



Manatee County Estimated Population: 429,125

— **Deadline Extended** —

Looking for a Few More Great Candidates

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR | Apply by July 7, 2023

Welcome to Manatee County – a place that has something special for everyone! Located on Florida’s west coast on the Gulf of Mexico and just south of Tampa, it is a rapidly growing, bustling and vibrant community composed of old Florida and new. Characterized by a charming collection of urban, suburban, and rural communities, the County is packed with opportunities for play, work, and friendship. From the crystal clear waters of Anna Maria Island and the cultural attractions of Bradenton to the equestrian centers and farms in the area’s east and south, our County Administrator position is an opportunity you do not want to miss.

The beaches here are legendary. Popular pastimes include swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, and simply relaxing. Other favorites are boating, jet skiing, kayaking, and paddle boarding. Deep sea fishing charters leave regularly, and you will likely catch your fill very quickly. Many also enjoy the sandcastle building contests, volleyball tournaments, and seafood festivals. Needless to say, you are sure to find the perfect seaside event to complement your day in the sun. Or, if you prefer, unwind with a sunset cruise.



Manatee County has over 30,000 acres of conservation land to explore in 12 publicly accessible preserves. These offer opportunities for camping, fishing, environmental education, and more. Connect with nature while hiking, kayaking, or horseback riding through a wide variety of coastal habitats. At Duette Preserve, enjoy a wagon tour, or join a hunting party. At Robinson Preserve, exercise your mind as well as your body at the beautiful Mosaic Center for Nature, Exploration, Science and Technology (NEST), which has hands-on interpretive programming for all ages. If that were not enough, the neighboring Sarasota County provides some wonderful opportunities as the home of Myakka River State Park, Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, and Sarasota Jungle Gardens.

For more casual outdoor fun, spend a day at one of the County's 33 parks offering a wide range of amenities, including playgrounds, basketball courts, pavilions, tennis courts, dog parks, trails, and fishing areas. Families and individuals love cooling off at one of four public pools and two splash pads. The County also owns two excellent 18-hole golf courses that offer affordable play year-round.

Shopping enthusiasts will find that Manatee County is heaven on earth. Looking for the perfect designer purse? Try the Ellenton Premium Outlets, one of the largest outlet malls on Florida's West Coast. Art? Visit Bradenton's downtown's Village of the Arts, a live-work community composed of colorful historic cottages that house everything from the County's best art galleries to award-winning restaurants, bakeries, specialty shops, studios, and healing arts. Bradenton is also the home of Art Center Manatee, a premier center for art, art education, and unique gifts. For an open-air artistic experience, Bradenton Riverwalk displays a collection of public art along the banks of the Manatee River. Nearby, the Miano Academy of Art trains aspiring artists in classical drawing, painting, and sculpture. Other favorites for visitors and locals are the charming seaside shops of Pine Avenue on Anna Maria Island and those along Bridge Street at Bradenton Beach. Serious shoppers won't want to miss the University Town Center, a shopping, dining and lifestyle destination on the Manatee-Sarasota County line. Bargain hunters will lose themselves at the Red Barn Flea Market in East Bradenton.

Local farmers markets are a favorite destination for foodies, shoppers, and families. Coquina Beach Market on Anna Maria Island, a beachside farmers market, is well worth a visit. You will find fresh produce, arts and crafts, jewelry, and apparel. Bradenton's Farmers Market has become a community gathering place where residents meet weekly and enjoy fresh produce, local art, music, and free family activities.

The County offers plenty of options for exploring local history. Manatee Village Historical Park is an open-air museum containing fourteen preserved and replica structures from its early days (1840 to 1918). At Anna Maria Island Historical Society Museum, visitors can follow the Island's journey from an uninhabited jungle to the tourist destination it is today. You won't want to miss the Anna Maria City Pier, a picturesque location that has inspired sightseers for decades.

