



May 5, 2026 - Regular Meeting

Subject

Trust for Public Land Conservation Finance Feasibility Study 2026 for Manatee County, Kara Koenig, Environmental Lands Program Section Manager - Countywide

Category

REPORTS

Briefings

Briefing Provided Upon Request

Contact and/or Presenter Information

Kara Koenig, Section Manager, Environmental Lands Program x 6052
Charlie Hunsicker, Director, Natural Resources Department x 6001

Action Requested

No Action Required

Enabling/Regulating Authority

N/A

Applicable Advisory Board

Environmental Lands Management and Acquisition Advisory Committee (ELMAC)

Background Discussion

On January 6th, 2026, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners requested by letter, technical assistance from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) with the County's efforts in consideration of increasing dedicated, ongoing sources of public funds for land conservation and parks.

The Trust for Public Land Conservation Finance Feasibility Study 2026 for Manatee County, being presented by Will Abberger, Vice President of Trust for Public Land, is the first deliverable prepared by TPL for the technical assistance requested.

Previously in 2019, TPL worked with County staff in the Natural Resources Department, the Manatee Fish and Game Association, and Big Waters Land Trust (formerly known as Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast), to develop the "Manatee County Conservation Finance Feasibility Study," completed in 2019.

Following public opinion research, this effort resulted in the successful 2020 Manatee County Conservation and Parks Projects Referendum.

After Board review of this 2026 feasibility report, the intent is for TPL to come back before the Board on June 16th, 2026 to present program recommendations.

Attorney Review

Not Reviewed (No apparent legal issues)

Instructions to Board Records

None

Cost and Funds Source Account Number and Name

N/A

Amount and Frequency of Recurring Costs

N/A



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DRAFT

Manatee County, FL

Conservation Finance Feasibility Study

March 2026





Manatee County Administration
1112 Manatee Avenue W
Bradenton, FL 34205
Phone: (941) 748-4501
Mymantee.org

January 6, 2026

Will Abberger
Vice President, Director, Conservation Finance
Trust for Public Land
1834 Hermitage Blvd., Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Mr. Abberger:

The Manatee County Board of County Commissioners request technical advice and assistance from Trust for Public Land in connection with our efforts to develop and sustain reliable, ongoing sources of funding for land and water conservation.

As part of your advice and assistance, I understand you may provide feasibility research, conduct a public opinion survey and develop strategies for our consideration in increasing dedicated, ongoing sources of public funds for land conservation and parks.

We are interested not only in the factual information that you can provide, but also your opinions and recommendations on public funding measures available to us and strategies to enact such measures. That would include understanding the public's priorities and attitudes concerning land conservation, water quality, and natural areas and how the public would respond to different methods of presenting those issues.

Information provided to the County Commission will be public record as a matter of law. This request does not in any way commit public funds to the efforts of Trust for Public Land related to this request, nor does it require public disclosure of any confidential information of either organization.

CAROL AHN FELTS District 7	AMANDA BALLARD District 2	TAL SIDDIQUE District 1	MIKE RAHN District 4	DR. BOB MCCANN District 5	JASON BEARDEN At Large	GEORGE W. KRUSE At Large
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This request will continue in effect for any advice you offer or presentations you submit for the use of this body related to such matters. In addition, we would like to take this opportunity to request that you continue to be available to provide technical advice and assistance in this area and on related matters in the future.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tal Siddique
Chairman, Manatee County Board of County Commissioners

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Introduction

Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that connects everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, TPL works with communities to create parks and protect public land where they're needed most. Since 1972, TPL has protected more than 4 million acres of public land, created more than 5,504 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places, raised \$112 billion in public funding for parks and public lands, and connected nearly 9.7 million people to the outdoors.

Conservation Finance

To help public agencies protect open space and working lands, build and improve parks and trails, and fund related purposes, TPL assists communities in securing public financing. TPL's conservation finance program offers technical assistance to elected officials, public agencies and community groups to design, pass, and implement public funding measures that reflect popular priorities. Since 1996, TPL has been involved in more than 680 successful ballot measures and dozens of statewide legislative campaigns creating nearly \$112 billion in new funding for parks, restoration, and land conservation across the nation. Voters have approved 84 percent of the ballot measures supported by TPL. Most recently in Florida, TPL assisted Clay, Lake, and Osceola Counties with passing bonds and Martin County with passing a sales tax for conservation in the November 2024 election. Clay County's \$45 million bond passed with 73 percent support; Lake County's \$50 million bond passed with 80 percent support; Osceola County's \$70 million bond passed with 84 percent support; and Martin County's 10-year ½-cent sales tax passed with 64 percent support.

Given the substantial investment of time and resources required for a successful local finance initiative, preliminary research is essential to determine which options and funding levels are feasible, economically prudent, and likely to be publicly acceptable. This research provides a stand-alone, fact-based reference document that can be used to evaluate financing mechanisms from an objective vantage point.¹

¹ The contents of this report are based on the best available information at the time of research and drafting, February 2026. This feasibility study is not a legal document and should not be relied upon for legal purposes.

Executive Summary

At the request of the Manatee County Board of Commissioners, Trust for Public Land has undertaken a feasibility analysis to explore public funding options to support land and water conservation, parks, water quality, and natural areas in the county. In 2019 and 2020, TPL worked with Manatee County to explore dedicated county funding for land conservation, completing feasibility and public opinion research. The Board of County Commissioners referred and Manatee County voters approved a combined bond and property tax on the November 3, 2020 ballot with 71 percent support. The measure included authority to levy 0.15 mills and issue \$50 million in general obligation bonds.

In Florida, local government funding for conservation and parks most often takes the form of budget appropriations, property taxes, general obligation bonds backed by property taxes, local sales taxes, and park impact fees. This study focuses on general obligation bonds, property tax, and sales tax as the best opportunities for financing the protection of natural areas and open space in Manatee County. See Appendix A for a matrix of revenue options.

- **Bonds:** To raise funds for capital improvements, including conservation land acquisition, parks and trail construction, and facilities improvements, local governments in Florida may issue bonds. In Manatee County, for example, a \$100 million bond would add about \$7.7 million to the county's annual debt service and would cost approximately \$35 per year for the average homeowner over the life of the bond (20 years). Regulations governing the issuance of tax-exempt bonds limit the use of proceeds to capital purposes, such as the acquisition of conservation lands. Voter approval is required.
- **Bonds with additional property tax:** In Florida, a single ballot question may authorize bonding authority and a millage levy, the excess of which can be used for operations and maintenance. The portion of the voted millage necessary to pay debt service must be treated as debt service millage (used only for capital purposes) and the excess portion is treated as general millage (may be used for maintenance and operations of properties acquired with bond funds). For example, in Manatee County, a 0.15 mill levy would generate approximately \$10.5 million annually at a cost of roughly \$47 a year to the average home in the county. A \$100 million bond with a 20-year maturity would require roughly \$7.7 million of this annual revenue stream for debt service, leaving about \$2.8 million per year to support operations and maintenance for the bond projects. Voter approval is required.
- **Property tax:** Alternatively, counties may allocate property tax revenue for conservation purposes, using a pay-as-you-go strategy. Some Florida counties have opted to place a measure on the ballot to gauge voter support for a county millage to support land conservation. For example, based on the county's total taxable value of \$69.9 billion for 2025, an additional 0.15 millage would generate approximately \$10.5 million annually at a cost of \$47 per year for the average home. Property tax revenues could be used for a variety of purposes, including land acquisition, land management, restoration, and operations and maintenance.
- **Sales tax:** Manatee County could increase its infrastructure tax from 0.5 to 1 percent. A 1 percent infrastructure sales tax increase could generate more than \$101 million per year countywide. This revenue would be shared with the municipalities, leaving approximately \$86 million annually for Manatee County. The revenues could be used for parks, conservation, and protection of natural resources. Revenues may not be used for operations and maintenance. Trust for Public Land estimates this tax would cost the median household \$180 per year (an increase of \$90) and spending by residents would account for 31 percent of the revenues. The remaining revenues would come from visitor and business spending. Voter approval is required.

Next steps should include selecting the finance mechanism and amount that best matches the needs of the county and testing voter attitudes toward a specific funding proposal. Trust for Public Land recommends conducting a public opinion survey that tests ballot language, tax tolerance, and program priorities of voters in Manatee County.

Overview

Located midway along the west coast of Florida, Manatee County's boundaries encompass 740 square miles. The county is bordered on the north by Hillsborough County, on the south by Sarasota County, on the east by Hardee and DeSoto Counties, and on the west by the Gulf of Mexico. There are six incorporated municipalities within Manatee County: Palmetto, Bradenton, Bradenton Beach, Holmes Beach, Anna Maria, and Longboat Key. Bradenton is the largest city in Manatee County with a population of 58,184 and serves as the county seat.

The county's population has grown 14.7 percent from 2020 to 2024, based on estimates from the United States Census Bureau. This is compared to population growth statewide in Florida of 8.5 percent. While the county is known to be one of the best retirement areas in the nation, the median age was 49 in 2024.

Manatee County has a diversified economic base with the three largest industry sectors being services, retail, and manufacturing. The county also has a strong tourism and agricultural base. Some of the larger industrial firms include a citrus juice producer, emergency equipment manufacturer, electromedical and control instruments manufacturer and professional dental products and technologies manufacturer. According to the latest information, the three largest employers in the public sector are Manatee County School Board, Manatee County Government and Manatee County Sheriff's Department. Major private sector employers include Publix, Manatee Healthcare System, Beall's Inc., Blake Medical Center, IMG Academy, State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, and Tropicana Products, Inc.

Port Manatee is in the northwestern corner of Manatee County. It fronts Tampa Bay and borders the Manatee-Hillsborough County line. An access channel from the Port connects with the federal channel in Tampa Bay only ten miles from the Gulf of Mexico. Port Manatee is one of the largest of Florida's 15 deepwater seaports. As the major shipping gateway to our community, the Port Authority manages the importing and exporting of many agriculture and industrial products.

