



# Community Engagement Meeting

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INITIAL FIRE RESCUE ASSESSMENT

# This presentation will review the following:

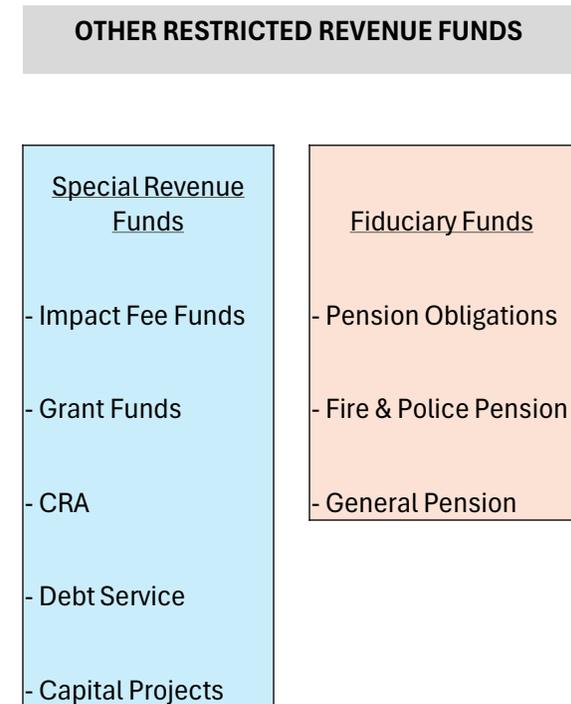
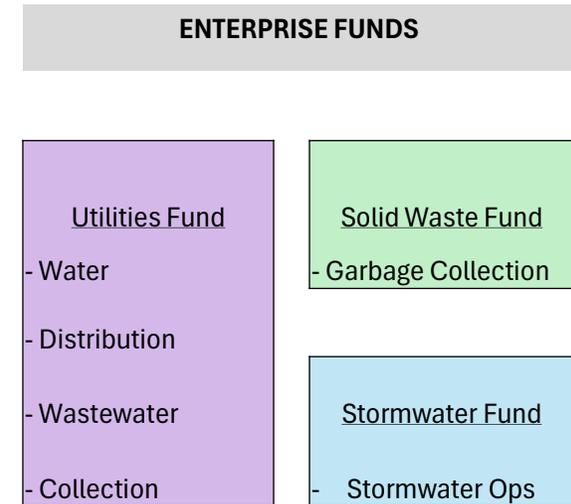
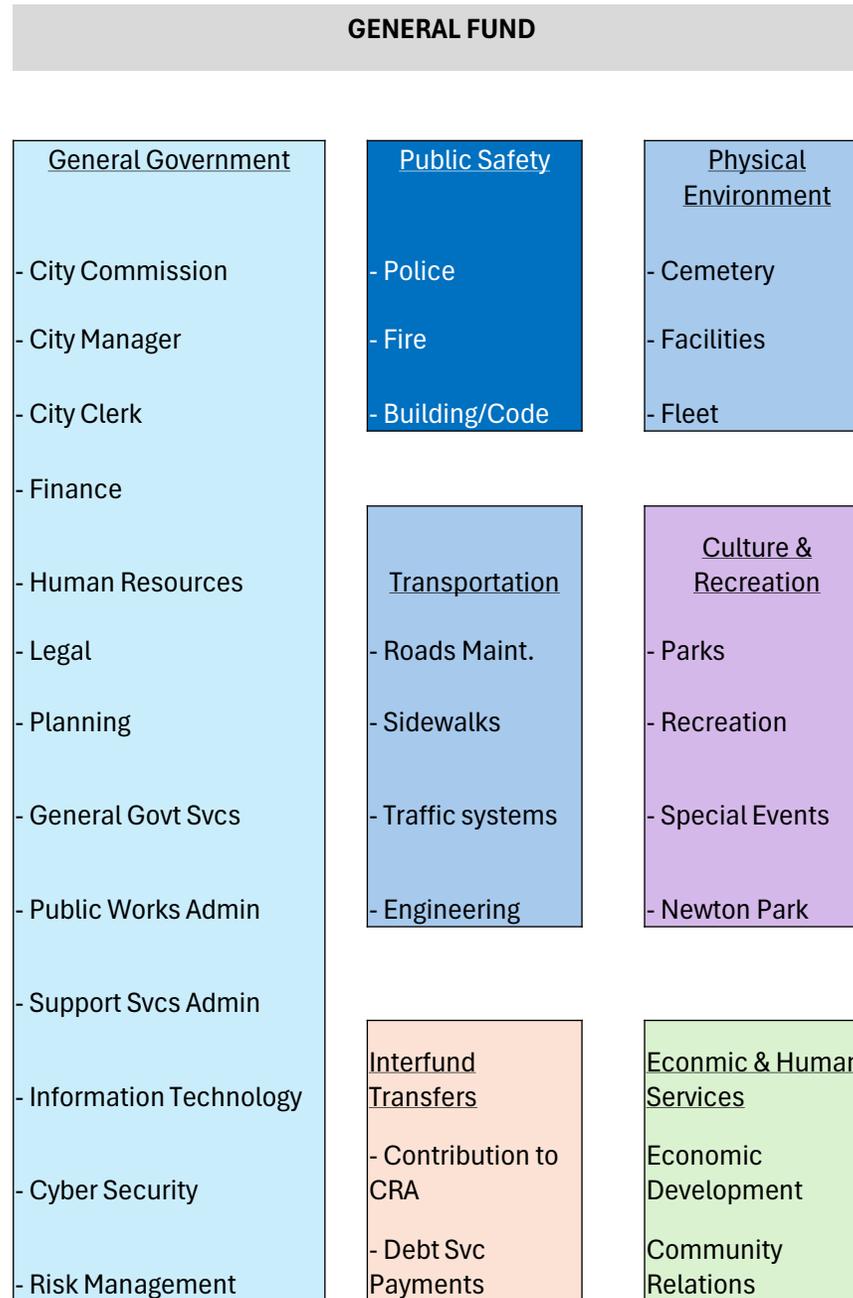
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- What are Government Services and how are they funded?
- What is a Fire Assessment?
- Why are we considering a Fire Assessment?
- Findings from the Fire Assessment Study.
- What's next.

What are Government  
Services and How are  
They Funded?

# City of Winter Garden Services

- General Fund
- Enterprise Funds
- Other Funds



# The General Fund

THE GENERAL FUND IS THE OPERATIONAL  
BACKBONE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SUPPORTING  
ESSENTIAL SERVICES.

# General Fund Services

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**Public Safety** – Police and Fire protection services

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**General Government** – core foundational support services include City Commission, City Manager’s Office, City Clerk, Finance, Human Resources, Legal Services, Cyber Security, Planning & Development

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**Culture & Recreation** – crucial for the quality of life in Winter Garden provides parks, recreation programs and community events

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**Transportation** – maintenance of the roads, sidewalks and traffic control systems.