Another must-see is Cortez Historic Fishing Village where visitors can immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of a real working fishing village. Founded in the 1880s, the Village retains its maritime traditions and continues to embrace fishing as its reason for being. The Florida Maritime Museum explores the Gulf Coast's maritime history through photographs, boat models, and artifacts.

Additional historical points of interest are the De Soto National Memorial in Bradenton which commemorates Hernando de Soto's 1539 landing in Tampa Bay. In Parrish, the Florida Railroad Museum details railroad history throughout the state and operates a heritage railroad for visitors to ride.

For a night of live theater, the Manatee Performing Arts Center in Bradenton will not disappoint. It hosts the Manatee Players as well as Broadway productions, serious plays (such as *The Glass Menagerie*), and community artistic collaborations. Alternatively, Anna Maria Island is home to The Island Playhouse, the oldest community theater in Manatee County, featuring an eclectic mix of comedy, social commentary, and drama.

Music is a way of life here. In the spring, locals gather at Bradenton Riverwalk Mosaic Amphitheater every Friday for Music in the Park. Each week, this free, family-friendly series



showcases a different artist or band performing a variety of musical genres from Country to Latin fusion. In December, the annual Bradenton Blues Festival features an outstanding lineup of talented blues musicians. In fact, in 2015, Blues411 rated the event as the Best Blues Festival in the United States.

Professional sports enthusiasts will be pleased to learn that the Pittsburgh Pirates' spring training site is located in Manatee County – as well as their Class A minor league baseball team, the Marauders. LECOM Park, where they play, was Baseball Digest's selection as the 2018 Best of the Ballpark for Class High-A facilities. Thirty minutes north, you can catch Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Rays. Another 30 minutes further lie the National Football League's Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the National Hockey League's Tampa Bay Lightning.



For a change of scenery, Manatee County residents can take a day trip to Tampa (45 minutes north) or Orlando (100 miles northeast) where you will find Disney World, SeaWorld, Universal Studios, and the National Basketball Association's Orlando Magic.

Travel to more distant destinations is easy from Manatee County. Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport is located along the Manatee-Sarasota County border and offers flights to more than 50 destinations. Nearby Tampa International Airport is a springboard to virtually anywhere in the world. Interested in a cruise? Travel to one of the three busiest cruise ports in the world: #1–the Port of Miami (four and a half hours southeast by car), #2–Port Canaveral (three hours east) or #3–Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale (five hours southeast)

One of the perks of living in Manatee County is its dizzying array of organized activities for its

residents. The County provides numerous athletic leagues for adults and children, including basketball, kickball, dodgeball, flag football, softball, and tennis. In addition, Manatee County partners with Sarasota County to offer the Gulf Coast Games for Life, a collection of over 20 sporting events for seniors.

In addition to physical activities, the County offers a variety of educational classes and events. The Agriculture & Extension Service hosts classes in gardening, nutrition, and health & wellness. It also sponsors the local 4-H Youth Development program. The Department of Natural Resources provides outdoor educational events, such as hikes, family nights, and nature workshops for homeschoolers. Through the Manatee County Public Library System, residents enjoy programs ranging from the expected to the surprising. Activities include story time for children, book clubs for adults, Game Day, French Appreciation Club, and classes for drawing, sewing, knitting, and ukulele.

Most importantly, Manatee County is not just a great place to visit—it is a great place to call home. The cost of living is reasonable and housing is available to fit every lifestyle and budget. You will find waterfront homes and condos, downtown condos, country estates, golf course homes, and new all-inclusive developments as well as historical neighborhoods. The median sold home price is around \$450,000, similar to homes nationwide.

Children here are served by the Manatee County School District and numerous excellent private schools. The District has many quality schools, and some offer special programs. For example, Anna Maria Elementary School hosts the first-ever Guy Harvey Academy of Arts and Science. Named for the world-renowned wildlife artist, the program teaches children about marine science, conservation, and the arts. As another example, Palm View Elementary School is the first WOZ ED Careers Pathway School in Florida. This program helps students explore their future in a technology-based economy. Furthermore, State College of Florida Collegiate School (SCFCS) is a public charter high school that partners with the College to allow students to complete an associate degree while earning their high school diploma. As of 2023, the school earned an A+ grade on Niche.com and was ranked the 6th Best Charter High School in Florida. For student-athletes, IMG Academy is an attractive option. The

Academy fosters academic growth, athletic improvement, character development, and social responsibility. It also received an A+ grade on Niche.com, which ranked it as the 6th Best Boarding High School in Florida in 2023.