Manatee County has long been an important agricultural center of Florida. Major tomato production facilities, citrus farms, dairies, nurseries, cattle ranches, vegetable farms, and poultry farms are all examples of the thriving agri-business that exists in the county. Tourism is another major component of the economy. The Gulf Coast's white sandy beaches are the leading tourist attractions in the area. There are numerous other attractions such as the Bishop Museum of Science and Nature and the Pittsburgh Pirates spring training facility. The county is also near the Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team, the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team, and the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team. Excellent golf courses, boating and fishing opportunities, and other recreational facilities contribute to the enjoyment of residents and many visitors.²

Currently 14 percent of Manatee County is managed for conservation by local, state, federal, and private agencies.³ Significant conservation lands in Manatee County include Duette Preserve, Edward W Chance Reserve, Emerson Point Preserve, Hidden Harbor Park, Lake Manatee State Park, Moody Branch Wildlife and Environmental Area, Myakka River State Park, Neal Preserve, Perico Preserve, Robinson Preserve, Rye Preserve, South Fork State Park, Terra Ceia Preserve State Park, Tom Bennett Park, Twin Rivers Preserve, Upper Myakka River Watershed - Flatford Swamp, and Wingate Creek State Park.

Demographics

The table on the following page provides a summary of Manatee County's demographic information, with Florida statistics for comparison.

² Manatee County FY2026 Budget

³ Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Summary of Florida Conservation Lands Acreage by County - January 2026

Manatee County Demographics		
Population	Manatee County	Florida
Population estimates, July 1, 2024	458,352	23,372,215
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020	399,716	21,538,192
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2024	14.70%	8.50%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	399,710	21,538,187
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	322,833	18,801,310
Race and Hispanic Origin		
White alone, percent	85.10%	76.40%
Black alone, percent (a)	9.10%	16.90%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	0.70%	0.60%
Asian alone, percent (a)	2.80%	3.40%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	0.10%	0.10%
Two or More Races, percent	2.20%	2.50%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	19.20%	28.70%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	68.00%	50.60%
Housing		
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2020-2024	74.30%	67.60%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2020-2024	\$391,400	\$359,000
Median selected monthly owner costs - with a mortgage, 2020-2024	\$2,079	\$1,959
Median selected monthly owner costs - without a mortgage, 2020-2024	\$706	\$673
Median gross rent, 2020-2024	\$1,671	\$1,669
Families & Living Arrangements		
Households, 2020-2024	176,747	8,752,810
Persons per household, 2020-2024	2.4	2.51
Living in the same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+ , 2020-2024	86.00%	86.30%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2020-2024	19.80%	30.60%
Education		
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2020-2024	90.90%	89.90%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2020-2024	35.40%	34.10%
Health		
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2020-2024	9.90%	8.90%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	13.80%	13.60%
Income & Poverty		
Median households income (in 2024 dollars), 2020-2024	\$78,457	\$74,568
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2024 dollars), 2020-2024	\$46,573	\$42,609
Persons in poverty, percent	9.80%	12.00%
<i>Source: US Census QuickFacts</i>		
<i>Notes: (a) Includes persons reporting only one race</i>		
<i>(b) Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories</i>		

Governance

Manatee County is a political subdivision of the State of Florida guided by an elected seven-member Board of County Commissioners. Through partisan elections, two are elected to represent the entire county as a district and five are elected to represent single-member districts. The Board performs the legislative function by developing policy of the management of Manatee County. The County Administrator, a professional appointed by the Board, and staff are responsible for the implementation of those policies. The Board is responsible for functions and services delivered throughout the county including municipalities and for municipal services to residents and businesses in the unincorporated area.⁴

⁴ Manatee County FY2026 Budget

Manatee County Board of County Commissioners		
Name	Seat	Next Election
Vacant	District 1	2026
Amanda Ballard	District 2	2026
Tal Siddique	District 3	2028
Mike Rahn	District 4	2026
Dr. Bob McCann	District 5	2028
Jason Bearden	At Large District	2026
George Kruse	At Large District	2028

Financials⁵

Manatee County’s adopted budget for FY26 is balanced in the net amount of \$1,368,296,426. Property taxes are the largest source of revenue (\$463 million, 34 percent of total revenues). The largest expenditure is public safety (\$364 million, 27 percent of total expenditures).

Revenues		
Property Taxes	\$	463,381,406
Other Taxes		123,051,744
Charges for Services		455,316,508
Licenses/Permits/Fines/Interest/Misc		237,047,946
Inter Governmental		89,498,822
Total	\$	1,368,296,426

Expenditures		
General Government	\$	168,022,572
Public Safety		364,488,713
Physical Environment		327,896,516
Public Transportation		100,760,381
Human Services		49,195,617
Culture & Recreation		49,754,867
Capital Outlay		242,073,057
Other		66,104,703
Total	\$	1,368,296,426

⁵ Manatee County FY2026 Budget

Environmental Lands Fund⁶

In November 2020, voters approved a referendum implementing an Environmental Lands Millage of 0.15 mills to finance the acquisition, improvement, and management of land to protect drinking water sources and water quality, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, prevent stormwater runoff pollution and provide parks within Manatee County. The millage is expected to raise \$11.25 million in revenue in FY26.

	Actual	Adopted	Adopted	Planned
	FY2023	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027
Beginning Balance/Budgeted Cash	11,117,657	19,109,941	14,567,422	18,783,167
Subtotal	11,117,657	19,109,941	14,567,422	18,783,167
Revenues to be received during Fiscal Year:				
Taxes	8,975,402	10,576,839	11,250,510	11,250,510
Charges for services	560,827	704,200	709,200	709,200
Interest income	856,571	949,459	666,168	858,954
Miscellaneous	49,996	51,600	51,600	51,600
Less 5% revenue	-	(614,105)	(633,874)	(643,513)
Subtotal	10,442,796	11,667,993	12,043,604	12,226,751
Total Sources	21,560,453	30,777,934	26,611,026	31,009,918
Budgeted Expenditures by Department in this Fund:				
Tax Collector	179,508	200,960	213,760	213,760
Financial Management	173,551	194,568	51,108	51,108
Property Management	-	-	480,204	475,786
Natural Resources	4,829,912	5,568,625	3,338,958	3,338,958
Subtotal	5,182,971	5,964,153	4,084,030	4,079,612
Transfers Out to Other Funds/Agencies:				
Transfer to 2023Env LandsBonds	1,635,278	2,913,500	2,870,525	2,878,625
Transfer to EnviroLandCapProj	891,024	2,544,431	708,525	1,356,987
Tran to Motor Pool Fund	181,555	-	-	-
Subtotal	2,707,857	5,457,931	3,579,050	4,235,612
Reserves & Set Aside Amounts:				
Reserve - Contingencies	-	-	30,000	30,000
Reserve - Salary Adjustments	-	167,637	134,778	134,778
Reserve - Cash Balance - Operating	-	1,226,358	835,855	834,971
Reserve - Budget Stabilization	-	17,961,855	17,947,313	21,694,945
Subtotal	-	19,355,850	18,947,946	22,694,694
Total Uses	7,890,828	30,777,934	26,611,026	31,009,918

Environmental Lands Program

The Environmental Lands Program is focused on the conservation of Manatee County's environmental heritage to benefit today's and future generations. County staff works with the Environmental Land Management and Acquisition Committee (ELMAC) to advise the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on environmental land acquisition, management, and recreational programming. The BCC decides which properties can be purchased. Only properties whose owners want to have their land considered for purchase are considered.

⁶ Manatee County FY2026 Budget

ELMAC was established in 1993 to advise the BCC on environmental land acquisition, environmental land management, and recreational programming. The Committee has worked with staff to establish methods to identify, evaluate and prioritize land for conservation acquisition.⁷

A grassroots effort, led by individuals and organizations throughout the region, resulted in a successful 2020 referendum to finance the acquisition, improvement, and management of conservation lands. The Conservation and Parks Projects Referendum called for a 0.15 mill ad valorem tax and up to \$50,000,000 in general obligation bonds. Partnerships with many other organizations resulted in additional funds and resources that support the success of the program.⁸

The county began collecting the 0.15 mills in FY2023. On November 8, 2023, the county issued a \$35 million general obligation bond. On March 25, 2025, the board approved the CFO to initiate the process towards issuing the remaining \$15 million.⁹ The county has purchased approximately 306 acres of land for conservation through this program.¹⁰

Performance Measure	Property Name							Total Area (Acres)
	Crane Park Addition	Crooked River Preserve	Emerson Point Preserve Expansion	North Pine Island	Rye Cemetery Buffer	Rye Road Property	Triple Oak Preserve	
Residential	1.20		1.29		0.03		2.48	3.00
Open Land		0.28				0.20		1.00
Crop and Pastureland		22.25	51.36				0.54	74.15
Mixed Rangeland							25.01	25.01
Pine Flatwood					1.15	1.62		2.77
Upland Hardwood Coniferou	6.04	30.82			3.31		27.31	67.48
Upland Hardwood Forest	0.25							0.25
Tree Plantation							28.16	28.16
Streams and Waterways						0.64		0.64
Reservoirs			0.45					0.45
Bays and Estuaries		0.63	1.29	0.82				2.74
Stream and Lake Swamp	5.83					7.61	18.67	32.11
Freshwater Marsh			2.06				0.50	2.56
Wetland Forest mixed		7.20	12.95	0.41			0.10	20.66
SALTWATER MARSHES		4.94	1.98	0.01				6.93
Wet Prairie		0.21					0.53	0.74
Salt Flats		1.37	0.53					1.90
Mangrove Swamp			22.34	11.47				33.81
Utilities		0.08						0.08
Total Area (acres)	13.32	67.78	94.25	12.71	4.49	10.07	103.30	305.92

⁷ <https://www.myanatee.org/government/government-information/advisory-boards/advisory-board-detail/environmental-lands-management-and-acquisition-advisory-committee>

⁸ <https://www.myanatee.org/connect/news-and-information/news-and-information/article-detail/property-management---environmental-lands-program/2025/03/13/about-the-environmental-lands-program>

⁹ Environmental Lands Financial Summary May 2025

¹⁰ Manatee County, Habitat Types Acquired, Natural Resources Criteria met, Referendum Criteria met

Choosing a Local Funding Strategy

Generally, there are three primary types of revenue sources available to local governments to pay for conservation: discretionary annual spending (i.e., budget appropriations), creation of dedicated funding streams such as voter-approved special taxes, and the issuance of bonds. The financing options utilized by a community will depend on a variety of factors such as taxing capacity, budgetary resources, voter preferences, and political will.

