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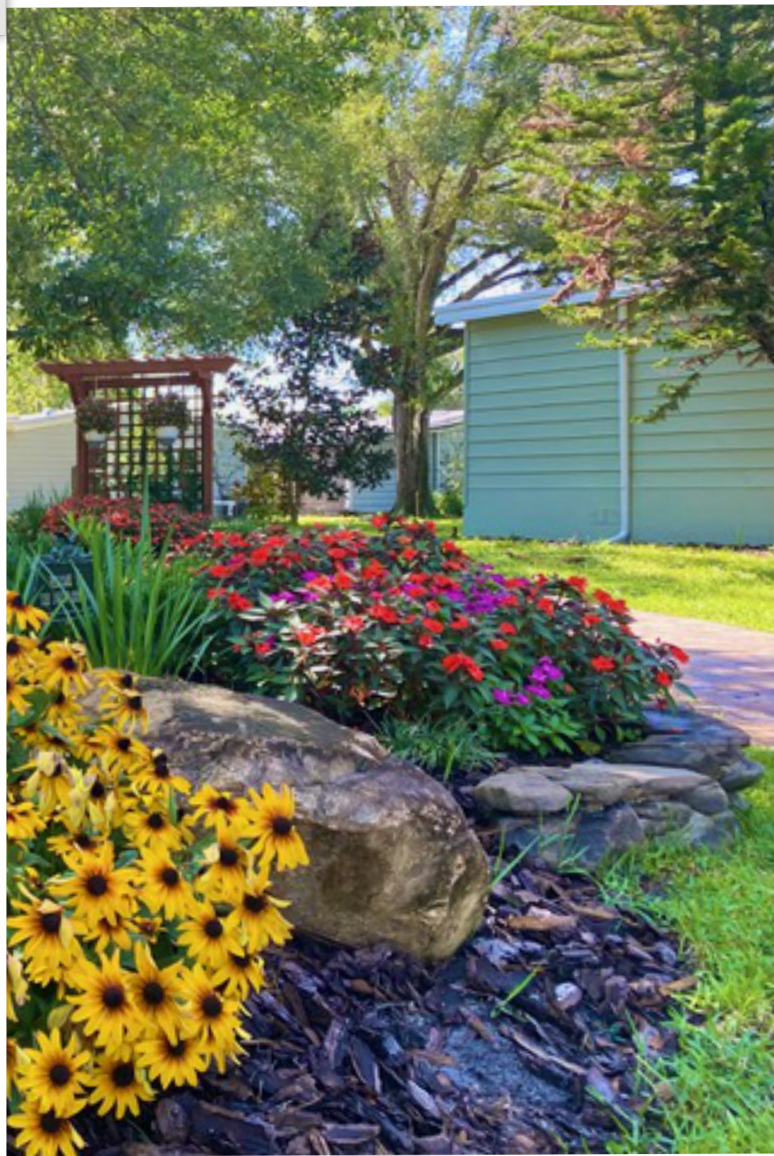
Deadline Extended - Looking for a Few More Great Candidates

## CITY ADMINISTRATOR

*Apply ASAP but no later than September 19, 2025*

Welcome to Lake Helen, one of Florida's best kept secrets—and its residents like it that way. The City is an oasis of tranquility—a beautiful small town that will remind you of the Florida of yesteryear. Many homes are over 100 years old, but so well maintained that only their architectural style gives their age away. While the main roads are paved, many of the others are not. Huge live oak trees abound and line the streets. It is not unusual to spot a family of sandhill cranes walking through your yard. Lake Helen is a place where you can escape the hustle and bustle of city life, while still being near virtually everything. Midway between Orlando and Daytona Beach, drive northeast 30 minutes and you can reach one of the world's most recognized beaches. Drive 30 minutes south and you will reach Orlando's big city lights and several internationally renowned amusement parks. Cape Canaveral is the home of the Kennedy Space Center, the hub of the nation's human space program, as well as SpaceX. Cape Canaveral is about 65 miles from Lake Helen, and residents are close enough to watch the rockets launch from their yards.

The area is known for its beautiful natural landscapes (including forests, lakes, and wetlands) which provide plenty of opportunity for outdoor activities like camping, fishing, boating, and hiking.



Florida is well-known for its natural beauty and plentiful water supply, and Central Florida is one of the best places in America for springs. Fourteen miles to the north is De Leon Springs State Park. The spring is the main attraction of the 625-acre park and provides activities for anyone who loves the outdoors. Swimming and snorkeling are favorites with water that is 73-degrees year-round. For those who like the water but wish to stay dry, kayaks, canoes, and paddleboats are available to rent. Opportunities for fishing, bow fishing, hiking and birdwatching are featured park activities. In fact, the park is located on the Great Florida Birding Trail.

