNAL CANDIDATES

We are not aware of any internal candidates, but if one applies, the Commission is committed to a level playing field.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Under Florida law, all applications are a public record once submitted. As a practical matter the local media generally does not show interest until after the close of the recruitment period and often much later in the process.

## HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your cover letter and resume to [Recruit28@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit28@cb-asso.com) by July 31, 2024. Questions should be directed to Ron Williams at (305) 338-8990, Scott Krim at (801) 628-8364, or Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

## THE PROCESS

Applications will be screened as they are submitted. Finalists will be selected on August 14th. A reception and interviews will be held in mid to late August. The City Manager will be selected shortly thereafter.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The City of Fernandina Beach is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women, minorities and veterans to apply. Under the Florida Public Records Act, all applications are subject to disclosure upon receipt.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about the City of Fernandina Beach, visit:

[www.fbfl.us](http://www.fbfl.us)

[www.islandchamber.com](http://www.islandchamber.com)