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**Economic Development & Human Services** – encompasses community relations, and fostering community engagement and well-being

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# Cost Allocation for General Fund Services

Service Area Category	FY2026 Budget Expenditure	% of General Fund
Public Safety	\$38,693,032	56.3%
General Government	\$9,705,085	14.1%
Culture & Recreation	\$6,524,955	9.5%
Physical Environment	\$4,542,138	6.6%
Transfer to CRA Contribution & Debt	\$4,382,297	6.4%
Transportation	\$3,175,057	4.6%
Economic Environment / Human Services	\$1,757,858	2.6%
Total General Fund	\$68,780,422	100%

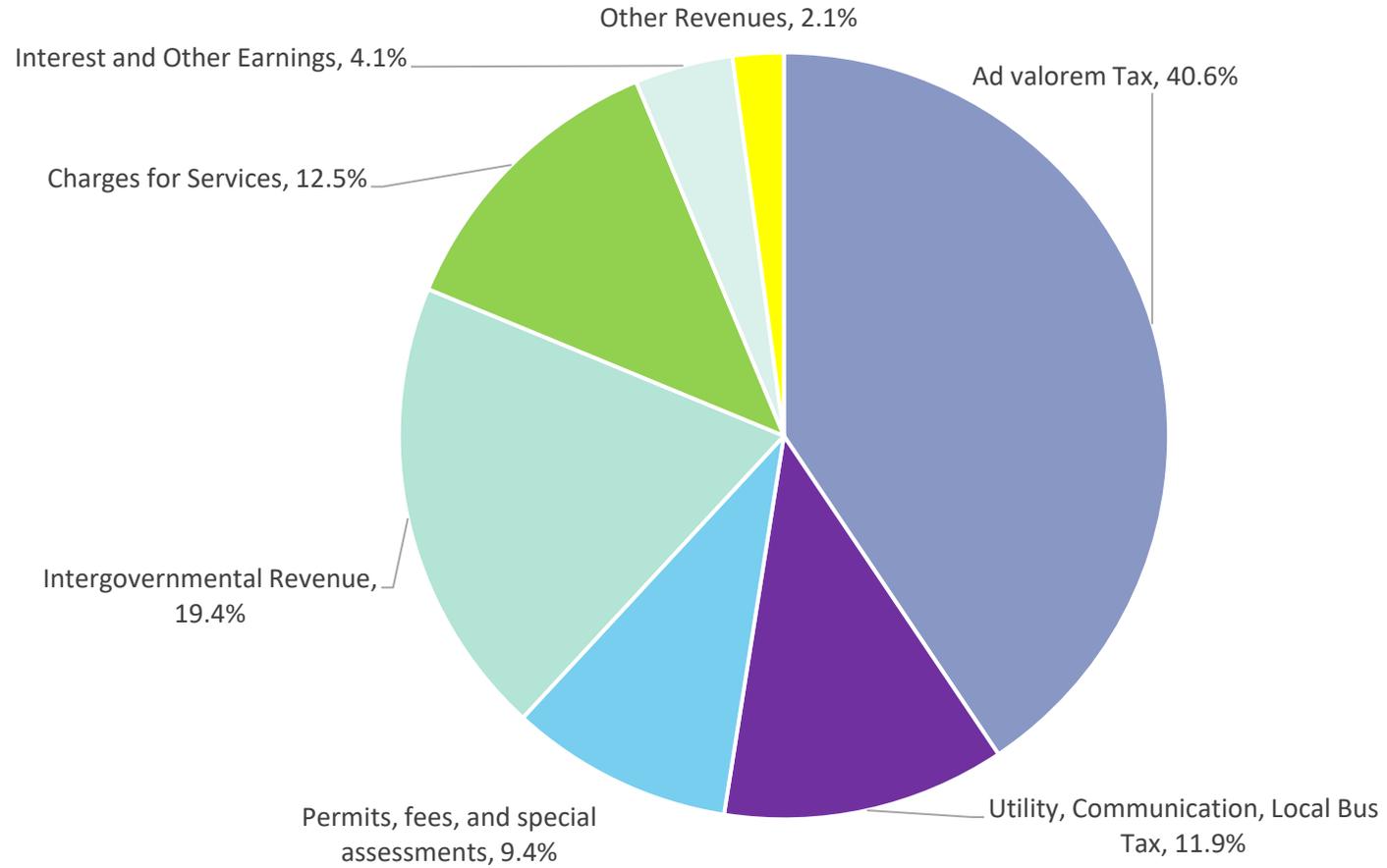
# How is Fire Rescue Currently Funded?

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The Fire and Rescue Department is funded by the General Fund Revenues.

Property taxes are the primary source of General Fund revenues, generating approximately 41% of the General Fund's total revenues.