The famous Blue Spring can be found west of Lake Helen and is the centerpiece of the popular Blue Spring State Park. Here you will find interactive water activities such as fishing, boating and scuba diving through underwater caves. One of Blue Spring's most extraordinary attractions is the manatees that congregate here from November through March. While no water activities are allowed while the manatees occupy the Spring, the "sea cows" make for a beautiful sight from the water's edge.

Lake Helen is home to six parks, with two that include lakes and offer plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Blake Park is a five-acre park where you will find the farmer's market every Saturday morning. Many annual community events are held starting with the March Strawberry Fest with live music, a dog frisbee show, monster truck rides, axe throwing, kids' events, and, of course, strawberry shortcake. Other events include the Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Carnival, the Lake Helen Car Show, the July 4th Celebration, and the Art Festival and Health Fair. Blake Park offers basketball, shuffleboard, and tennis courts along with a community center, playground, pavilion, and picnic areas.

The Lake Helen Equestrian Center is approximately five acres and boasts a professional outdoor rodeo arena, spacious horse stalls, practice arena, public picnic area, exercise trail, and playground. Better yet, the facilities and exercise trail connect to the Florida trail system.

The Mitchell Brothers Sports Complex encompasses three baseball/softball fields and a practice field, viewing stands, concessions, and playground area. The independent Lake Helen Little League and surrounding city leagues use the fields on a

continuous basis during the baseball season. On the east end of the complex is a wooded trail extending from Ohio Avenue to Kicklighter Road that is used by Volusia Pines Elementary school children, bicyclists and avid community trail walkers and hikers. Other activities in and around Lake Helen include a host of parks, golf courses and fairground events.

Historians can meander through more than a century of history at the Lake Helen Museum which shares the building with City Hall and was once an active school. In fact, many current residents attended there. The Lake Helen Historic District consists of 71 historic buildings. Adjacent DeLand has several museums as well, including the African American Museum of the Arts, the West Volusia Historical Society, the Henry A. DeLand House Museum, the Museum of Art, and more.

Those who love the theater will enjoy the local Shoestring Theater in Lake Helen as well as many other performing arts venues in the area. These include the historic Athens Theater in DeLand, the Wayne Densch Performing Arts Center in Sanford, the Spotlight Theatre of Central Florida in Geneva, the Seaside Music Theater in Daytona Beach, the Winter Park Playhouse, the Orlando Shakespeare Theater, Central Florida Performing Arts in Orlando, and the Dr. Phillips Center also in Orlando. Disney World, Universal Studios and SeaWorld all lie about 45 minutes' drive to the southwest. Daytona Beach with its world-renowned beaches and Speedway are about a 30-minute drive to the northeast.

For those who like to travel, Orlando International Airport is approximately an hour south and a jumping off point to anywhere in the world. More limited service can be found about 30 minutes away at Daytona Beach International Airport (to the northeast) and Orlando-Sanford International Airport (to the southwest). The latter offers some excellent domestic fares for those with flexible travel plans. If you like to cruise, Port Canaveral is 70 minutes southeast and is the busiest multi-day cruise port in the world.

Lake Helen is primarily a residential community. Most residents own their home, and lots tend to be large. Recent sales of nice three-bedroom/two bath homes have ranged between \$450,000 and \$550,000, though newly constructed homes will run higher.

Lake Helen is a safe community and crime rates are about a third of the national average.

Public schools in Lake Helen are above average. The City has two elementary schools, Volusia Pines Elementary School and The Ivy Hawn Charter School of the Arts which is a high performing, tuition-free public charter school. Local middle and high schools lie outside the city limits. Numerous vocational, college and university opportunities are nearby in the Orlando/Daytona Beach metroplex. One of the better known is Stetson University in adjacent DeLand.

Known for its laid-back lifestyle, Lake Helen is a place to walk or ride your bike on lazy, sun dappled lanes. Stop a few minutes and chat with your neighbors. You'll always get a friendly wave and a smile. So, if you are a seasoned manager looking for a relaxed environment, please dust off your resume and apply.

## HISTORY

Often referred to as the “Gem of Florida,” Lake Helen was founded by Henry DeLand in 1888. He was attracted to the beauty of the land’s clear lakes and the rolling and spacious longleaf pine forests, once described as “lying like a string of pearls encased in living green.” So inspired was DeLand with the natural splendor of the Lake Helen area that he named the town for his daughter.