Significant, dedicated funding generally comes from broad-based taxes and/or the issuance of bonded indebtedness, which often require the approval of voters. In Trust for Public Land’s experience, local governments that create funding via the budget process often provide substantially less funding than those that create funding through ballot measures. As elected officials go through the process of making critical budgetary decisions, funding for parks and conservation often lags behind other public purposes, and the amount appropriated tends to be less than what voters would support. It is understandably often difficult to raise taxes without an indisputable public mandate for the intended purpose.

Ballot measures provide a tangible means to implement a local government’s vision. With their own funding, local governments are better positioned to leverage scarce funding from state or federal government grants or private philanthropic partners. In addition, having a stable, predictable funding source empowers the local jurisdiction to establish long-term priorities that meet important community goals and values.

Nationwide, a range of public financing options has been utilized by local jurisdictions to fund conservation, including general obligation bonds, the sales tax, and the property tax. The ability of local governments to establish dedicated funding sources depends upon state enabling authority.

The State of Florida authorizes local communities to use various revenue sources for parks and conservation purposes including property taxes, sales and use taxes, general obligation bonds, and the creation of special districts. Voters have approved 85 percent of local conservation finance measures (88 of 104) on the ballot in Florida since 1996. General obligation bonds are the most popular public finance mechanism in Florida for parks and conservation. The table below illustrates the number and type of conservation finance measures that have gone before voters.

Florida Local Conservation Finance Measures, 1996-present					
Finance Mechanism	# Measures	# Passed	% Passed	Conservation Funds Approved	Total Funds Approved
Bond	63	56	89%	\$1,748,490,000	\$3,963,510,000
Sales tax	25	18	72%	\$1,450,713,280	\$10,326,540,142
Property tax	15	13	87%	\$1,601,485,900	\$1,677,853,000
Advisory Referendum	1	1	100%		
Total	104	88	85%	\$4,800,689,180	\$15,967,903,142

Source: Trust for Public Land's LandVote Database, www.landvote.org

Proposed Property Tax Changes

Rapid increases in home values have amplified calls to cut or even eliminate the property tax in the State of Florida. Because property taxes rise with home values, homeowners in many parts of the state face significantly larger tax bills. The median bill rose about 30 percent between 2019 and 2024—far short of soaring home values, but with wide variation. Florida lawmakers are considering constitutional amendments and legislative proposals to reduce or eliminate property taxes, particularly on homesteaded properties. While intended to provide tax relief and address housing affordability, these proposals pose very significant risks to local government operations, especially in rural areas, and threaten the stability of infrastructure financing through municipal bonds.

Eight plans to change the local property tax cleared the House Select Committee on Property Taxes in November 2025 and moved to the State Affairs Committee for consideration. In January 2026, the House State Affairs committee passed CS/HJR 203, “Phased Out Elimination of Non-school Property Tax for

Homesteads” – a proposal that would increase the homestead exemption by \$100,000 every year for the next decade, eventually eliminating non-school property taxes entirely by 2037. The proposal, which would require approval by 60 percent of voters, also would seek to prevent local funding cuts for law enforcement, firefighters and other first responders. As of the date of this study, the Senate is still studying the issue and has not yet approved a proposal.

More than \$400 million of Manatee County’s FY26 revenues come from property taxes. According to the Florida Association of Counties, the impact on Manatee County property taxes of HJR 203 would be \$63 million in cash and \$200 million in annual recurring revenue.¹¹

¹¹ Florida Association of Counties, House Property Tax Proposals, County-by-County Ad Valorem Impacts, updated 11/5/2025

Bonds

Florida counties and municipalities are authorized to issue debt for capital projects including parks, trails, and open space in the form of general obligation (GO) bonds.¹² GO bonds may be used for land acquisition, including purchasing conservation easements. Acquiring land or an interest in land is a permissible capital cost associated with park, conservation, rural lands, and other projects and public programs. The state statutes do not place specific limits on the amount of debt that can be incurred by a community but do limit the duration of the bonds to a period not exceeding 40 years. When bonds have been issued, the governing body must levy annually a tax upon taxable property in the jurisdiction sufficient to pay the debt service and interest on the bonds.¹³

Bond expenditures are limited to capital projects and may not be used for operations and maintenance purposes. Federal regulations governing the issuance of tax-exempt bonds limit the use of proceeds to capital purposes such that only a small fraction (up to 5 percent) of bond funds may be used for maintenance or operations directly related to the funded facilities.¹⁴ State and local laws may further limit the use of bond proceeds.

Debt instruments provide several advantages over pay-as-you-go funding, including the opportunity to make significant land acquisitions and investments in the near term, presumably before the price of land increases. If land prices are increasing faster than the annual interest rate, bonding can be a smart fiscal choice and can help save critical habitat from development. In addition, current and future residents share costs. County bonds for parks, recreation, and natural lands conservation have seen widespread support from voters throughout the state. In 2020, Manatee County voters approved a \$50 million bond with 71 percent support.

As of the adoption of the FY26 Budget, Manatee County's outstanding debt totaled \$1,746,044,643, of which \$1,122,188,637 is principal and \$623,856,006 is interest. This includes \$33.9 million in outstanding general obligation bonds.¹⁵

Manatee County continues to demonstrate outstanding creditworthiness with credit ratings calculated by Moody's and Fitch. On August 18, 2022, Manatee County was rated by Fitch rating agency, which assured the county's strong credit rating of AAA for Ad Valorem Bonds and AA+ for Non-Ad Valorem Bonds. On August 20, 2024, Fitch Ratings upgraded Manatee County Revenue Improvement Bonds to AAA.¹⁶

Manatee County could consider issuing general obligation bonds for conservation. The table on the following page illustrates the estimated annual debt service, required property tax rate, and annual household cost of various general obligation bond issue amounts that could be considered by the county. For example, a \$100 million bond would add about \$7.7 million to the county's annual debt service and would cost approximately \$35 per year for the average homeowner over the life of the bond (20 years).

¹² Florida Constitution, Article VII, Section 12(a) and § 125.013, Florida Statutes..

¹³ §§ 125.013, 130.10, and 200.181, F.S..

¹⁴ Treas. Reg. §1.148-6(d)(3)(ii)(A)(5). This "general de minimis exception" applies to a small set of specific expenses, as follows:
(A) General de minimis exception. Paragraph (d)(3)(i) of this section does not apply to expenditures to pay -
(1) Any issuance costs of the issue or any qualified administrative costs within the meaning of §§ 1.148-5(e)(2) (i) or (ii), or § 1.148-5(e)(3)(ii)(A);
(2) Fees for qualified guarantees of the issue or payments for a qualified hedge for the issue;
(3) Interest on the issue for a period commencing on the issue date and ending on the date that is the later of three years from the issue date or one year after the date on which the project is placed in service;
(4) Amounts paid to the United States under §§ 1.148-3, 1.148-5(c), or 1.148-7 for the issue;
(5) Costs, other than those described in paragraphs (d)(3)(ii)(A) (1) through (4) of this section, that do not exceed 5 percent of the sale proceeds of an issue and that are directly related to capital expenditures financed by the issue (e.g., initial operating expenses for a new capital project) (emphasis added).

¹⁵ Manatee County Fiscal Year 2026 Adopted Budget

¹⁶ Manatee County Fiscal Year 2026 Adopted Budget

Manatee County Bond Financing Estimates						
Bond Issue	Interest Rate	Maturity (Years)	Annual Debt Service	Total Taxable Value*	Millage	Annual Cost for Average Home**
\$50,000,000	4.5%	20	\$3,843,807	\$69,918,074,695	0.0550	\$17
\$75,000,000	4.5%	20	\$5,765,711	\$69,918,074,695	0.0825	\$26
\$100,000,000	4.5%	20	\$7,687,614	\$69,918,074,695	0.1100	\$35
\$125,000,000	4.5%	20	\$9,609,518	\$69,918,074,695	0.1374	\$43
\$150,000,000	4.5%	20	\$11,531,422	\$69,918,074,695	0.1649	\$52
<i>*Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025</i>						
<i>**Average single family residential/condominium taxable value = \$314,813 (Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025)</i>						

Trust for Public Land’s bond cost calculations provide a basic estimate of debt service, tax increase, and cost to the typical homeowner in the community of potential bond issuances. Assumptions include the following: the entire debt amount is issued in the first year and payments are equal until maturity; 20-year maturity; and a conservative 4.5 percent interest rate. The property tax estimates assume that the jurisdiction would raise property taxes to pay the debt service on bonds. The cost per household represents the maximum estimated annual impact of increased property taxes levied to pay the debt service. The estimates do not take into account growth in the tax base due to new construction, annexation over the life of the bonds, or the possibility that the jurisdiction will sell bonds only as needed for specific projects, rather than all at once. The annual debt service and cost per household are the maximum tax impacts that could occur if the entire debt amount is issued at once. The jurisdiction’s officials, financial advisors, bond counsel and underwriters would establish the actual terms of any bond.

Implementation

The County Commission must call a referendum election prior to the issuance of bonds.¹⁷ There must be at least 30 days’ notice published in the local newspaper of general circulation.¹⁸ Bond elections may be held concurrently with any general or primary election or concurrently on the day of any election of a county, district, or municipality for any purpose other than the purpose of voting on such bonds.¹⁹ General elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each even numbered year.²⁰

Special elections may also be called after the supervisor of elections consents.²¹ In any special election or referendum not otherwise provided for there shall be at least 30 days’ notice of the election or referendum by publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the county. The publication shall be made at least twice, once in the fifth week and once in the third week prior to the week in which the election or referendum is to be held.²²

Ballot Language

For public measures submitted to voters, a summary must be printed in clear and unambiguous language on the ballot following the list of candidates. The summary shall be an explanatory statement of the chief purpose of the measure, not exceeding 75 words in length, and must be followed by the word “yes” (to indicate approval) and the word “no” (to indicate rejection). The ballot title shall consist of a caption, not exceeding 15 words in length, by which the measure is commonly referred to or spoken of.²³

Bond referendum ballot - The ballots used in bond referenda shall include a printed description of the issuance of bonds to be voted on as prescribed by the authority calling the referendum. A separate statement of each issue of bonds to be approved, giving the amount of the bonds and interest rate

¹⁷ §§100.201 and 100.211, F.S.