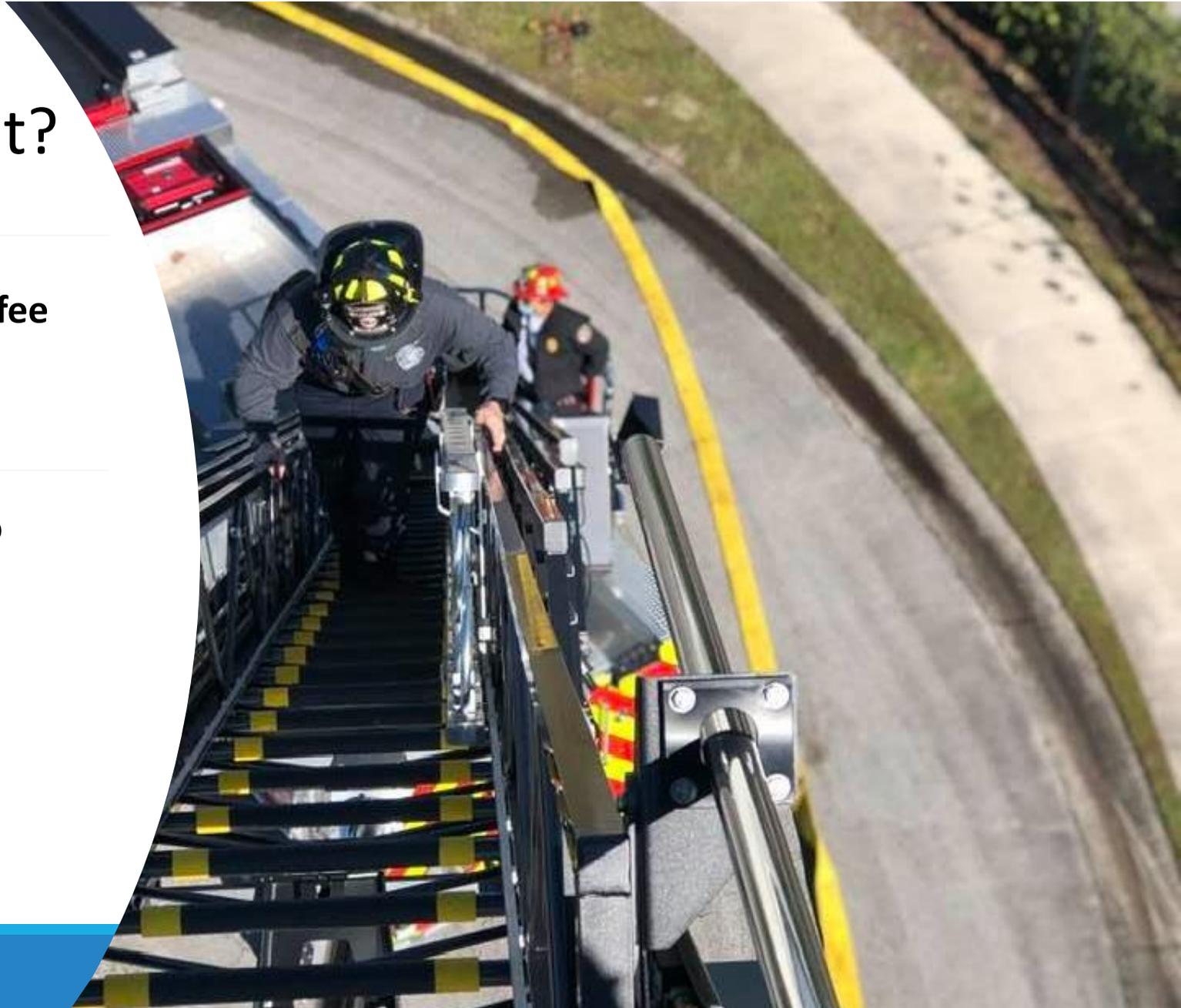
# General Fund FY2026 Revenues \$69.8M



# What is a Fire Assessment?

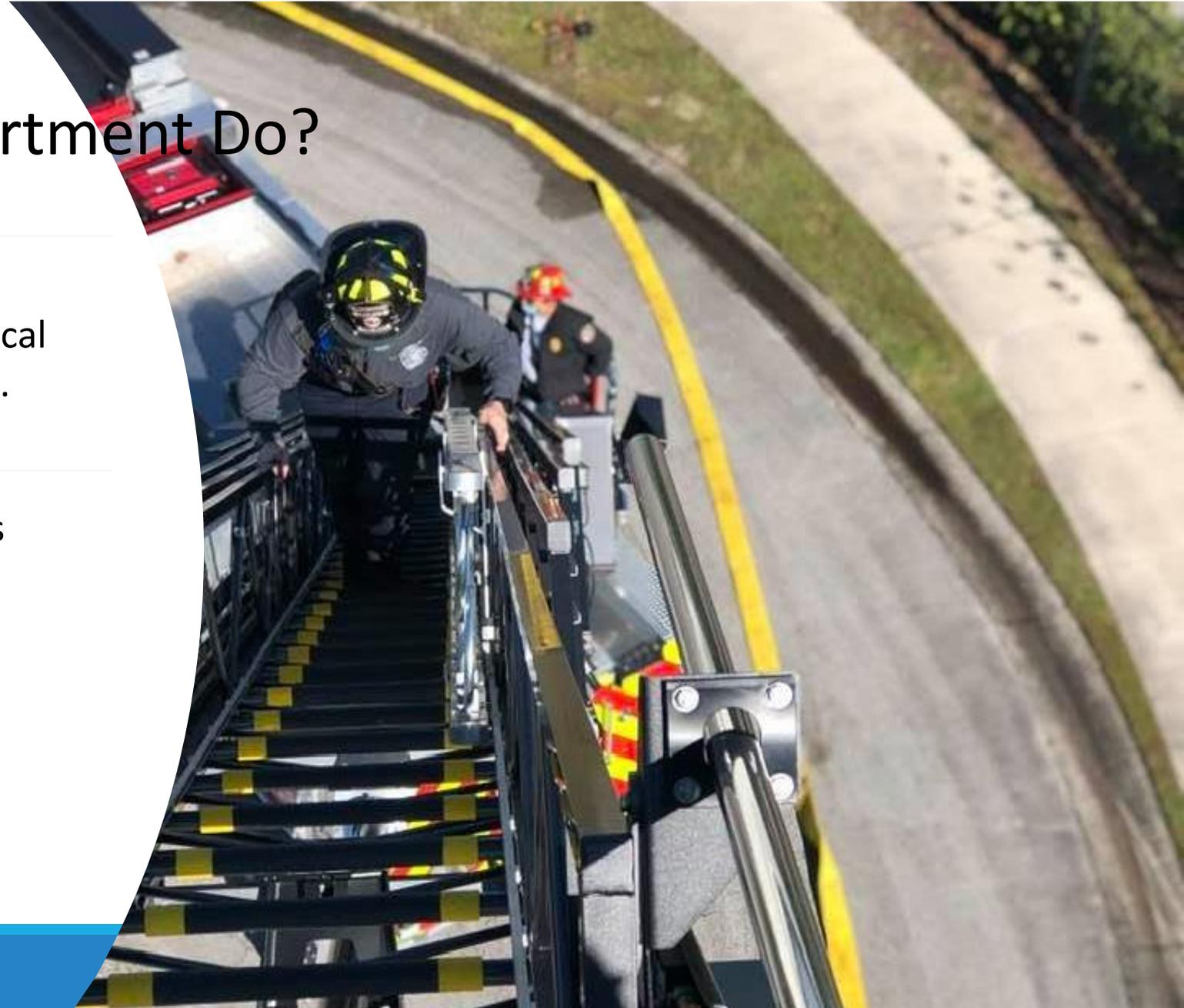
# What is a Fire Assessment?

- A fire assessment is a **non-ad valorem fee** – fire service benefit to property
- Fire Assessment is applied according to **property use** and service demand.
- Revenues are **restricted** solely to fire protection: personnel, equipment, training, and capital costs.



# What does the Fire Department Do?

- Primary function/goal is to respond to fire and medical incidents within a critical time frame to save lives and structures.
- Available for service on a 24-hour basis for 7 days a week.
- Helps reduce insurance premiums and increases property values.



# How the Fire Assessment is Calculated

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- It is important to clarify that the \$12 million fire rescue assessment is **not** an additional \$12 million being added to the Fire Department's budget.
  - Rather, it represents the reallocation of how existing, ongoing fire protection costs are funded, shifting a portion of the funding burden from ad valorem taxes and other General Fund revenues to a dedicated, service-based assessment.
- The calculated assessment is based on a formula that considers the total Fire Department budget for FY 2026 of \$14.6 million, excluding costs associated with Advanced Life Support which are not assessable under Florida law. This results in the “assessable portion” of the Fire Department's budget, which forms a basis of the \$12 million assessment calculation.
- The City set the tentative resolution with the intent to have as a tool in the budget process.

Why are We  
Considering a Fire  
Assessment?