Lake Helen was originally a destination spot for New Englanders anxious to retreat from the harsh winters. Citrus groves were planted and thrived, a sawmill and the Bond Brick Company were established.

Lake Helen grew quickly and most of the new homes were built from the local southern yellow pine. Many of these homes still stand today as a tribute to the craftsmanship of the times. Sadly, the “big freeze” struck during the winter of 1894 and 1895, and most of the citrus trees were destroyed. While some replanted, many left and the City was never quite the same.

In many ways, time seems to have passed Lake Helen by. It continues to be a quaint little community off the beaten path, with tree-lined streets and a slow pace that is ever so inviting. As

one of the prettiest and most pleasant towns in Florida, residents are proud of the well-preserved historic architecture and small-town atmosphere.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, Lake Helen has a population of 3,136. In many ways, the City’s demographics reflect those of the nation as a whole. For example, the estimated median age of its residents is 43.8 while the median age nationwide is 39.1. What differentiates the City from many Florida communities it is less diverse, and it does not have a disproportionately large retirement population. In fact, most of Lake Helen’s residents are between the ages of 16 and 60.

## CLIMATE

Lake Helen's climate is warm and temperate. The weather is quite beautiful with around 232 sunny days per year and an average temperature of 70.2°F. The annual average high temperature falls at 81.2°F and the annual average low temperature is 59.1°F, and the area receives an average of 58.06 inches of rainfall each year. While hurricanes have been known to pass through the area, they reach Lake Helen when the worst of the storm’s energy is spent, and the most serious threat is tree damage and minor flooding.

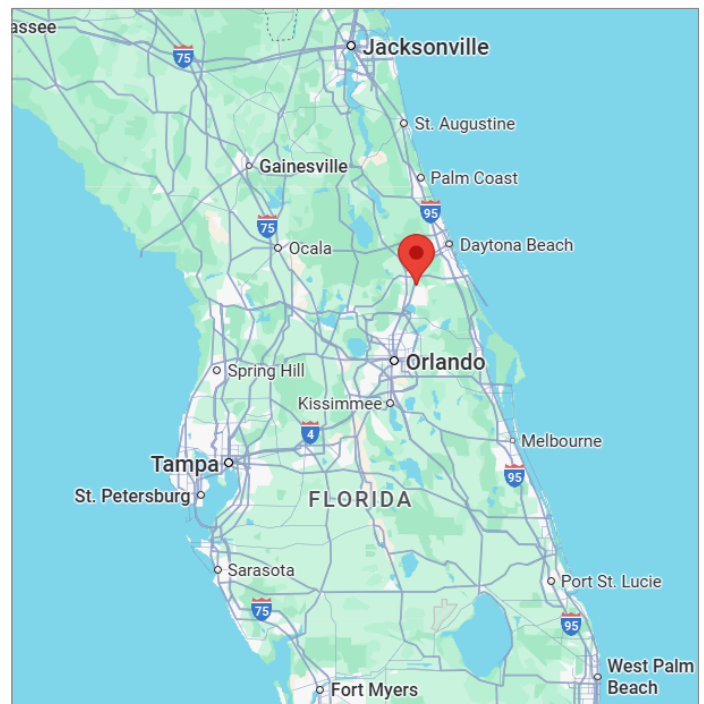


Figure 1: Location of Lake Helen, Florida

## GEOGRAPHY

Lake Helen is located in Volusia County in East Central Florida. The City is located 25 minutes from Daytona Beach and 50 miles from Disney World. Its total land area is 4.72 miles, of which 4.55 square miles are land and .17 square miles are water. The largest lake in the City is Lake Helen.

Residents are proud that their City is the last remaining community that looks like what Florida was before the I-4 Corridor existed. It has worked tirelessly on developing its old Florida brand and protecting its historic ambience. Even today, while Florida is growing rapidly, there is no traffic light in Lake Helen and many of the City's roads are unpaved.

## COMMERCE

The City is almost exclusively residential. Commerce is very limited and consists primarily of a number of small contractors