Higher Education is readily accessible as well. Nearby institutions include the aforementioned State College of Florida, New College of Florida, Ringling College of Art & Design, and the Sarasota-Manatee campus for the University of South Florida. About an hour drive away, Tampa is home to the University of Tampa, which regularly places among The Princeton Review's best 387 institutions for undergraduate education—an honor that goes to only 15% of the United States' four-year institutions.

The best part, however, is the County's people. In fact, Bradenton's motto is, "The Friendly City." Really, though, it applies to the entire County. Locals welcome new residents, visitors, and tourists while valuing and protecting their small-town, hometown charm. Neighbors help neighbors, and residents readily volunteer for projects and efforts to improve their community. This close-knit atmosphere is what truly makes Manatee County the ideal place to live and raise a family.

In short, Manatee County is a true destination—a place to come, see, and stay—to work, play, raise a family, and eventually retire. We invite you to seize this opportunity and make it your home. Please apply today!

## HISTORY

For thousands of years, Native American tribes inhabited the area now known as Manatee County. One of the first Europeans to arrive in the area was Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto. He led his conquistadors on a 4,000-mile expedition through Florida in search of riches and land for the Spanish crown. With his arrival and later Europeans, disease and conflict drove the Native Americans into extinction.

In the early 1800s, the area became a safe haven for escaped slaves from the United States. By 1819, these African Americans had formed a settlement called Angola along the Manatee River, and its population had grown to about 750 people by the time Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821. However, Andrew

Jackson soon destroyed the colony when he attempted to return the escaped slaves to bondage. Some of these settlers escaped to the Bahamas. In 2018, their descendants created the annual Back to Angola Festival to commemorate their experience.

European settlement began in earnest in 1842 with the passage of the Armed Occupation Act. This Act granted settlers land for free on the condition that they stay for at least five years. Early settlers built a sugar plantation and mill, and a dock.

When Manatee County was established in 1855, it encompassed an area of over 5,000 square miles. Over time, the area was divided into seven different counties. The area attracted citrus growers, cattle ranches, and farmers who took advantage of the Manatee River for water and transportation. It became a major producer of processed sugar and molasses before slavery was abolished after the Civil War.

The County developed a more modern economy during World War II. Army Signal Corps personnel were trained in Bradenton, and the Army Air Corps trained at Bradenton-Sarasota Airport. After the war, many of these trainees returned with their families and Bradenton's population grew rapidly.

More recently, Manatee County's growth has been explosive. The Census Bureau named Florida as the fastest growing state in the country in 2022. One of the major reasons was growth in the Tampa Bay area and in Manatee County in particular. In fact, Lakewood Ranch in southern Manatee County is the fastest growing master planned community in the country. Parrish in eastern Manatee is expected to be the next area to take off. Further, the growth is anticipated to continue unabated for at least the next 20 years.

## GEOGRAPHY

Manatee County is centrally located along Florida's Gulf Coast. It is bordered by Hillsborough County to the north, Hardee and De Soto Counties to the east, and Sarasota County to the south. Manatee County covers 893 square miles, of which 743 are land and 150 (17%) are water. It is an average of 43 feet above sea level. Its western sections are well populated while the east largely remains farms and ranches, although that is changing.

Location of Manatee County, FL



The County's largest municipality is Bradenton, which is the county seat. Five other municipalities lie within its borders, including the City of Anna Maria, Bradenton Beach, Holmes Beach, the Town of Longboat Key, and Palmetto. The County is also home to several unincorporated communities like Ellenton, Cortez, and Lakewood Ranch. The City of Tampa is located approximately 45 miles to the north of Manatee County, and Fort Myers is about 95 miles to the south.