# I Pay Property Tax, why the need for alternative funding?

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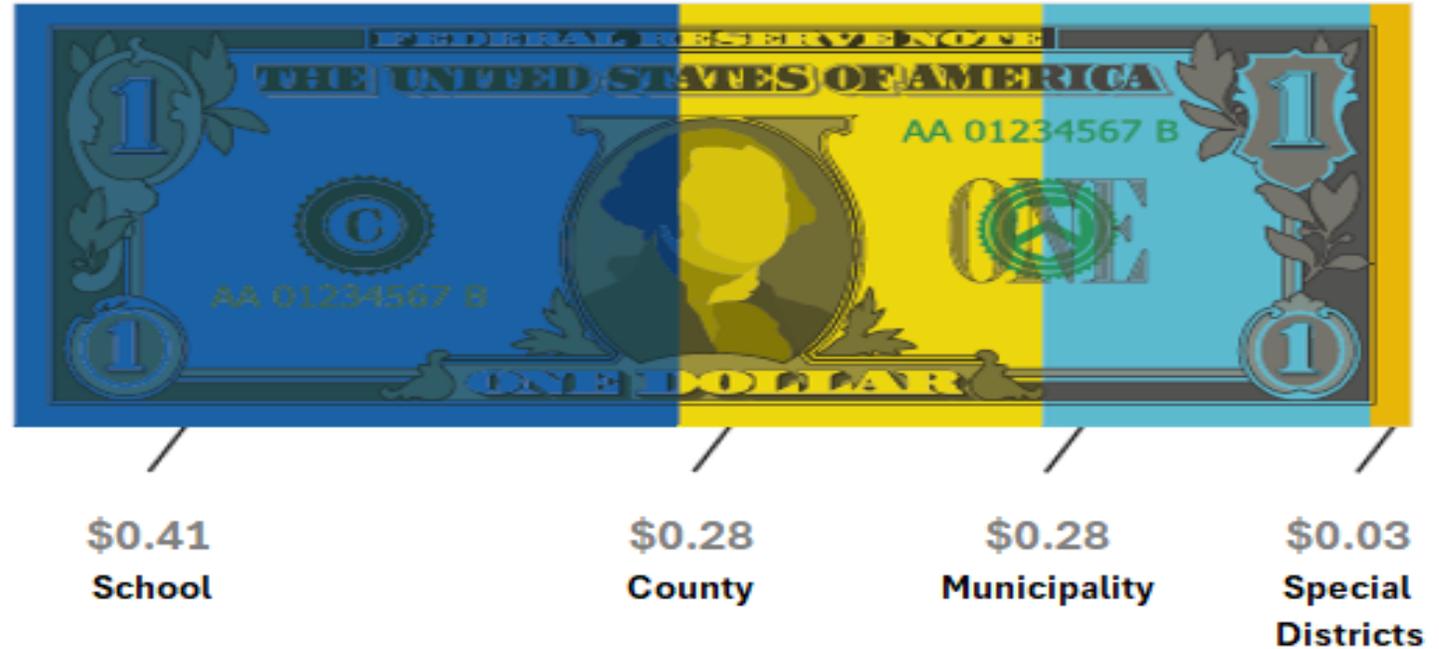
There is a structural imbalance that reflects rising service costs- including staffing, equipment and operations – outpacing revenue growth.

Police & Fire expenses for personnel and operating costs are approximately \$36.8 million (Police \$22.2 million and Fire \$14.6 million). Property taxes bring in approximately \$28.4 million which accounts for only 77% of the total amount needed for fire and police protection services. The fire assessment would help fund the protections services gap of \$8.4 million.

While the General Fund has other revenues that could be considered as alternative sources, many of those are either limited in scope, less stable or subject to restrictions.

# What do my taxes pay for?

## MILLAGE RATE BREAKDOWN FY 2025



Entity	Millage Rate	Millage Percentage
School	6.4640	40.52%
County	4.4347	27.80%
Municipality	4.5000	28.21%
Special Districts	0.5541	3.47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.9528</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# Current Property Tax Rate

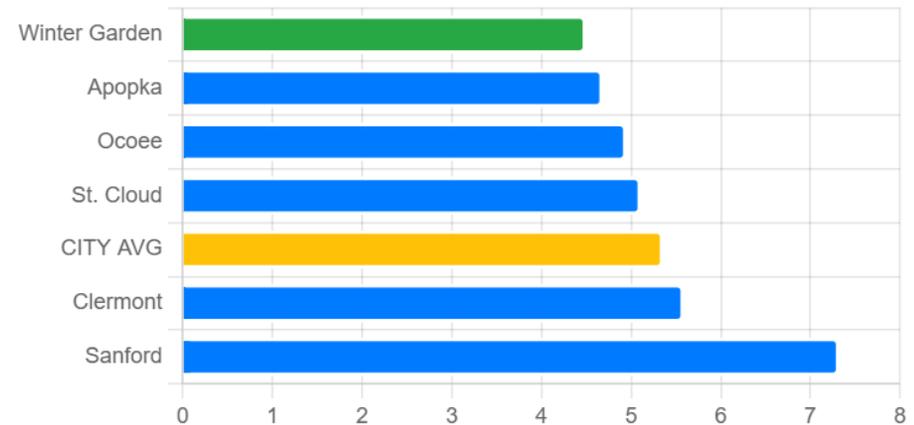
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Millage Rate = 4.5000 for past 8 years