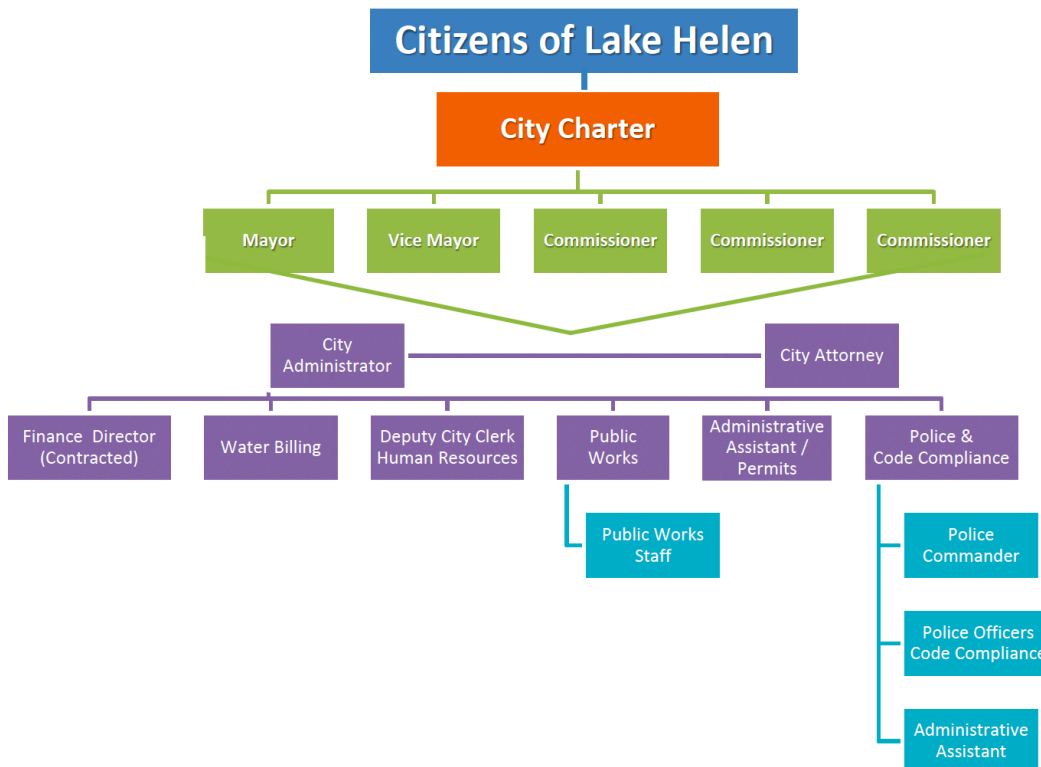
and two well-regarded restaurant/sub shops, Roma's Pizza and the Little Café.

## THE GOVERNMENT

The Mayor and City Commission serve as Lake Helen's governing body and set policies and rules by which the City is operated. The mayor is elected, presides over City Commission meetings, and serves as the ceremonial head of the government. The other four members of the City Commission represent one of four zones and must reside in the zone they represent. All are elected at large. The term of office for all seats are two years, and there are no term limits. Any new Commissioners will be sworn in on November 13th, 2025. The Commission appoints the City Attorney and the City Administrator.

The City Administrator has the typical City Manager responsibilities and duties except all hiring and firing decisions must be approved by the City Commission. The Administrator

FIGURE 2: LAKE HELEN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



is appointed and dismissed by a simple majority of the Commission. The Administrator also serves as the City Planner (although the actual planning is handled via contractual services), City Treasurer (handled by the City Finance Director - also by contract) and the City Clerk (handled by the Director of Administration).

Not counting the City Administrator, the city has 16 full-time employees. The City's total budget is \$6,237,450 and the General Fund Budget is \$4,667,450. The City provides the following services: Police, Planning and Zoning, Public Works including water treatment and distribution, Fire by contract, Solid Waste by contract, Stormwater improvements and maintenance, Building Inspections by contract, Code Enforcement with a Magistrate, IT Services by contract and Human Resources. Police Officers are represented by a union.

## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Lake Helen is a fiscally sound community and has the typical challenges one would expect in a community of its size. Even though the City has an award-winning Master Plan, the City Administrator will be very busy.

Firstly, like many municipalities across the country, social media plays an important and often negative role in the community. The next City Administrator will need to be skilled in digital communications and promptly address incorrect information. Lake Helen is a close-knit community, so once misinformation gains traction, it's much harder to undo the damage—even with corrections. Social media responsiveness will build trust between the city government and its residents.

The City has significant infrastructure projects in the planning and/or early stages of implementation. The first is the reconstruction of the water distribution system. The pipes are old, and many are of insufficient diameter to meet future (as well as some current) needs. For example, water pressure is often insufficient to fight fires in the area. Additionally, as an older City, it does not have an adequate stormwater system, and when a significant storm strikes the area, the water can linger for quite some time. The third significant infrastructure issue is City Hall was built as a school in 1916. There are structural and mold issues

that are being resolved. The Commission, staff, and residents are anxiously anticipating the building to be fully open.

Another issue is the City Charter, and some City ordinances need to be reviewed and possibly updated to ensure there are no contradictions. The next Administrator will need to work with the elected officials and public to build community support around a charter revision.