¹⁸ §100.342, F.S.

¹⁹ §100.261, F.S.

²⁰ §100.031, F.S.

²¹ §100.151, F.S.

²² §100.342, F.S.

²³ §101.161, F.S.

thereon, together with other details necessary to inform the electors, shall be printed on the ballots in connection with the question “For Bonds” and “Against Bonds.”²⁴

In addition, county and municipal bond measures in Florida must abide by the “single subject” rule, such that funding for distinct purposes must appear as separate questions on the ballot unless they are sufficiently related.²⁵

Ballot Language Examples

Lake County, November 2024, Passed, 80% Yes

Clean Water Protection, Overdevelopment Prevention, Natural Area Preservation, Parks And Trails General Obligation Bond Referendum

To acquire and improve land to protect drinking water sources; preserve natural areas; protect open space from overdevelopment; provide parks and trails; improve the water quality of rivers and lakes; protect springs; and establish a citizen oversight committee with full public disclosure of spending, shall Lake County be authorized to issue unlimited general obligation bonds maturing within 20 years, not exceeding the legal maximum interest rate, not exceeding \$50,000,000 payable from ad valorem taxes?

Indian River County, November 2022, Passed, 78% Yes

Acquire Lands To Protect Water Resources, The Indian River Lagoon, Natural Areas, And Wildlife Habitat

To acquire and permanently preserve environmentally significant lands to restore the Indian River Lagoon, protect water resources, natural areas, wildlife habitat, drinking water resources, and construct public access improvements related thereto, shall Indian River County be authorized to issue general obligation bonds up to \$50,000,000, maturing within 20 years from each issuance, not exceeding the legal maximum interest rate, payable from ad valorem taxes, with full public disclosure of all spending through annual independent audits?

Nassau County, November 2022, Passed, 68% Yes

NASSAU COUNTY GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS FOR LANDS TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND RIVERS

To acquire lands that improve water quality in rivers, creeks, and drinking water sources; protect natural areas, beaches and the St. Mary’s, Nassau and Amelia Rivers; reduce flooding, conserve wildlife habitat, and provide outdoor recreation, shall Nassau County be authorized to issue General Obligation Bonds, not exceeding maximum lawful interest rates, maturing within 30 years, not exceeding 30 million dollars payable from ad valorem taxes, with citizen oversight and full public disclosure of all spending?

Bonds with Additional Property Tax

A single ballot question may authorize bonding authority and a millage levy, the excess of which can be used for operations and maintenance. The portion of the voted millage necessary to pay debt service must be treated as debt service millage and the excess portion must be treated as general millage. The portion treated as general millage must be included within the millage levied under the county or municipal 10-mill limitation.

²⁴ §100.341, F.S.

²⁵ State v. Dade County, 39 So.2d 807 (1949); Winterfield v. Town of Palm Beach, 455 So.2d 359 (1984); State v. City of St. Augustine, 235 So.2d 1 (1970); Grapeland Heights Civic Ass’n v. City of Miami, 267 So.2d 321 (1972). The single-purpose rule was adopted by the Florida Supreme Court in Antuono v. City of Tampa, 87 Fla. 82, 99 So. 324 (1924). The rule was stated as follows: If there are two or more separate and distinct propositions to be voted on, each proposition should be stated separately and distinctly so that a voter may declare his opinion as to each matter separately, since several propositions cannot be united in one submission to the voters so as to call for one assenting or dissenting vote upon all the propositions; and elections are invalid where held under such restrictions as to prevent the voter from casting his individual and intelligent vote upon the object or objects sought to be obtained.

The statutory authority comes from F.S. 200.181:

“200.181 Bond payments; tax levies; restrictions.—

(1) None of the provisions of this chapter or of any other law, whether general, special or local or of the charter of any municipality or county, shall limit or restrict the rate or the amount of the ad valorem taxes levied for the payment of the principal of and the interest on any debt service whether secured by revenue certificates or by bonds for which the full faith and credit of any county, municipality or taxing district may be pledged, and such taxes shall be in addition to all other taxes authorized or limited by law.

(2) Nothing in this section shall prevent any municipality, county or school board from levying at least 5 mills of ad valorem tax during any fiscal year.

(3) A county or municipality may levy voted millage at the maximum millage rate approved by referendum even if the levy would raise revenue in excess of that necessary for debt service as authorized by a vote of the electors pursuant to s. 12, Art. VII of the State Constitution. The county or municipality may use the surplus revenue for any lawful purpose solely related to the capital project for which the voted millage was approved, including operations and maintenance. For purposes of this chapter, the portion of the voted millage necessary to pay debt service must be treated as debt service millage and the excess portion must be treated as general millage. The portion treated as general millage must be included within the millage levied under the county or municipal 10-mill limitation.”

The table below illustrates the revenue and bonding potential from a mill levy. For example, a 0.15 mill levy would generate approximately \$10.5 million annually at a cost of roughly \$47 a year to the average home in the county. A \$100 million bond with a 20-year maturity would require roughly \$7.7 million of this annual revenue stream for debt service, leaving about \$2.8 million per year to support operations and maintenance for the bond projects.

Manatee County Property Tax and Bond Financing Estimates								
Millage	Total Taxable Value*	Annual Revenue	Annual Cost for Average Home**	Bond Issue	Interest Rate	Maturity (Years)	Annual Debt Service	Remaining Annual Revenue
0.15	\$69,918,074,695	\$10,487,711	\$47	\$50,000,000	4.5%	20	\$3,843,807	\$6,643,904
				\$75,000,000	4.5%	20	\$5,765,711	\$4,722,000
				\$100,000,000	4.5%	20	\$7,687,614	\$2,800,097
				\$125,000,000	4.5%	20	\$9,609,518	\$878,193
<i>*Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025</i>								
<i>**Average single family residential/condominium taxable value = \$314,813 (Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025)</i>								

Manatee County voters approved a combined bond and property tax in November 2020 with 71 percent support. The measure included authority to levy 0.15 mills and issue \$50 million in general obligation bonds. The county began collecting the 0.15 mills in FY2023. On November 8, 2023, the county issued a \$35 million general obligation bond. On March 25, 2025, the board approved the CFO to initiate the process towards issuing the remaining \$15 million.²⁶ The county has purchased approximately 306 acres of land for conservation through this program.

To renew the funding, the county would need to approve both a new property tax levy and a new bond. The capital project at issue (and as referenced in §200.181(3), F.S.) is a multi-parcel, multi-year conservation land acquisition program approved by Manatee County voters. The scope of that "project" is controlled by the referendum language and the approved financing terms. The statutes do not support treating a single voted capital project as an indefinite authorization for continuous future land acquisition beyond the duration, bond amount, and project description approved by the electorate.

²⁶ Environmental Lands Financial Summary May 2025

Section 200.181, Florida Statutes, provides that: “The county or municipality may use the surplus revenue for any lawful purpose **solely related to the capital project for which the voted millage was approved**, including operations and maintenance.”

Accordingly, the millage approved in 2020 may be used only for the projects financed by the \$50 million in bonds that were authorized in the same ballot question. If the county were to approve a new bond measure without also approving a new millage, the 2020 millage could not be applied to those newly authorized projects.

Ballot Language Examples

Polk County, November 2022, Passed, 58% Yes

ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOND REFERENDUM

To acquire, preserve, protect, manage, or restore water resources, environmental lands, important fish and wildlife habitat and historic preservation, shall Polk County levy an additional 0.20 mill ad valorem tax and issue bonds payable therefrom in one or more series in an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$75 million, excluding previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing no later than 20 years from date of issuance of such bonds, bearing interest not exceeding the maximum lawful rate?

Manatee County, November 2020, Passed, 71% Yes

Water Quality Protection, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Preservation, and Park Ad Valorem Tax and Bonds

To finance the acquisition, improvement, and management of land to protect drinking water sources and water quality, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, prevent stormwater runoff pollution, and provide parks, shall Manatee County levy an additional 0.15 mill ad valorem tax and issue general obligation bonds in a total principal amount not exceeding \$50,000,000, maturing within 20 years, bearing interest not exceeding the legal rate, payable from such ad valorem taxes, with annual public audits?

Flagler County, November 2008, Passed, 65% Yes

Clean Water and Environmentally Sensitive Land Preservation

To continue to acquire and improve land to protect drinking water sources, preserve wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive lands, reduce risk of wildfires, improve water quality of lakes, streams and the Intracoastal Waterway, and seek matching funds, shall Flagler County be authorized to levy 0.25 mill ad valorem tax for twenty years and issue bonds not exceeding \$40 Million at interest rates not exceeding the legal maximum, subject to an annual independent audit?

Property Tax

Ad valorem taxes, commonly referred to as property taxes, are the single most important revenue source for local governments in Florida, funding schools and many other locally provided government services. Property taxes are levied by counties, municipalities, schools, and various special taxing authorities such as water management and fire districts. In FY26, property taxes represent \$463 million, or 34 percent of the overall sources of revenue for Manatee County’s budget.²⁷

The “general county millage” is set by the governing body of the local taxing authority.²⁸ Cities, counties, and school districts are subject to a constitutional limit of 10 mills each for operating purposes.²⁹ Exceptions include “debt service millage” and a “voted millage” not to exceed a period of two years. In addition, the maximum tax levy allowed by a majority vote of the governing body is based on the rate of growth in per capita personal income in Florida. Ad valorem taxes may be increased at a greater rate only with a super majority or unanimous vote of the local government governing body or a vote of the electorate.³⁰

The state’s Truth in Millage (TRIM) law provides the process for local government officials to adopt new property tax millage rates and mandates that the starting point is the rolled-back rate. This is the millage rate that would raise the same amount of property tax revenue in the jurisdiction as the previous year, when applied to the new tax roll (minus new construction). If the governing board proposes a millage rate that exceeds the rolled-back rate—even if the proposed rate is the same or lower than the current rate--it must advertise a Notice of Proposed Tax Increase.

Manatee County’s FY26 millage is 6.0326. This includes the 0.15 mills for Environmental Lands. The county’s current property tax rate is below the Constitutional limit of 10 mills, so, with regard to that limit, the county has room to utilize property taxes to fund land conservation. The table below illustrates the revenue and cost of various millage amounts. For example, based on the county’s total taxable value of \$69.9 billion for 2025, an additional 0.15 millage would generate approximately \$10.5 million annually at a cost of \$47 per year for the average home.