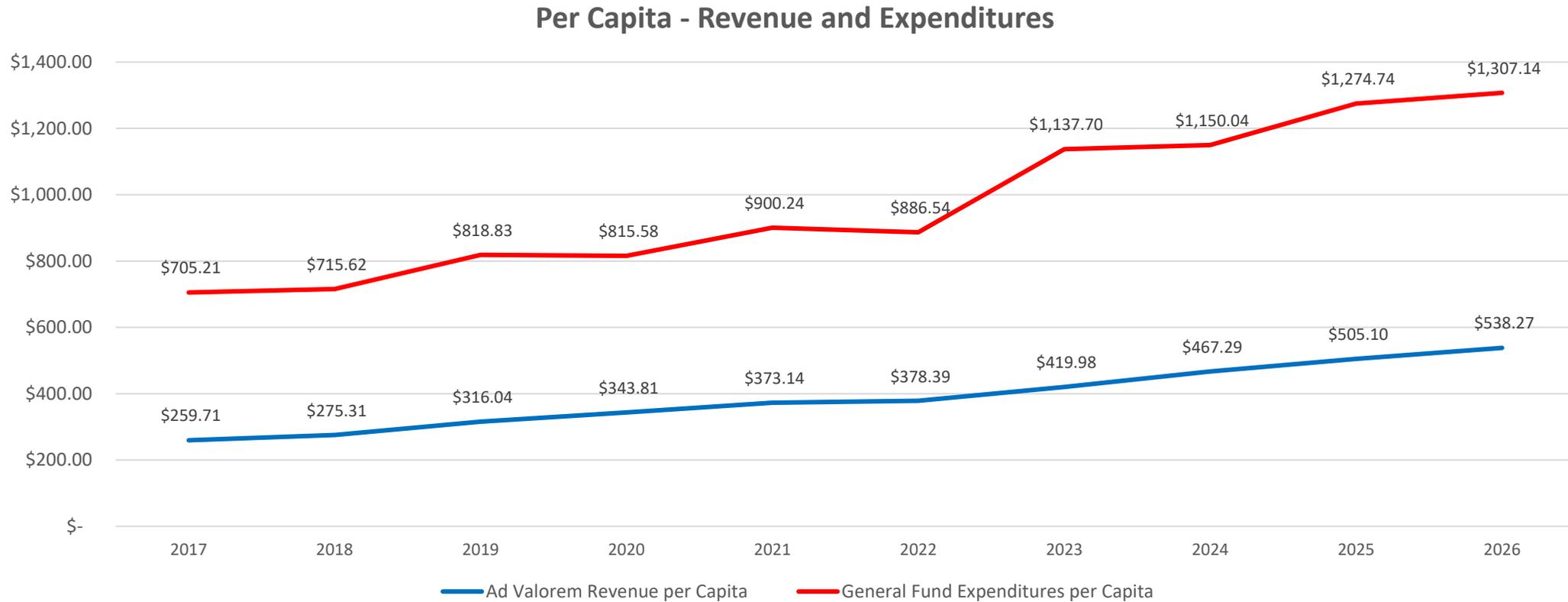
One of the lowest in Central Florida

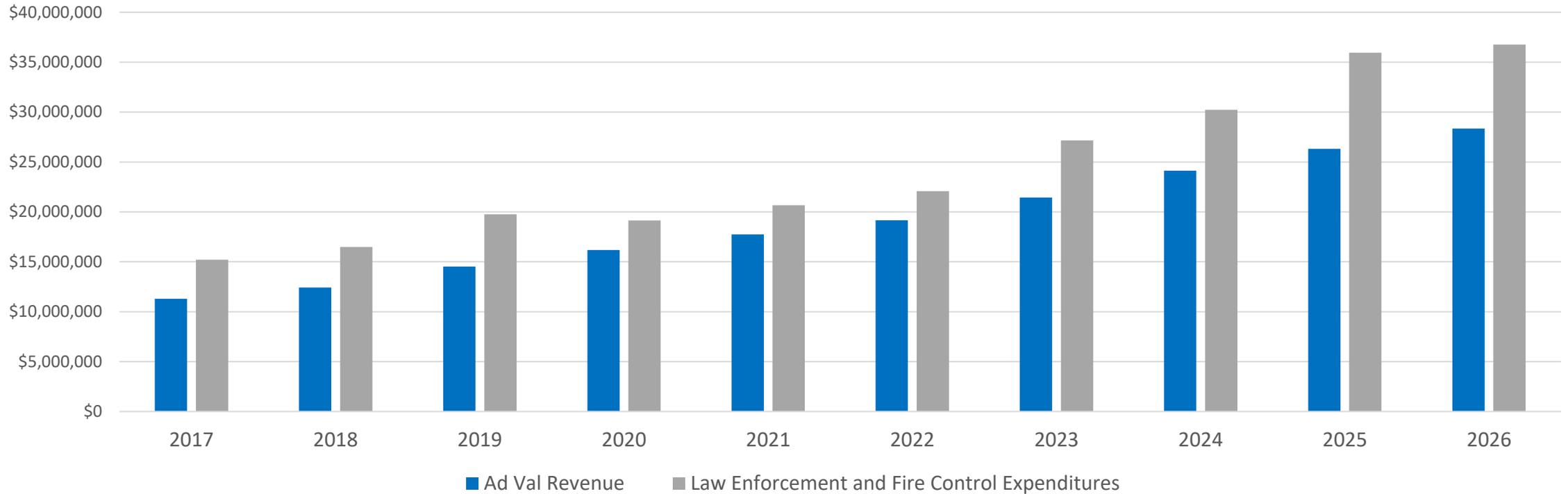
## Millage Rates Comparison

Winter Garden maintains the lowest property tax millage rate among its neighboring cities, offering significant value to taxpayers.



# Ad valorem per capita vs cost per capita

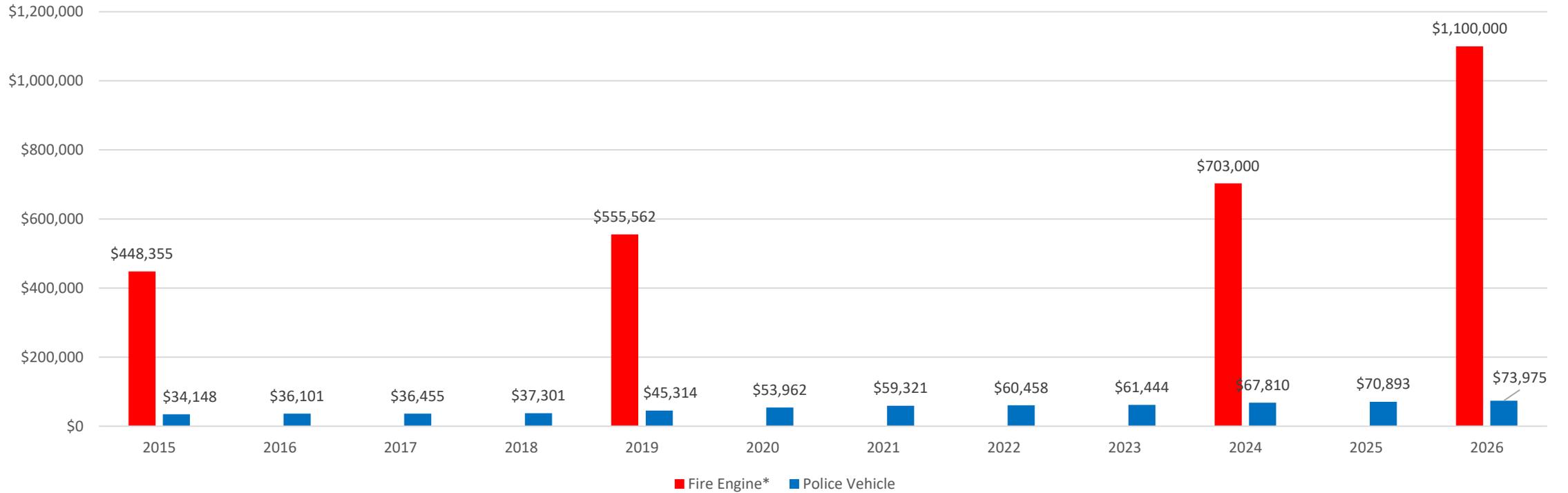




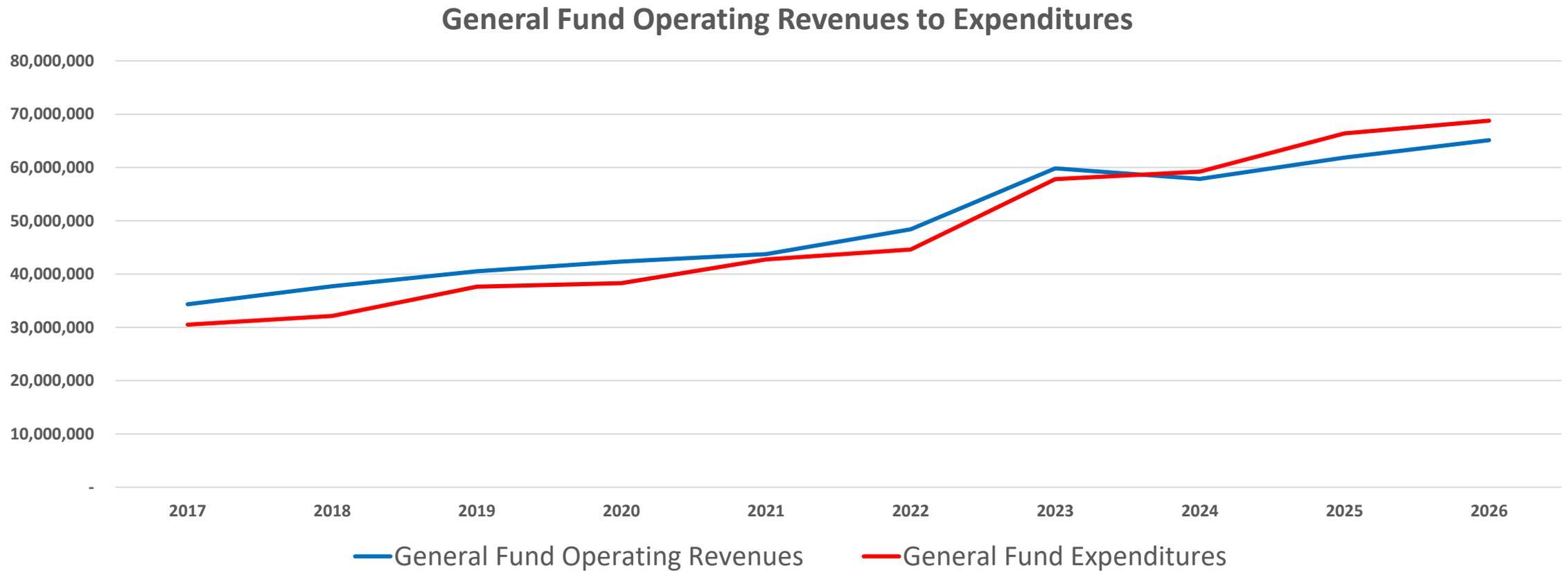
# Property Tax to Fire & Police Costs

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### Fire Engine and Police Vehicle Costs 2015 - 2026