## CLIMATE

Manatee County has a humid, subtropical climate with mild winters and warm, wet summers. In summer, average high temperatures are around 90° F, with lows around 76° F. The winter months are cooler with highs in the low 70s and low temperatures in the low 50s. While the humidity in the peak of the summer can be oppressive, the weather is pleasant for much of the year. The County receives about 54.7 inches of rainfall annually, with a rainy season peaking in the summer months. Hurricanes are possible but infrequent. The last measurable snowfall was in 1977.

Table I: Manatee County Demographics

Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
White	85.7%	0 to 14	14.4%
Black	9.2%	15 to 24	9.8%
Asian	2.4%	25 to 44	20.7%
Native American	0.6%	45 to 64	26.9%
Two or More Races	2.1%	65 to 84	25.0%
Total	100%	Over 85	3.2%
Hispanic Ethnicity	17.1%	Estimated Population: 429,125	

  

Educational Achievement (Over Age 25)	
High School or Higher	90.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	32.2%

  

Other Statistics	
Median Age—Manatee County	49.0
Median Age—U.S.	38.1
Median Household Income—Manatee County	\$64,964
Median Household Income—U.S.	\$69,021
Poverty Rate	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table II: Principal Employers, Manatee County, FL

Employer	Industry	Employees
Manatee County School Board	Education	5,626
Manatee Healthcare System	Healthcare	2,489
Publix	Retail	2,381
Manatee County Government	Government	2,155
Beall's, Inc.	Retail	1,996
Blake Medical Center	Healthcare	1,471
Manatee County Sheriff's Department	Government	1,239
Tropicana Products, Inc.	Manufacturing	988
IMG Academies	Education	862
State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota	Education	710

Source: Manatee County, FL 2022 CAFR

## DEMOGRAPHICS

See Table I for information on the demographics of Manatee County. The most important factor, however, is the County's rapid population growth—23.8% population increase between 2010 and 20—and it is increasing.

## COMMERCE

As noted, Manatee County is growing very rapidly. As a result, construction is the economy's primary driver while education, and retail, healthcare, tourism, and agriculture are also important drivers. Bradenton—the county seat—hosts the headquarters of Bealls (one of the few brick and mortar retail chains that is growing and one of the fastest growing), and Champs Sports, a nationwide sports-apparel chain. Tropicana Products was founded in Bradenton in 1947 and has become a global brand while maintaining a strong presence in the region's economy. The County's highest-grossing crops are tomatoes, strawberries, and peppers.

Notably, the Port of Manatee is poised for dramatic growth. It is adding four berths and contains 900 undeveloped acres that are ripe for its activities. The County Commission serves as its Board and the Port is one of the few entirely self-sufficient ports in the State (i.e., it is not subsidized by tax payer dollars).

Also notably, the County's airport (Sarasota-Bradenton International) is one of the fastest (if not the fastest) growing airports in the U.S.

## THE GOVERNMENT

Manatee County operates under a Council-Administrator form of government. The Board of County Commissioners is comprised of seven members. Five commissioners are elected from single-member districts and must reside in their districts while two are elected to represent the County as a whole. The Board establishes policy for the

MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA—ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



County and its departments with the goal of enhancing the health, welfare, safety, and quality of life for its residents. The Board is also responsible for appointing the County Attorney and County Administrator. With one exception (who was first elected in 2014), the Board is relatively new—that is, six members are in their first term. Although they represent a wide variety of residents and interests, they are largely like-minded and very conservative.

One of the more important aspects of the Commission is to know the County has outstanding, collaborative relationships with local and regional organizations and governments. As a result, Manatee County has far more clout than most local governments in Florida. For example, the senior most County Commissioner serves as Chair of the State Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Manatee is very close to its State Senator, and he is in line to be the Senate’s President next term. Its Congressman is the Deputy Chair of the U.S. House of

Representatives' Ways and Means Committee. The County also has a very strong relationship with the Secretary of Florida's Department of Transportation, as well as its District Secretary. More locally, the Commission works integrally and collaboratively with the Manatee County Chamber of Commerce (with over 2,100 members, it was recognized as the Florida's Best Chamber in 2022, its fifth such award) and the local Economic Development Council. Working together, they have been able to and are addressing many of the issues addressed in the next section.