Manatee County Property Tax Estimates			
Millage	Total Taxable Value*	Annual Revenue	Annual Cost for Average Home**
0.05	\$69,918,074,695	\$3,495,904	\$16
0.10	\$69,918,074,695	\$6,991,807	\$31
0.15	\$69,918,074,695	\$10,487,711	\$47
0.20	\$69,918,074,695	\$13,983,615	\$63
0.25	\$69,918,074,695	\$17,479,519	\$79
<i>*Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025</i>			
<i>**Average single family residential/condominium taxable value = \$314,813 (Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025)</i>			

A property tax levy for conservation is relatively easy to implement. Under Florida law, a majority vote of the County Commission is all that is necessary; a referendum is not required to allocate county property tax funds for conservation purposes. Use of the funds is flexible; they can be used both for land conservation and for ongoing stewardship of conservation lands or operations and maintenance of parks.

However, the property tax millage increase may not provide a large pool of capital funding up front to facilitate the acquisition of conservation land. Perhaps most importantly, funds from the property tax may not be truly dedicated. While voter approval of an increase could certainly support the county’s adoption of an ordinance dedicating proceeds to conservation purposes, millage set by a **non-required**

²⁷ Manatee County FY2026 Budget

²⁸ §200.001(1)(a), F.S.

²⁹ Florida Constitution, Article VII, Section 9(a) and §200.071(1), F.S.

³⁰ §§200.065(5) and 200.071, F.S..

referendum is not “voted millage.”³¹ Therefore, even if approved by the voters, future Board of County Commissioners could vote to alter or eliminate either the implementing ordinance or the property tax itself.

Implementation³²

Taxing authorities hold public hearings to adopt a budget and levy a millage rate to fund the budget. At their first hearing (also called the tentative hearing), taxing authorities may amend their tentative budget and recalculate the millage rate. Additionally, at this hearing, the taxing authority must publicly announce the percentage (if any) by which the recalculated rate exceeds the rolled-back millage rate.

If the first public hearing does not result in an adopted tentative budget and millage rate to fund the budget, taxing authorities recess the hearing and notify the public of the continued hearing date(s). The hearing continuation process may repeat until the tentative budget and millage rate are adopted.

Next, taxing authorities hold final hearings to approve the budget and levy a millage rate to fund the budget two to five days after their public advertisement appears. The approval threshold for the taxing authority varies. The requirements are:

- A simple majority for millage rates equal to the rolled-back millage rate
- 2/3 approval for millage rates up to 110 percent of the rolled-back millage rate
- Unanimous approval or a referendum for millage rates that exceed statutory maximum millage limits

The final adopted millage rate cannot be higher than the millage rate printed on the TRIM notice. See Appendix B for more information about the implementation process and important dates.

For public measures submitted to voters to exceed a county’s statutory maximum millage limits, a summary must be printed in clear and unambiguous language on the ballot following the list of candidates. The summary shall be an explanatory statement of the chief purpose of the measure, not exceeding 75 words in length, and must be followed by the word “yes” (to indicate approval) and the word “no” (to indicate rejection). The ballot title shall consist of a caption, not exceeding 15 words in length, by which the measure is commonly referred to or spoken of.³³

Lee County Conservation 20/20

Lee County’s Conservation 20/20 program was established in 1996 through a voter referendum and reaffirmed at the ballot box in 2016, receiving 84 percent majority support from Lee County voters. Conservation 20/20 manages 49 preserves comprising 31,437 acres spread throughout Lee County.

In the early 1990s Lee County had the lowest percentage of conservation lands of all counties on Florida’s Gulf Coast – only 10 percent. With the help of 20/20 acquisitions, publicly owned conservation lands in Lee County are close to 19 percent.

OFFICIAL BALLOT	
CONSERVATION 2020 NON-BINDING REFERENDUM TO ACQUIRE AND MANAGE LANDS CRITICAL TO LEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENT.	
DO YOU APPROVE LEE COUNTY PURCHASING AND MANAGING CONSERVATION LANDS CRITICAL FOR WATER SUPPLY, FLOOD PROTECTION, OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT AND PASSIVE RECREATION BY THE COUNTY LEVYING AN AD VALOREM TAX OF UP TO 0.50 (½) MIL ANNUALLY FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED SEVEN (7) YEARS; PURSUANT TO LEE COUNTY ORDINANCE 96-12?	
YES - FOR	_____
NO - AGAINST	_____

³¹ A referendum that a county chooses to hold for a within-cap tax is not automatically a binding “voted millage” referendum, because such a referendum is not required by law. See Section 200.001(8)(f). Instead, such a referendum is more akin to a straw ballot by which the county may “obtain an expression of elector sentiment with respect to matters of substantial concern.” §125.01(1)(y), F.S.

³² <https://floridarevenue.com/property/Documents/PTSDetail.pdf>

³³ §101.161, F.S..

A property tax levy for conservation is relatively easy to implement. Under Florida law, a majority vote of the County Commission is all that is necessary; a referendum is not required to allocate county property tax funds for conservation purposes. Use of the funds is flexible; they can be used both for land conservation and for ongoing stewardship of conservation lands or operations and maintenance of parks.

On the other hand, the property tax millage increase may not provide a large pool of capital funding up front to facilitate the acquisition of conservation land. Perhaps most importantly, funds from the property tax may not be truly dedicated if the Board of Commissioners decides not to impose the levy.

Ballot Language Examples

Collier County, November 2020, Passed, 76% Yes

Reestablish funding for Conservation Collier to protect water quality, water resources, and wildlife habitat

Shall Collier County reestablish the levy of a .25 mil ad valorem tax for 10 years for the purpose of continuing to acquire, preserve and manage environmentally sensitive lands, and provide compatible public access wherever applicable to such lands, for the protection of water quality, water resources, wildlife habitat, and public open space in perpetuity?

Sarasota County, November 2005, Passed, 80% Yes

Continue Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program Ad Valorem Tax and Expand Program to Add Neighborhood Parkland

Shall the existing environmentally sensitive lands program ad valorem tax not-to-exceed 0.25 mill, authorized through December 31, 2019, be continued for ten years through December 31, 2029, and the program expanded to include not only the acquisition, protection and management of environmentally sensitive lands, but also the acquisition and management of neighborhood green space for conservation and public recreation?

Sales Tax

The State of Florida charges a 6 percent tax rate on the sale or rental of goods, with some exceptions such as groceries and medicine. Sales tax in Manatee County is currently 7 percent. The county levies a local government infrastructure surtax of 0.5 percent, which will expire in 2031, and a school capital outlay surtax of 0.5 percent, which will expire in 2032. The infrastructure surtax may be levied at 0.5 or 1 percent, and Manatee County could increase its local government infrastructure surtax to 1 percent. Revenues can be used to acquire land for public recreation, conservation, or protection of natural resources. Revenues may not be used for operations and maintenance.

In November 2016, Manatee voters approved the half-cent sales tax for infrastructure with 56.8 percent support. The half-cent infrastructure sales tax took effect on January 1, 2017. Funding will be spent on local projects based on the following percentages:

- 70.7 percent of the funding for transportation;
- 15.2 percent for public safety and law enforcement;
- 14.1 percent for parks and community facilities.³⁴

The Citizens Advisory Committee on Infrastructure Sales Tax oversees the related sales tax expenditures each year and reports to the Board of County Commissioners on whether actual or planned expenditures are consistent with the subcategories and percentages provided in the infrastructure sales tax funding categories list.³⁵

Manatee County could increase the infrastructure tax to 1 percent. The Florida Department of Revenue's Office of Tax Research estimates that a 1 percent infrastructure sales tax increase could generate more than \$101 million per year countywide. This revenue would be shared with the municipalities, leaving approximately \$86 million for Manatee County government.³⁶ The revenues could be used for parks, conservation, and protection of natural resources. Trust for Public Land estimates this tax would cost the median household \$180 per year (an increase of \$90) and spending by residents would account for 31 percent of the revenues. The remaining revenues would come from visitor and business spending.

Manatee County Sales Tax Estimates				
Tax Rate	Annual Revenue*	Annual Cost for Median Household	Total Revenue Attributed to Resident Spending	% Revenue Attributed to Resident Spending
1.0%	\$101,988,186	\$180	\$31,894,191	31%
<i>*The Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2025 Local Government Financial Information Handbook, page 167</i>				

Counties are required to share revenues of a local infrastructure surtax with municipalities. The table on the following page estimates what the county and each of the municipalities would receive from a 1 percent infrastructure surtax, according to the default formula.³⁷

³⁴ Manatee County Resolution R-18-130

³⁵ <https://www.mymanatee.org/government/government-information/advisory-boards/advisory-board-detail/citizens-oversight-committee-for-infrastructure-sales-tax-advisory-board>

³⁶ The Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2025 Local Government Financial Information Handbook, page 167

³⁷ The Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2025 Local Government Financial Information Handbook, page 167

indicate approval) and the word “no” (to indicate rejection). The ballot title shall consist of a caption, not exceeding 15 words in length, by which the measure is commonly referred to or spoken of.⁴⁰

Ballot Language Examples

Martin County, November 2024, Passed, 64% Yes

Lands to Protect Water Quality, Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitat One-Half Percent Sales Surtax

Shall Martin County protect its water quality and unique character by acquiring critical natural lands in Martin County within the Indian River Lagoon South, Pal-Mar, Loxahatchee and St. Lucie Headwaters, Blueways areas and provide municipal infrastructure allowed by law, by levying a one-half percent (0.5%) county sales tax for 10 years starting January 1, 2025 with annual audit and citizen oversight.

Alachua County, November 2022, Passed, 52% Yes

WILD SPACES PUBLIC PLACES, ROAD REPAIR, FIRE STATIONS, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ONE PERCENT SALES TAX

SHALL ALACHUA COUNTY: ACQUIRE AND IMPROVE LANDS FOR CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE HABITAT, WATER QUALITY, AND RECREATION; OPERATE AND MAINTAIN PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES; REPAIR ROADS AND IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY; CONSTRUCT AND RENOVATE FIRE STATIONS AND OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES; ACQUIRE LANDS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING; FUND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTE 212.055(2)(D)(3); PROVIDE CITIZEN OVERSIGHT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT; BY LEVYING A ONE PERCENT SALES SURTAX FOR TEN YEARS STARTING JANUARY 1, 2023?