# Funding trends vs. cost of services trends

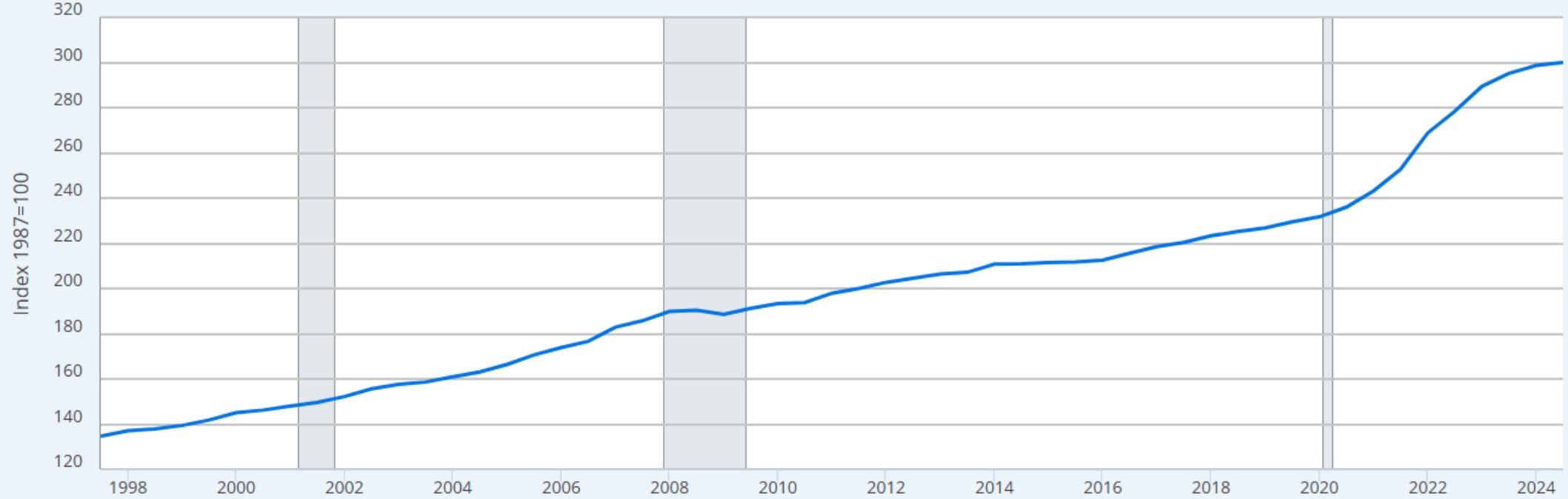


Operating Revenues depicted in this graph are steady funding sources which include taxes, charges for services, and permits, fees and special assessments. Does not include unpredictable revenues sources such as investment earnings, sale of assets, or contributions.

FRED



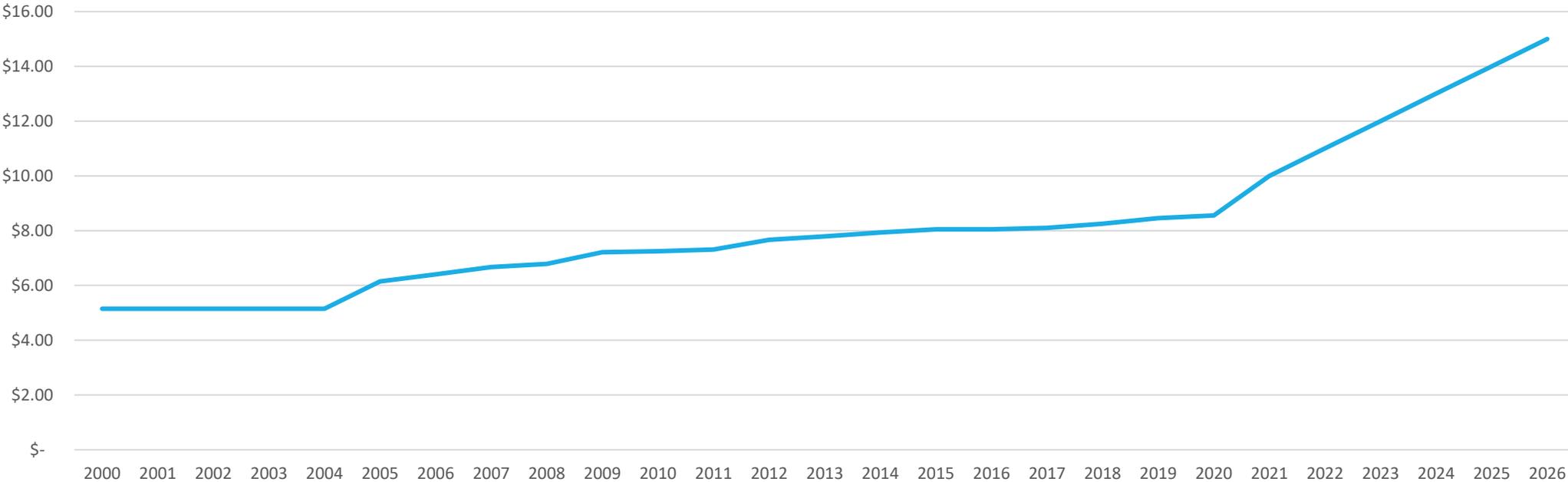
Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items in Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL (CBSA)



