

Literally translated “Clear Water” from the Timucuan Indian word “Pocotopaug,” the City of Clearwater gained its name from the abundant freshwater springs along its shore. Today, with nearly 110,000 residents and 3 million visitors annually, Clearwater is an established international destination for commerce, tourism, sporting events and residential development. While the name conjures up images of beautiful white sand beaches and relaxing days on the shore, the community has also garnered a reputation as one of the most progressive and well-run cities in Florida.

Throughout the organization, you’ll find departments – and department leadership – that sets the standard for local government administration. Guided by a Vision that was established nearly 10 years ago, and revised in 2005, Clearwater’s City Council has been on a path that has sparked unprecedented revitalization throughout the community. A comprehensive vision for Clearwater Beach and downtown are examples, with multiple hotel, residential and commercial developments resulting from the city’s guidance and investments in these two areas.

The five-member City Council and city manager Bill Horne use performance indicators as part of the budget process to help gauge success in meeting with Council’s Vision priorities. The city has committed to continually refining those measures through participation in the Florida Benchmarking Consortium. In 2008, Clearwater was selected as one of just four communities selected to participate in Leadership ICMA’s development program, which brought a leaders from around the country together to review and make recommendations on the city’s measures and indicators.

These performance indicators have been supplemented with an open and far-reaching partnership with the community on setting budget priorities in the past two years, spurred in part by recent far-reaching changes to local budgeting imposed by state legislators.

Examples of this pursuit of excellence are evident throughout the organization.

Clearwater's Police Department has met compliance standards with the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation for the last 10 years. *Sports Illustrated Magazine* recognized Clearwater as the top "Sports Town" in the state of Florida for their comprehensive and multigenerational athletics programs and facilities. Clearwater Fire & Rescue maintains international accreditation with the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Individually, the city's executive team are recognized as leaders in their respective professions. City Management and directors have served in leadership roles with, or have been recognized for professional excellence by, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida City/County Managers Association, the Government Finance Officers Association, the Pinellas Fire Chiefs Association, the American Society for Public Administration and the University of South Florida.

You'll find city leaders on the boards of Leadership Pinellas, the Pinellas Education Foundation, Morton Plant Mease Healthcare, the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit

Alliance, the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce, the YWCA of the Florida Suncoast and many other local organizations.

All of Clearwater's employees are committed to the community. Employees contributed more per employee to the United Way than any other city in Pinellas County, totaling more than \$200,000 in donations over the last two years. The city also averages 100 employee participants in the United Way Day of Caring and more than 150 employees, friends and spouses for Paint Your Heart Out! Clearwater. Clearwater reinforces the importance of community involvement and youth mentoring by allowing one hour per week for employees to participate as youth mentors or tutors.

Clearwater's leadership style is defined by two key principles: collaboration and partnership. Key decisions are made through interdepartmental teams who participate in a number of regular strategy sessions, including biweekly Senior Executive meetings and Project Management meetings. These are supplemented by weekly meetings of the city's "Strategy Team," charged with discussing and charting the city's course on key issues.

Partnership with the community and other local jurisdictions is also a defining trait of Clearwater's leadership in tackling tough community issues. You can see this commitment in just a few of the city's community partnership initiatives:

- The city's CAN (Clearwater Awards for Neighbors) program was recognized as one of the top neighborhood initiatives in the nation at this year's Neighborhoods

USA Conference. It provides cash grants to neighborhoods that demonstrate partnership and community-building in addressing local issues of concern.

- The Clearwater Homeless Intervention Program (CHIP) has been a leader in addressing homelessness, and is a partnership between Clearwater Police Department and the non-profit board that operates the program. This year, the partnership has taken on a new dimension through project Homeless Connect, a multi-agency event designed to connect the homeless with local social service agencies that can help them reach self-sufficiency.
  
- Apoyo Hispano and the Hispanic Outreach Center, a partnership between the city of Clearwater, the Hispanic Leadership Council of Tampa Bay and the YWCA of the Florida Suncoast, which provides “one-stop” services, information and legal guidance for the city’s Hispanic immigrant population.
  
- During Celebrate Clearwater Neighborhoods Day, the Neighborhood Services Division provides guidance and support for nearly 30 community-building neighborhood block parties that the city’s leadership visits to listen to resident concerns and answer questions “on their turf.”
  
- Clearwater’s community engagement initiative uses town hall meetings, focus groups and the Clearwater Citizen’s Academy to expand dialogue with citizens on core issues affecting the community. This is supplemented by traditional advisory

boards, online/on-demand access to video of city proceedings and a series of monthly breakfasts between Councilmembers groups of residents.

- Clearwater's Green Initiative, a partnership between the multiple departments within city and the University of South Florida, has led to a new comprehensive analysis of the city's "carbon footprint" and strategies for becoming a leader in sustainable operations.
- Signature events in the community like Clearwater Jazz Holiday and the Foster Grant Ironman 70.3 World Championship draw tens of thousands to the city. But it's the hundreds of volunteers, community sponsors and foundation supporters that make these free events such a success.

Maintaining and developing a robust technological infrastructure has been key to many of the city's successes. This has included an integrated, paperless agenda management system; online systems for permitting, ordering plans and paying utility bills; an integrated multi-tiered citizen notification/communication system; robust, real-time GIS applications for tracking everything from code violations to police calls for service; and a CRM system developed entirely in-house that is now accessed by over 500 users every month. Challenging processes like tracking assets, driving routes and orders for service have also been integrated to allow for better assessment of performance. A diverse and talented Information Technology team has allowed Clearwater to build and implement many of its best solutions in-house, saving hundreds of thousands in development costs.

Clearwater continues to be a leaders in fiscal management and innovation. This year, the Finance Department was recognized by ASPA for its innovative e-Pay project, which bundles and pays invoices as electronic “credit card” payments, earning the city a rebate from the bank and greater interest returns on its cash investments by reducing “float” and the potential for fraud. The city’s Office of Management and Budget has earned GFOA’s Distinguished Budget Presentation award for the last 22 consecutive years, and their Excellence in Financial Reporting award for the last 27 years.

All of this combines to define a community that is defining quality governance, community engagement and innovation in local government: a City of Excellence.