Manatee County, November 2016, Passed, 57% Yes

HALF CENT SALES SURTAX FOR PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

To provide for safer neighborhoods, reduce traffic congestion, and improve roadways and public facilities, shall Manatee County levy a half cent sales surtax for a period of fifteen years to fund roadways, sidewalks, intersections, street lights, infrastructure for law enforcement, emergency response, libraries, parks, waterways, public buildings and stormwater, all projects located exclusively in Manatee County, with citizen oversight?

⁴⁰ §101.161, F.S.

Election Analysis

Election Results History

Election results can often be helpful in gauging voter support for capital projects and tolerance for public spending. The available financing options covered in this report require voter approval. As such, an examination of election history on similar fiscal questions can be instructive. Still, past election results are not necessarily indicative of current voter sentiment on public financing, nor on a particular proposal. Trust for Public Land recommends engaging a professional pollster to conduct a public opinion survey that tests ballot language, tax tolerance, and program priorities of Manatee County voters.

Voters in Manatee County have approved several fiscal-related ballot measures over the past decade of elections. Most recently, in November 2024, county voters approved both a 1 mill property tax renewal for schools, as well as an increase to the county’s tourist development tax. Manatee County voters approved the 2014 statewide Water and Land Conservation Initiative with 76 percent support.

Manatee County Election History		
Election Date	Description	% Yes Manatee County
11/5/2024	Manatee County School Board Referendum - 1 mill property tax renewal	83%
11/5/2024	Manatee County Tourist Development Tax Referendum - 1% increase to 6% total	68%
11/2/2021	Manatee County School Board Referendum - 1 mill property tax renewal	69%
11/3/2020	Florida Amendment 2, \$15 Minimum Wage Initiative	55%
11/3/2020	Manatee County \$50 million bond and 0.15 mill property tax for water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat preservation, and parks	71%
3/20/2018	Manatee County School Board Referendum - 1 mill property tax	51%
11/8/2016	Manatee County infrastructure half-cent sales tax	57%
11/8/2016	Manatee County school capital outlay half-cent sales tax	59%
11/4/2014	Florida Amendment 1, Water and Land Conservation Initiative	76%

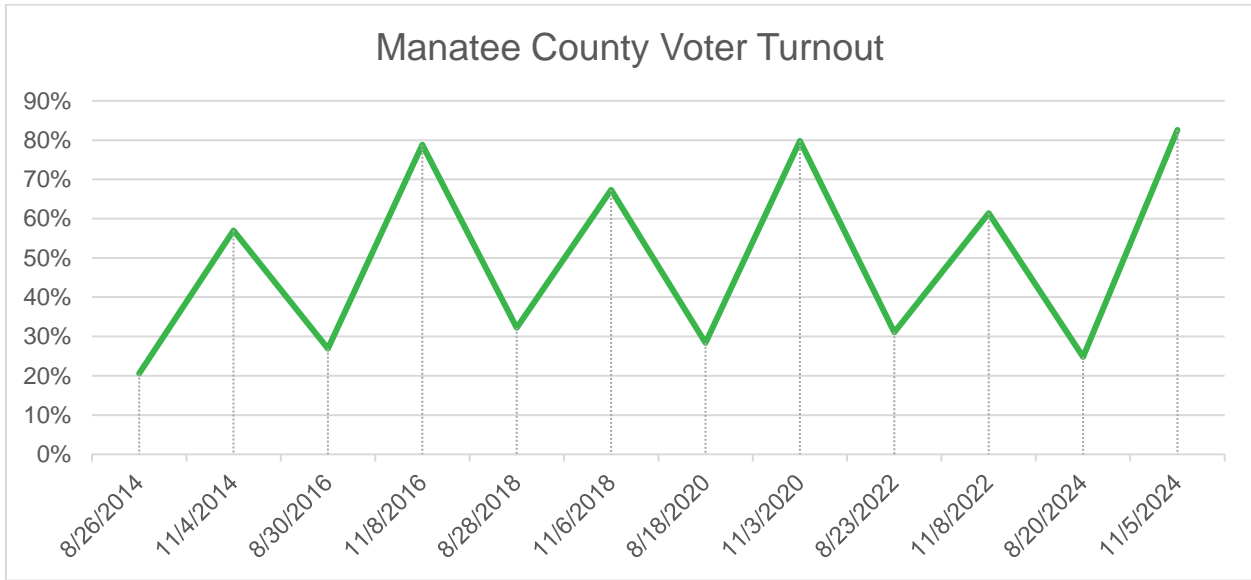
Voter Registration and Turnout

As of January 2026, Manatee County has 277,751 registered voters. Approximately 50 percent are registered as Republicans and 24 percent are registered as Democrats.

Manatee County Registered Voters		
Party	Voters	% of Total
Republican	137,876	50%
Other	73,433	26%
Democratic	66,442	24%
Total	277,751	100%

Source: Florida Division of Elections, as of January 31, 2026

The chart on the following page shows voter turnout for every election in Manatee County since 2014. Turnout is highest for presidential and midterm elections.



8/26/2014	11/4/2014	8/30/2016	11/8/2016	8/28/2018	11/6/2018	8/18/2020	11/3/2020	8/23/2022	11/8/2022	8/20/2024	11/5/2024
21%	57%	27%	79%	32%	67%	28%	80%	31%	61%	25%	83%

Upcoming Elections

The detailed 2026 election calendar is not available as of February 24, 2026, however the statewide general election will be held on November 3, 2026. Elections for the following federal and state offices will be on the November 2026 ballot: U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, (District 16), Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer, Commissioner of Agriculture, Florida State Senate (Districts 20 and 22), and Florida House of Representatives (Districts 70, 71, and 72). There will be four county commission seats (Districts 1, 2, and 4, and the At-Large seat currently held by Commissioner Bearden) on the ballot. As of February 24, 2026, two statewide ballot measures were certified for the ballot in Florida in 2026. One is a constitutional amendment that would increase the amount of funds that may be retained in the budget stabilization fund from 10 percent to 25 percent of net general revenue, and the other is a constitutional amendment that would exempt agricultural-related tangible personal property, such as farm equipment or tools, from property taxes.⁴¹

⁴¹ https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_2026_ballot_measures

Primary Election 2026	
Vote-by-Mail Ballot Send Deadline - UOCAVA Voters (Absent Stateside and Overseas Uniformed and Civilian Voters)(45 days before election) for requests already on file	July 4, 2026
Vote-by-Mail Ballot Send Deadline - Domestic Voters (7-day window) for requests already on file	July 9 - 16, 2026
Voter Registration Deadline (book closing)	July 20, 2026
Early Voting - Optional Days (A county may offer one or more of these early voting days)	August 3 - 7, 2026 and/or August 16, 2026
Deadline to Request that Ballot Be Mailed	August 6, 2026
Early Voting - Mandatory (8-day period)	August 8 -15, 2026
Primary Election Day	August 18, 2026
General Election 2026	
Vote-by-Mail Ballot Send Deadline - UOCAVA Voters (Absent Stateside and Overseas Uniformed and Civilian Voters)(no later than 45 days before election) for requests already on file	September 19, 2026
Vote-by-Mail Ballot Send Deadline - Domestic Voters (7-day window) for requests already on file	September 24 - October 1, 2026
Voter Registration Deadline (book closing)	October 5, 2026
Early Voting - Optional Days (A county may offer one or more of these early voting days)	October 19 - 23, 2026 and/or November 1, 2026
Deadline to Request that Ballot Be Mailed	October 22, 2026
Early Voting - Mandatory (8-day period)	October 24, 2026
General Election Day	November 3, 2026

Appendix A: Revenue Options Matrix

Revenue Options Summary			
Finance Mechanism	Description	Implementation	Comments
Bonds	Manatee County could issue bonds for land conservation. For example, a \$100 million bond would add about \$7.7 million to the county's annual debt service and would cost approximately \$35 per year for the average homeowner over the life of the bond (20 years).	Voter approval required.	<p>Bonds raise substantial amounts of money up front, allowing a jurisdiction to make acquisitions now while land is still available.</p> <p>May not be used for operations and maintenance unless an additional millage is included and approved.</p>
Bonds with additional property tax	In Florida, a single ballot question may authorize bonding authority and a millage levy, the excess of which can be used for operations and maintenance. For example, in Manatee County, a 0.15 mill levy would generate approximately \$10.5 million annually at a cost of roughly \$47 a year to the average home in the county. A \$100 million bond with a 20-year maturity would require roughly \$7.7 million of this annual revenue stream for debt service, leaving about \$2.8 million per year to support operations and maintenance for the bond projects.	Voter approval required. The measure can include additional millage for operations and maintenance.	<p>Costs would be spread out over a long-time horizon, and therefore borne by current and future beneficiaries.</p> <p>Interest increases the total cost.</p> <p>Bonds are typically repaid from property taxes, which are somewhat regressive (less equitable), although less regressive than sales taxes. The impact in Florida is mitigated to some extent by homestead exemptions.</p>
Property tax	Manatee County can levy property taxes for general governmental services. For example, based on the county's total taxable value of \$69.9 billion for 2025, an additional 0.15 millage would generate approximately \$10.5 million annually at a cost of \$47 per year for the average home.	Board of County Commissioners can increase millage or dedicate part of existing millage.	<p>Not necessarily a dedicated, perpetual funding source; future BOCC could decide not to levy. Must be approved by BOCC each year.</p> <p>Would require a pay-as-you-go approach to financing, or wait to save enough funds for a large project.</p> <p>Dedicating part of the existing millage could divert funding from other county programs, necessitating a decrease in services or need to generate additional funds from another source.</p> <p>Property taxes are usually somewhat regressive, although less regressive than sales taxes. The impact in Florida is mitigated to some extent by homestead exemptions.</p>
Sales tax	Manatee County could increase its infrastructure tax from 0.5 to 1 percent. A 1 percent infrastructure sales tax increase could generate more than \$101 million per year countywide. This revenue would be shared with the municipalities, leaving approximately \$86 million for Manatee County government. The revenues could be used for parks, conservation, and protection of natural resources. Trust for Public Land estimates this tax would cost the median household \$180 per year (an increase of \$90)	Voter approval required.	<p>Allows the county to collect revenues from visitors.</p> <p>Residents' spending on taxable goods would generate roughly 31 percent of sales tax collections; the remaining revenue would be attributable to visitors and commercial/business spending.</p> <p>Infrastructure sales tax funds may not be used for operations and maintenance.</p> <p>Sales tax revenues can fluctuate significantly with changing economic conditions.</p> <p>Sales taxes are generally considered to be more regressive (less equitable).</p>

Appendix B: Property Tax Dates

PROPERTY TAXES - IMPORTANT DATES

- **July 1**—Property Appraiser certifies property values to taxing authorities
- **August 2**—Taxing authorities notify PA of proposed millage, rolled-back rate, meetings
- **August 24**—PA mails Notice of Proposed Property Taxes (TRIM Notice) to taxpayers
- **September**—Budget and millage rate hearings
- **September 18**—Deadline for Value Adjustment Board petitions
- **October 10**—Taxing authorities finalize millage
- **November 1**—Tax Collector mails tax bills
- **April 1**—Unpaid taxes become delinquent and interest accrues⁴

⁴ Early pay discounts are available in November (4%), December (3%), January (2%), and February (1%).