# inflation

# Minimum wage

State of Florida Minimum Wage History  
2000 - 2026

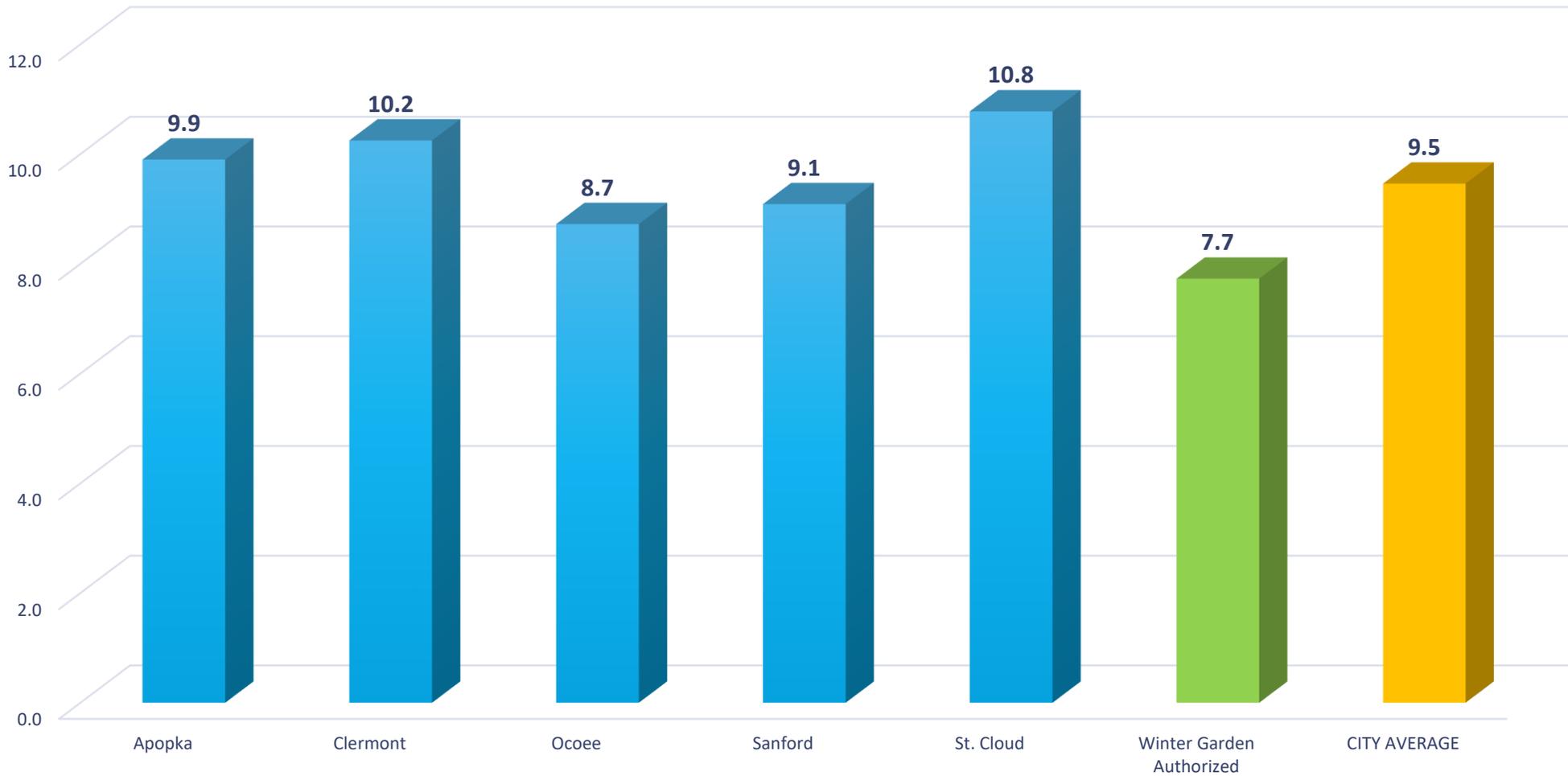


“Orlando /  
Orange /  
Seminole  
county effect”

Need to maintain competitive salaries and benefits, which is **crucial** for attracting and retaining **quality** staff, particularly in critical areas like public safety where competition for talent is **intense**.

The “Orlando/Orange/Seminole County Effect” on public safety wages creates an external market pressure, compelling Winter Garden to increase compensation to remain competitive in attracting and retaining qualified personnel.

### Local Municipalities - Full-time Equivalent Employees per 1,000 Population



# Limitations of Current Funding Sources

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Ad valorem revenues are used to support a broad range of City services – including fire and police protection, parks and recreation, planning, administration, public works and infrastructure maintenance. As public safety costs increase, they place greater pressure on this limited and shared funding source.

Ad valorem revenues alone are not sufficient to fund the current levels of public safety. The General fund relies on other revenues to fund all general fund services. However, some of the alternative revenues are unpredictable and unstable.

# Revenue Volatility and Unpredictability

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- The FY 2026 revenue projections include several revenue sources that are inherently less predictable, such as:
  - \$1.7 million in red light camera revenues, which are not expected to begin until January 2026, and
  - \$2.9 million in investment earnings, which are subject to market fluctuations and economic conditions, and therefore not guaranteed.
- While these revenues are included in the projections and may be available to help fund operations, they should not be relied upon to support ongoing, critical services like fire and police projections.
- They lack the stability and reliability needed to fund essential personnel, equipment, and emergency response capabilities year after year.

# Benefits of Implementing a Fire Assessment

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**Dedicated and Stable Funding**



**Fairer Distribution of Costs**



**Improved Financial Health**



**Potential for Enhanced services**

# Findings from the Fire Assessment Study

# Fire Assessment Fee Study

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City engaged with Benesch to conduct a technical Fire Assessment Fee Study for the City of Winter Garden.

The technical report provides the calculated fire assessment fee rates based on property type.

Study based on 10 years of data.



# WGFRD

## Services Provided to Community

### Fire Administration

- Budget & Strategic Planning, Quality Assurance, Policies, Record Management

### Office of the Fire Marshal

- Plans Review, Inspections, Community Risk Reduction, Public Education

### Fire Rescue Operations

- Firefighting, Technical Rescues, Hazmat, Disaster Response

### Emergency Medical Services

- Basic and Advanced Life Support Services, EMS Billing, Quality Assurance

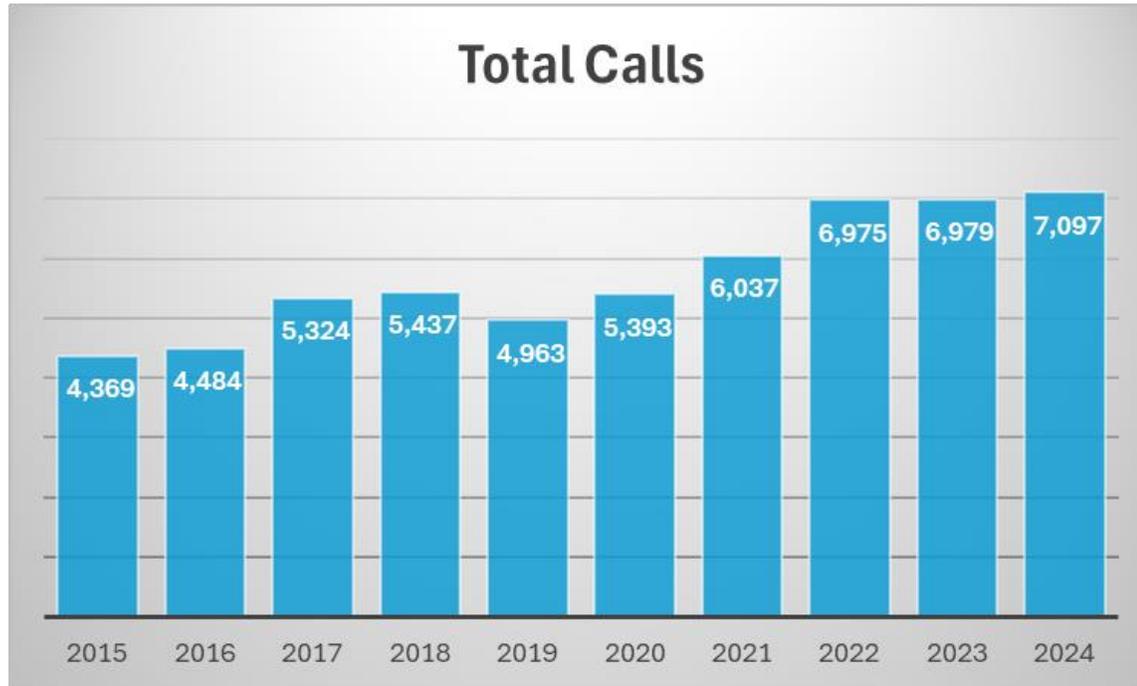
### Emergency Management

- Disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery



# WGFRD

Calendar year 2024 – 7,097 total calls for service



## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

SAFETY • PREPARATION • TRAINING • RESPECT





**22,506 DOCUMENTED TRAINING HOURS**



**2 NEW PARAMEDIC GRADUATES**



**2 NEW DEPARTMENT PROMOTIONS**

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

<p>CHILD SEAT INSTALLATIONS</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">24</p>	<p>PUBLIC RELATION EVENTS</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">124</p>	<p>CITIZEN CPR PARTICIPANTS</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">1542</p>	<p>SMOKE ALARM INSTALLATIONS</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">82</p>
 <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">1435</p> <p>FIRE INSPECTIONS</p>	 <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">1769</p> <p>HYDRANT INSPECTIONS</p>	 <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">743</p> <p>PRE-INCIDENT PLANS</p>	

