



What is AI and Why It Matters for Florida Cities

What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of machines to mimic human tasks like learning, reasoning, and problem-solving. You've likely already used AI today, whether typing with auto-suggestions, using a voice assistant, or getting recommendations online.

Here are the most common types of AI you'll encounter:

- **Machine Learning (ML):** Systems that learn from past data to make predictions (e.g., forecasting trash tonnage by route)
- **Generative AI (GenAI):** Tools that create new content like text, images, or code based on prompts
- **Large Language Models (LLMs):** AI systems trained on vast amounts of text to understand and generate human-like responses
- **Decision-Support AI:** Applications that analyze data to highlight options or flag issues (e.g., identifying duplicate pothole reports)

What AI Matters for Cities

AI can help local governments do more with limited resources, saving time, reducing costs, and improving public services.

Here are a few examples of how municipalities are using or exploring AI today:

- **Draft routine documents:** Let AI generate the first draft of meeting agendas, event announcements, or newsletters for staff to review and edit.
- **Summarize complex materials:** Turn a 50-page state statute into a one-page briefing for council members.
- **Answer internal questions:** Create an internal tool that helps staff quickly find HR policies or IT guidance.

- **Translate for residents:** Use AI to create Spanish versions of city notices (with human review for accuracy).
- **Support 24/7 resident help:** Add a chatbot to your website to answer common questions like “When is bulk trash pickup?” or “How do I pay a parking ticket?”
- **Optimize infrastructure:** Use AI to adjust traffic lights in real time or detect potential water leaks from unusual usage patterns.

Various cities across Florida — including Fort Myers, Hialeah, Miami, Orlando, and Jacksonville — are already piloting AI uses like translation, chatbots, predictive analytics, writing support, meeting transcription, and more.

What Florida City Leaders Are Saying

Recent FLC surveys of elected officials and city managers show strong interest in AI:

- Over 90% of city managers and 85% of elected officials are either supportive or open but cautious of using AI.
- Top AI opportunities include public engagement, workflow automation, predictive analytics, and document generation.
- The biggest concerns are accuracy, data privacy, and legal risk.
- Most cities do not yet have a dedicated AI or innovation lead, highlighting a need for accessible tools and clear guidance.

Both city managers and elected officials strongly support FLC’s role in helping cities:

- 94% of city managers want sample policies and legal guidance.
- 85% of elected officials want FLC-hosted trainings and real-world case studies.

Both city managers and elected officials strongly support FLC’s role in providing sample policies, legal guidance, real-world case studies, and training opportunities.

Bottom line: AI can help cities of all sizes better serve their residents, support staff, and build more resilient communities. By approaching it with curiosity, care, and collaboration, Florida’s cities can lead the way in using AI responsibly.