Source: <https://floridataxwatch.org/>

Appendix C: Florida County Conservation Finance Measures

Florida County Conservation Finance Measures, 1996-present						
Jurisdiction Name	Election Date	Finance Mechanism	Total Funds Approved	Conservation Funds Approved	Status	% Yes
Alachua County	11/7/2000	Bond	\$29,000,000	\$29,000,000	Pass	61%
Alachua County	11/2/2004	Sales tax			Fail	49%
Alachua County	11/4/2008	Sales tax	\$40,000,000	\$20,000,000	Pass	51%
Alachua County	11/8/2016	Sales tax	\$119,200,000	\$41,918,061	Pass	60%
Alachua County	11/8/2022	Sales tax	\$491,147,150	\$245,573,575	Pass	52%
Brevard County	11/4/2003	Sales tax			Fail	35%
Brevard County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	Pass	69%
Brevard County	11/8/2022	Property tax	\$159,000,000	\$159,000,000	Pass	70%
Broward County	11/7/2000	Bond	\$400,000,000	\$200,000,000	Pass	74%
Charlotte County	11/7/2006	Bond	\$77,000,000	\$77,000,000	Pass	53%
Clay County	11/5/2024	Bond	\$45,000,000	\$45,000,000	Pass	73%
Collier County	11/5/1996	Sales tax			Fail	35%
Collier County	11/5/2002	Property tax	\$75,000,000	\$63,750,000	Pass	59%
Collier County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$40,000,000	\$40,000,000	Pass	73%
Collier County	11/7/2006	Property tax	\$123,000,000	\$123,000,000	Pass	82%
Collier County	11/3/2020	Property tax	\$287,000,000	\$287,000,000	Pass	76%
Escambia County	11/5/1996	Bond			Fail	49%
Flagler County	11/5/2002	Bond	\$6,700,000	\$6,700,000	Pass	74%
Flagler County	11/4/2008	Property tax	\$40,000,000	\$40,000,000	Pass	65%
Hillsborough County	11/4/2008	Bond	\$200,000,000	\$200,000,000	Pass	79%
Indian River County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000	Pass	67%
Indian River County	11/8/2022	Bond	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000	Pass	78%
Jacksonville	9/5/2000	Sales tax	\$2,200,000,000	\$50,000,000	Pass	57%
Lake County	11/6/2001	Sales tax	\$30,000,000	\$15,000,000	Pass	63%
Lake County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$36,000,000	\$36,000,000	Pass	71%
Lake County	11/5/2024	Bond	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000	Pass	80%
Lee County	11/5/1996	Property tax	\$119,000,000	\$119,000,000	Pass	54%
Lee County	11/8/2016	Other			Pass	84%
Leon County	11/7/2000	Sales tax	\$728,000,000	\$400,000,000	Pass	60%
Manatee County	3/9/2004	Sales tax			Fail	48%
Manatee County	11/3/2020	Property tax	\$108,000,000	\$108,000,000	Pass	71%
Martin County	3/12/1996	Sales tax	\$12,100,000	\$3,630,000	Pass	52%
Martin County	3/12/1996	Bond	\$7,700,000	\$7,700,000	Pass	57%
Martin County	11/3/1998	Sales tax	\$27,189,522	\$19,056,954	Pass	51%
Martin County	11/2/2004	Sales tax			Fail	48%
Martin County	11/7/2006	Sales tax	\$60,000,000	\$30,000,000	Pass	55%
Martin County	11/5/2024	Sales tax	\$183,000,000	\$183,000,000	Pass	64%
Miami-Dade County	11/5/1996	Bond	\$200,000,000	\$25,000,000	Pass	67%
Miami-Dade County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$680,258,000	\$90,000,000	Pass	66%
Miami-Dade County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$255,070,000	\$30,000,000	Pass	58%
Miami-Dade County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$552,692,000	\$10,000,000	Pass	65%
Nassau County	11/8/2022	Bond	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000	Pass	68%
Osceola County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	Pass	67%
Osceola County	11/5/2024	Bond	\$70,000,000	\$70,000,000	Pass	84%
Palm Beach County	3/9/1999	Bond	\$150,000,000	\$150,000,000	Pass	66%
Palm Beach County	11/5/2002	Bond	\$50,000,000	\$6,000,000	Pass	62%
Palm Beach County	11/2/2004	Bond	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000	Pass	68%
Pasco County	3/9/2004	Sales tax	\$145,500,000	\$36,375,000	Pass	52%
Pasco County	11/6/2012	Sales tax	\$502,000,000	\$45,180,000	Pass	70%
Pasco County	11/8/2022	Sales tax	\$700,000,000	\$140,000,000	Pass	65%

Pinellas County	3/25/1997	Sales tax	\$1,138,203,470	\$81,856,690	Pass	65%
Pinellas County	3/13/2007	Sales tax	\$1,437,000,000	\$75,123,000	Pass	57%
Pinellas County	11/7/2017	Sales tax	\$2,000,000,000	\$64,000,000	Pass	83%
Polk County	11/2/2004	Property tax			Fail	48%
Polk County	11/8/2022	Property tax	\$200,000,000	\$200,000,000	Pass	58%
Sarasota County	11/4/1997	Sales tax	\$513,200,000		Pass	61%
Sarasota County	3/16/1999	Property tax	\$104,171,020	\$93,753,920	Pass	65%
Sarasota County	3/16/1999	Bond			Pass	68%
Sarasota County	11/8/2005	Property tax	\$170,000,000	\$170,000,000	Pass	80%
Sarasota County	11/8/2005	Bond			Pass	78%
Sarasota County	11/6/2018	Bond	\$65,000,000	\$30,100,000	Pass	71%
Seminole County	11/7/2000	Bond	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	Pass	58%
Seminole County	11/7/2006	Property tax			Fail	49%
Seminole County	11/5/2024	Sales tax			Pass	73%
St. Johns County	11/3/1998	Sales tax			Fail	44%
St. Johns County	11/4/2008	Sales tax			Fail	45%
St. Lucie County	11/5/2002	Property tax	\$56,900,000	\$2,200,000	Pass	52%
Volusia County	11/7/2000	Property tax	\$89,000,000	\$89,000,000	Pass	61%
Volusia County	11/7/2000	Bond	\$82,000,000	\$4,000,000	Pass	57%
Volusia County	11/3/2020	Property tax	\$146,781,980	\$146,781,980	Pass	76%

Source: Trust for Public Land's LandVote Database, www.landvote.org

With any questions or for more information please contact:

Will Abberger

Vice President

Director, Conservation Finance

Trust for Public Land

Will.Abberger@tpl.org

or

Jessica Welch

Senior Conservation Research Analyst II

Trust for Public Land

Jessica.Welch@tpl.org



TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND®

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

tpl.org



Manatee County, Florida Conservation Finance Feasibility Study

Jessica Welch, Senior Conservation Research Analyst II, Conservation Finance
Will Abberger, Vice President and Director, Conservation Finance

Manatee County Environmental Lands Management and Acquisition
Advisory Committee

May 5, 2026

We Believe Everyone Should
Have Access to the Outdoors

We create parks and protect
land for people, ensuring
healthy, livable communities
for generations to come.



What is the Trust for Public Land's Conservation Finance Program?

We create and protect new public funding for land conservation, parks, and restoration through the research, design, and passage of ballot measures and legislation and serve as thought leaders in the field.





OUR TRACK RECORD

Across the country, Trust for Public Land has demonstrated deep expertise and a strong track record of success.