The County Administrator manages the day-to-day business of the County. He or she is responsible for implementing the policies, decisions, ordinances, and motions of the Board. Other than the constitutionally elected officers (the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections, and Tax Collector), the County's department heads report directly or indirectly to the Administrator.

These departments include Community & Veterans Services, Convention & Visitors Bureau, Development Services, Financial Management, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Parks & Natural Resources, Property Management, Public Safety, Public Works, and Utilities. Together, they provide services such as social services, public assistance to residents, countywide health care for medically indigent, animal services, emergency medical services, and regional parks and preserves. The County also provides municipal-type services to residents of its unincorporated areas, including road construction and maintenance, solid waste disposal, parks and recreation, water and wastewater treatment, planning, zoning, building inspections, and code enforcement. See Figure 2, on previous page, for more information.

Manatee County's elected officials and County employees are united in their commitment to the credo, "ACE: Accountability, Civility, and Ethics." Members of the organization are guided by five simple questions when making decisions: "Is it the right thing for the community? Is it the right thing for Manatee County? Is it ethical and legal? Is it something you are willing to be accountable for? Is it consistent with the Department's values and policies?" If the answer is yes to all of these questions, employees need not ask permission before acting. They should

"JUST DO IT!" while keeping the Administration informed of their actions.

Manatee County's total budget for the Fiscal Year 2023 is almost \$2.4 billion and its General Fund Budget is \$475,243,656. Its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is over \$2.3 billion and includes significant investments in infrastructure, public safety, parks and the environment.

## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Manatee County is a beautiful place with many attractive amenities and opportunities, but it is not without challenges. First and foremost, the County is transitioning from a more rural agriculture community into a very vibrant hub with various industries. The next Administrator will work with the elected body to guide the growth and economic development in a positive way for the County and its residents.

Keeping ahead of the growth from an infrastructure perspective is an enormous challenge. As noted above, the County's CIP is enormous. It includes \$720 million in local road projects. Complementing it is the State has \$1.5 billion in road projects funded, in design and/or under construction. The next Administrator will need to ensure projects stay on schedule and make adjustments as the growth shifts and changes. One thing is certain and that is it will not stop. Further, some currently developed areas of the County have significant infrastructure issues (particularly, stormwater and flooding), and these cannot be neglected. Other examples are the three bridges to Anna Maria Island and the bridge in downtown Bradenton all need to be replaced. On top of that, a high priority is to alleviate traffic in congested areas.

Although the current Board is very conservative, they are not anti-government. Rather, they simply expect the government to be as efficient and effective as possible. They also understand the County is growing and that the government will need to grow with it. In other words, the Board wants County operations to be right sized. The good news is the most recent County Administrator cut many of the unnecessary positions. Further, as with virtually every other employer in the country, attracting and





maintaining high quality employees will be a challenge.

The Board is eager to diversify the County's economy. As noted, construction is the primary driver, but as people move here, employment opportunities in other fields will be needed. Further, the Board recognizes that construction can be cyclical, and while it wonderful now and while the County recognizes it importance, it wants to become less dependent on it by growing other segments of its economy.

Some of the other significant issues facing Manatee County are those commonly facing other more populated areas across the country. One example is affordable housing. The Commission would like to find creative ways to address it without using tax dollars. Another issue is homelessness. Manatee is known as a caring, religious community, and that, along with the pleasant weather, has attracted a significant homeless population. Still another issue that needs to be addressed is opioid abuse. While the Commission is actively working on solutions to these issues, more needs to be done and progress is slow.

#### THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Manatee County is seeking a strong, but humble, leader to partner with the Commission to guide the County to an ever improving future. The individual will be an advisor to the elected officials and unafraid to speak truth to power at the right time and in the right setting. However, once the decision is made, the Administrator is expected to fully support the Commission's direction. The ideal candidate will work for the Commission as a whole—and not for individual members. He/she will be transparent, very responsive and keep all equally and fully informed while working proactively to meet their information needs. In other words, the individual will understand

his/her role and stay in his/her lane. Within his/her span of control, the ideal candidate will not hesitate to make decisions and move projects forward.

The County is seeking an outstanding, professional Administrator who is knowledgeable, inclusive, intelligent, upbeat, relentlessly positive, forward thinking, approachable, open, honest, transparent, and highly ethical. He/she will be visionary and suggest ideas/options to the Commission.

The ideal candidate will think strategically, be a consensus builder, and have excellent people skills. Building effective working relationships with regional partners will be vital. To this end, tact and excellent negotiation skills will be needed. The next Administrator should also be a forward thinker who sees beyond the horizon and plans accordingly.

The County Administrator will have a positive presence and excellent communication skills. The individual must have outstanding people skills and will be equally comfortable speaking to individuals from all walks of life. He/she will be customer service oriented and set the tone for subordinates.

The County's staff is strong and capable. Its directors are by and large experts in their fields. Thus, the County Administrator will not need to micromanage. Instead, he/she will provide general direction concerning the efforts necessary to achieve the Board's vision, as well as mentor and encourage initiative and creativity. The individual will not just let department directors do their jobs but will challenge them to do so. At the same time, the ideal candidate will be informed and hold the staff accountable for results, meeting targets, and achieving goals. He/she will create an environment where employees feel valued and comfortable while still leading and managing the organization.

The County Administrator will be achievement-oriented, analytical, and solution-driven. The individual will constantly and diplomatically challenge accepted practices – always looking for a better way to accomplish the County's services. Though the County seems to function well overall, its leadership and staff welcome a fresh set of eyes that may be able to identify opportunities for improved efficiency and effectiveness.

The position requires a Bachelor's degree with an emphasis in Public or Business Administration or a related field. A Master's degree is preferred. Candidates should have at least seven years of senior level management experience in public or business administration – preferably within local government – as a City/County Administrator or Assistant City/County Administrator with agencies of similar size and complexity. Experience in the private sector will be a definite plus.

Expertise in growth management, infrastructure, transportation, and finance (ideally, being able to rub two nickels together and produce a quarter) are required. Success in economic development and experience with emergency management coordination are pluses. The ability to recruit and retain quality staff is critical.

The ideal candidate will need to bring an enthusiasm and passion to the job. Further, the environment is fast paced. Hence, candidates seeking a soft place to land should look elsewhere. The County also has a strong desire to find someone who will commit for the long-term. For the right person, this job will be very satisfying and very rewarding.

## COMPENSATION

The salary range is \$200,000 to \$275,000. While the County hopes to pay in the lower half of the range, the actual salary will depend on qualifications and experience. Further, the Commission understands outstanding administrators can be expensive and will pay what it takes to get the right person. The County Administrator will be part of the Florida Retirement System in the Senior Management Class.

## THE MOST RECENT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

The former County Administrator resigned after just under two years of service.

## RESIDENCY

Residency within the County is required.

## HOW TO APPLY

Please e-mail your cover letter and resume to [Recruit26@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit26@cb-asso.com) by July 7, 2023. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Rick Conner at (915) 227-7002 or Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

## INTERNAL CANDIDATES

The County does not expect any internal candidates.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Under Florida's public records act, once an application is submitted, it is deemed a public record. That said, if requests are made, they generally happen after the closing date.

## THE PROCESS

Applications will be screened between July 7 and August 7th. Finalists will be selected on August 8th. A reception and interviews will be held on August 17th and 18th. A selection will be made shortly thereafter.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Manatee County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women, minorities and veterans to apply.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about the County, visit:

[www.mymanatee.org](http://www.mymanatee.org)

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

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

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