Working with FEMA will be an important task for the next Administrator. The City is expecting a large sum of money concerning reimbursements from recent storms. Navigating the process for the best outcome for Lake Helen will require finesse and diligence. The next Administrator will be responsible for coordinating with FEMA after any major declared disaster.

Housing prices and the type of homes available currently prohibit young families from moving into Lake Helen. Affordable housing would help. The next Administrator will continue to work with developers to expedite affordable housing opportunities, and find an alternative solution that will not impact the historical ambiance of the community.

Other challenges include conducting a compensation review of all employees and finding ways to support the police department.

## THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The Commission is seeking a dynamic and experienced leader to serve as its next City Administrator. The ideal candidate will bring a proven record of accomplishment, along with strong leadership and management skills. This individual will be a collaborative team builder, capable of navigating differing perspectives and fostering consensus. A visible and engaged presence, the next City Administrator will lead by example—working alongside staff and connecting directly with the community. Given Lake Helen's small size and limited staff, this is very much a hands-on role requiring a proactive and adaptable approach.

The Commission wants someone to work with it as a partner and a trusted advisor. She/he will be open and honest with the Commission, staff, and the public with a focus on regular communication with all parties. The individual will be confident

and strong in presenting ideas. The Commission is definitely not looking for a “yes” person, but the Administrator will also recognize the chain of command and that the Commission has the final say. The individual will ensure all the Commission Members have the same information at the same time and that there will be no surprises.

The Administrator must possess exceptional communication skills and the ability to connect with a diverse range of constituents—regardless of socioeconomic status, education level, race, or ethnicity. This individual will be a unifying presence, ensuring that all voices are heard, and that information is accessible and clearly conveyed. A key responsibility will be developing strategies to effectively explain how City policies and projects serve the greater good, as well as individual community members. Proactive, transparent, and honest communication will be essential in positively shaping the City’s public image.

Customer service will not be just a catchy phrase with the Administrator, but rather, along with integrity and a strong moral compass, 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 within the bounds of the law and ordinances. The City is looking for someone trustworthy along with high ethical standards and integrity. The individual will ensure that rules and services are consistently applied to all.

Due to the size of the organization, the Administrator must be very organized and willing and able to wear many hats. Where possible, the Administrator will delegate and encourage an environment that inspires creativity. He/she will not be a micromanager. Rather the ideal candidate will give assignments, set broad performance parameters, and expect results. While employees will be encouraged to be innovative, they will also be held accountable.

The individual will be upbeat, friendly, outgoing, and relentlessly positive – someone with a “can do” attitude and who is visionary yet practical. The ideal candidate will bring a well-rounded skill set with demonstrated success in key areas such as management, budgeting and finance, land use planning and development, redevelopment, emergency management, FEMA coordination, and grant writing. Experience in building strong relationships with community groups, governmental agencies, and in

navigating intergovernmental affairs will be essential to their effectiveness in the role.

Candidates should possess at least a bachelor’s degree—preferably a master’s—in business administration, public administration, public policy, or a related field. A minimum of five to seven years of progressively responsible experience at a senior executive level in either the public or private sector is expected. Prior experience working in a small community is highly desirable and will be considered a valuable asset.

Finally, the City is looking for someone who will recognize this job for the tremendous opportunity it is and be willing to make a long-term commitment to the City and organization.

## COMPENSATION

The salary range is \$105,000 to \$145,000 and the salary will depend on qualifications and experience. Benefits are excellent. The Administrator will be part of the Florida Retirement System. As a side note, Florida is one of nine states in the U.S. that does not have a state income tax.

## THE MOST RECENT CITY ADMINISTRATOR

The current City Administrator will retire once a successor has been selected.

## RESIDENCY

While there is no residency requirement for the City Administrator, he/she should plan to live close enough to be available during emergencies.

## HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your cover letter and resume to [Recruit22@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit22@cb-asso.com) ASAP, but no later than September 19, 2025. Applications will be screened as they arrive. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Scott Krim at (801) 628-8364, and then to Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

## INTERNAL CANDIDATES

There are no internal candidates.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Under Florida's public records act, once an application is submitted, it is deemed a public record. As a practical matter, this search may not receive any media coverage until after the semi-finalists are named, and perhaps not even then.

## THE PROCESS

Applications will be screened between August 15th and October 1st. Finalists will be selected on October 9th. A reception and interviews will be held on October 16th and 17th. A selection will be made then or shortly thereafter.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Lake Helen invites all to apply and does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or parental status.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about the city, visit:

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

[www.business.westvolusiaregionalchamber.org](http://www.business.westvolusiaregionalchamber.org)