682

WINS

84%

PASSAGE RATE

OVER

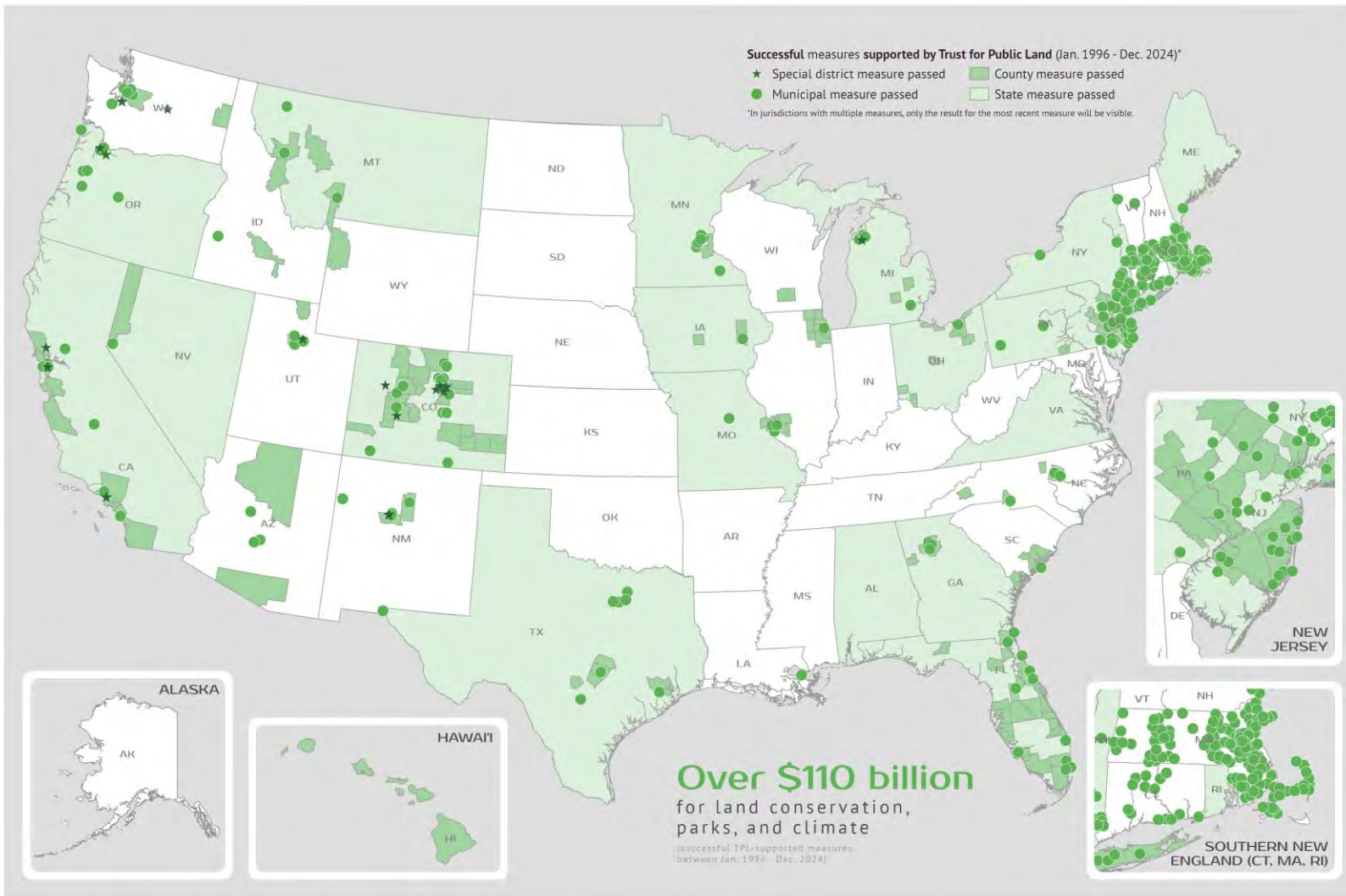
175 million

“YES” VOTES

\$112 Billion

CREATED





Over 25 years of conservation finance

SUCCESSFUL STATE, COUNTY, MUNICIPAL, AND SPECIAL DISTRICT MEASURES SUPPORTED BY TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND (1996-2024)

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TPL Ballot Measures in Florida: 45 of 52 of (87%)

Jurisdiction Name	Date	Mechanism	Result	% Yes	Funds Approved
Clay County	11-05-2024	Bond	Pass	73%	\$45,000,000
Lake County	11-05-2024	Bond	Pass	80%	\$50,000,000
Martin County	11-05-2024	Sale tax	Pass	64%	\$183,000,000
Osceola County	11-05-2024	Bond	Pass	84%	\$70,000,000
Indian River County	11-08-2022	Bond	Pass	78%	\$50,000,000
Alachua County	11-08-2022	Sales tax	Pass	52%	\$245,573,575
Nassau County	11-08-2022	Bond	Pass	68%	\$30,000,000
Polk County	11-08-2022	Property tax	Pass	58%	\$200,000,000
Miami Lakes	11-08-2022	Bond	Fail	41%	\$0
Brevard County	11-08-2022	Property tax	Pass	70%	\$159,000,000
Collier County	11-03-2020	Property tax	Pass	76%	\$287,000,000
Volusia County	11-03-2020	Property tax	Pass	76%	\$146,781,980
Volusia County	11-03-2020	Property tax	Pass	72%	\$146,781,980
Manatee County	11-03-2020	Property tax	Pass	71%	\$108,000,000
Sarasota County	11-06-2018	Bond	Pass	71%	\$65,000,000
Doral	11-06-2018	Bond	Pass	53%	\$150,000,000
Cape Coral	11-06-2018	Bond	Pass	54%	\$60,000,000
New Smyrna Beach	11-06-2018	Bond	Pass	75%	\$15,000,000

*Since 2018

Manatee County Results by Precinct

County Commission Districts Precincts

Registered Voters: 273,427
 Ballots Cast: 218,317
 Voter Turnout: 79.84%

	Election Day	EV	Mail	Total	%
Donald J. Trump (REP)	28,849	48,797	47,341	124,987	57.47%
Joseph R. Biden (DEM)	10,767	22,940	56,459	90,166	41.46%
For Bonds (NPA)	24,002	43,542	74,563	142,107	71.34%
Against Bonds (NPA)	12,288	22,177	22,627	57,092	28.66%

Uncontested Race for At-Large County Commissioner

District 1

For Bonds: 35,480 67.65%
 Against Bonds: 16,965 32.35%

Manatee County Technical Assistance Request



Manatee County Administration
1112 Manatee Avenue W
Bradenton, FL 34205
Phone: (941) 748-4501
Mymantee.org

January 6, 2026

Will Abberger
Vice President, Director, Conservation Finance
Trust for Public Land
1834 Hermitage Blvd., Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Mr. Abberger:

The Manatee County Board of County Commissioners request technical advice and assistance from Trust for Public Land in connection with our efforts to develop and sustain reliable, ongoing sources of funding for land and water conservation.

As part of your advice and assistance, I understand you may provide feasibility research, conduct a public opinion survey and develop strategies for our consideration in increasing dedicated, ongoing sources of public funds for land conservation and parks.

Key Steps for Successful Ballot Measures

Feasibility Research



Public Opinion Survey



Program Recommendations



Ballot Language



Campaign

Step 1: Feasibility Research

Finance options

Conservation priorities

Fiscal capacity

Election requirements

Ballot language requirements

Pathways to ballot

Best practices

Election history

Manatee County Feasibility Study



DRAFT

Manatee County, FL

Conservation Finance Feasibility Study
March 2026



Manatee County Feasibility Study – Table of Contents

Introduction

Executive Summary

Overview (Demographics, Governance, Financials, Environmental Lands Program)

Choosing a Local Funding Strategy

- Bonds
- Bonds with Additional Property Tax
- Property Tax
- Sales Tax

Election Analysis (Election Results History, Voter Registration and Turnout, Upcoming Elections)

Appendices (Revenue Options Matrix, Property Tax Dates, Florida Conservation Finance Measures)

Bonds

Manatee County Bond Financing Estimates						
Bond Issue	Interest Rate	Maturity (Years)	Annual Debt Service	Total Taxable Value*	Millage	Annual Cost for Average Home**
\$50,000,000	4.5%	20	\$3,843,807	\$69,918,074,695	0.0550	\$17
\$75,000,000	4.5%	20	\$5,765,711	\$69,918,074,695	0.0825	\$26
\$100,000,000	4.5%	20	\$7,687,614	\$69,918,074,695	0.1100	\$35
\$125,000,000	4.5%	20	\$9,609,518	\$69,918,074,695	0.1374	\$43
\$150,000,000	4.5%	20	\$11,531,422	\$69,918,074,695	0.1649	\$52
*Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025						
**Average single family residential/condominium taxable value = \$314,813 (Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025)						

Bond with Additional Property Tax

Manatee County Property Tax and Bond Financing Estimates

Millage	Total Taxable Value*	Annual Revenue	Annual Cost for Average Home**	Bond Issue	Interest Rate	Maturity (Years)	Annual Debt Service	Remaining Annual Revenue
0.15	\$69,918,074,695	\$10,487,711	\$47	\$50,000,000	4.5%	20	\$3,843,807	\$6,643,904
				\$75,000,000	4.5%	20	\$5,765,711	\$4,722,000
				\$100,000,000	4.5%	20	\$7,687,614	\$2,800,097
				\$125,000,000	4.5%	20	\$9,609,518	\$878,193

*Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025
 **Average single family residential/condominium taxable value = \$314,813 (Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025)



Property Tax

Manatee County Property Tax Estimates			
Millage	Total Taxable Value*	Annual Revenue	Annual Cost for Average Home**
0.05	\$69,918,074,695	\$3,495,904	\$16
0.10	\$69,918,074,695	\$6,991,807	\$31
0.15	\$69,918,074,695	\$10,487,711	\$47
0.20	\$69,918,074,695	\$13,983,615	\$63
0.25	\$69,918,074,695	\$17,479,519	\$79
<i>*Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025</i>			
<i>**Average single family residential/condominium taxable value = \$314,813 (Florida Department of Revenue Ad Valorem Valuation and Tax Data Book, Parcel Count Report, 2025)</i>			

Sales Tax

Manatee County Sales Tax Estimates				
Tax Rate	Annual Revenue*	Annual Cost for Median Household	Total Revenue Attributed to Resident Spending	% Revenue Attributed to Resident Spending
1.0%	\$101,988,186	\$180	\$31,894,191	31%

**The Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2025 Local Government Financial Information Handbook, page 167*

Other Potential 2026 Conservation Finance Measures

Jurisdiction	Election Date	On Ballot	Finance Mechanism	Amount
Bonita Springs, FL	Aug. 18	Yes	Bond	\$35 million
Brevard County, FL	Nov. 3		Sales tax	\$670 million
Charlotte County, FL	Nov. 3		Bond	
Highlands County, FL	Nov. 3		Bond	\$30 million
Marion County, FL	Nov. 3			
St. Johns County, FL	Nov. 3			
Santa Rosa County	Nov. 3	Yes	Sales tax	\$14 million
Sarasota County	Nov. 3	Yes	Bond	\$250 million

Next Step – Public Opinion Survey

- Methodology: random, sample, voters, telephone
- Why poll?
 - reality test
 - perspective
 - messages and messengers
- Polling goals
 - affordable proposal
 - compelling purposes
 - accountability provisions

Questions?

Will Abberger

Vice President, Conservation Finance

Trust for Public Land

M: 850-294-2006

Will.abberger@tpl.org

Or

Jessica Welch

Senior Conservation Research Analyst II

Trust for Public Land

Jessica.Welch@tpl.org