7,097 TOTAL CALLS FOR SERVICE

STATION 21 (900)
STATION 22 (1279)
STATION 23 (1459)
STATION 24 (3455)
FDHQ (4)

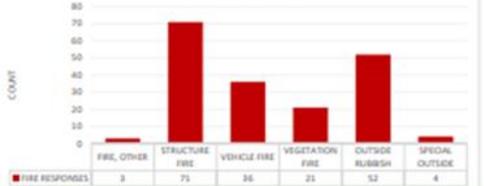
1806 TOTAL FIRE RESPONSES



90<sup>th</sup> PERCENTILE FIRE TURN OUT TIME  
01m:19s (< 1m:30s)

5 MINUTES 51 SECONDS  
AVERAGE FIRST APPARATUS TRAVEL TIME TO STRUCTURE FIRES

FIRE RESPONSES



VEHICLE ACCIDENT AND HAZMAT INCIDENTS

71 - HAZMAT ALARMS
355- VEHICLE ACCIDENTS W/ INJURIES
42 - VEHICLE VS. PED
16 - VMR EXTRICATIONS

5291 TOTAL EMS RESPONSES



90<sup>th</sup> PERCENTILE EMS TURN OUT TIME  
01m:06s (< 1m:00s)

ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROME

- 16:11 AVERAGE SCENE TIME (< 15 MINS)
- 07:12 AVERAGE ON SCENE TIME TO 12 LEAD (< 10 MINS)
- 07:16 AVERAGE TIME 12 LEAD TO STEMI ALERT

CARDIAC ARREST

- 4% RECEIVED BYSTANDER CPR
- 82% SUCCESSFUL ADVANCED AIRWAY
- 11% ROSC ACHIEVED / 4% WITH ROSC AT ED

EMS TRANSPORT

- 3,792 WGFRD TRANSPORTS
- 267 TRANSFERS OF CARE TO OTHER EMS AGENCY

# WGFRD

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## 4 Fire Stations

- Station 21 (Temporary)
- Station 22
- Station 23
- Station 24



## Apparatus

- 3 Engines
- 1 Tower – Aerial Device
- 3 ALS Rescues
- 8 Reserve Apparatus



## 72 Full-Time Staff

- 1 Fire Inspector
- 1 Executive Assistant
- 70 Firefighters (inclusive of Command Staff)



# WGFRD

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## NFPA 1710 RESPONSE OBJECTIVES



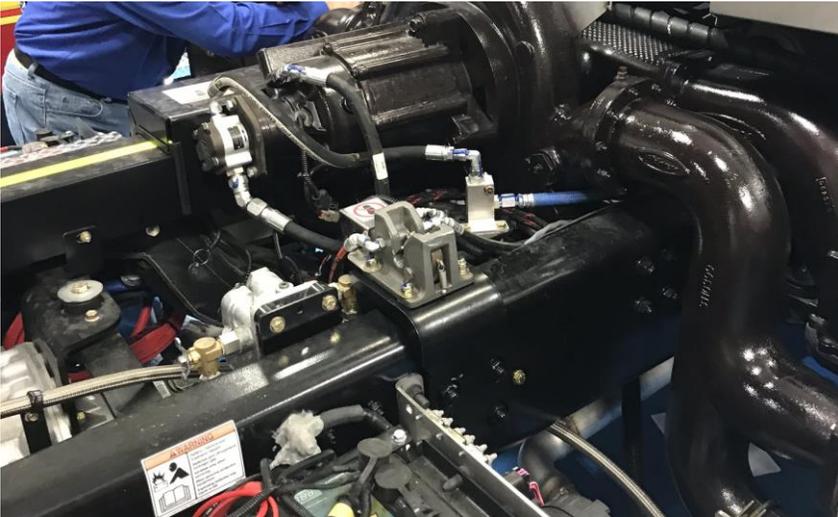
### Response Times

- EMS - 5 minutes
- Fire - 5 minutes 20 seconds



### Deployment

- Requires 17-43 members based on Occupancy Type



# WGFRD

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## Capital needs

- Vehicle Replacement Plan
- Two Temporary Stations
- Oldest station is 40+ years old

## Why is this important

- Provides a dedicated, equitable, and sustainable funding source for fire protection and emergency services.

# Fire Assessment Fee Study Findings

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- Full Fire Assessment Fee will fund approximately 80% of the Fire Rescue Department Costs
- City set the tentative resolution with the intent to have as a tool in the budget process.

# Fire Assessment Calculations

## ➤ Rate Summary

Land Use	Unit	Calculated
<b>Residential</b>		
Less than 1,000 sf	Du	\$333.56
1,000-1,499 sf	Du	\$359.47
1,500-1,999 sf	Du	\$386.61
2,000-2,499 sf	Du	\$413.76
2,500-2,999 sf	Du	\$442.14
3,000-3,499 sf	Du	\$470.52
3,500 sf or more	Du	\$518.64

Land Use	Unit	Calculated
<b>Vacant Land</b>		
Vacant Land	Parcel	\$366

Example Tiers for Non-Residential (32 total tiers)

Sq Ft Range	Unit	Calculated
<b>Commercial</b>		
1 – 1,999	parcel	\$553
8,000 – 9,999	parcel	\$4,424
30,000 – 34,999	parcel	\$16,590
90,000 – 99,999	parcel	\$49,770
300,000 or more	parcel	\$165,900
<b>Industrial/Warehouse</b>		
1 – 1,999	parcel	\$404
8,000 – 9,999	parcel	\$3,232
30,000 – 34,999	parcel	\$12,120
90,000 – 99,999	parcel	\$36,360
300,000 or more	parcel	\$121,200
<b>Institutional</b>		
1 – 1,999	parcel	\$1,114
8,000 – 9,999	parcel	\$8,912
30,000 – 34,999	parcel	\$33,420
90,000 – 99,999	parcel	\$100,260
300,000 or more	parcel	\$334,200

# If we don't do a Fire Assessment, Then what?

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- The Commission is not obligated to enact the Fire Assessment.
- It is important to clarify that the ad valorem gap is not a shortfall, but rather the difference between current ad valorem revenues (\$28 million) and the cost to provide public safety fire and police services (\$37 million).
- This funding gap reflects a long-term structural funding challenge, as the costs of public safety continue to raise faster than revenue growth.

# Do any other Florida Cities have a Fire Assessment?

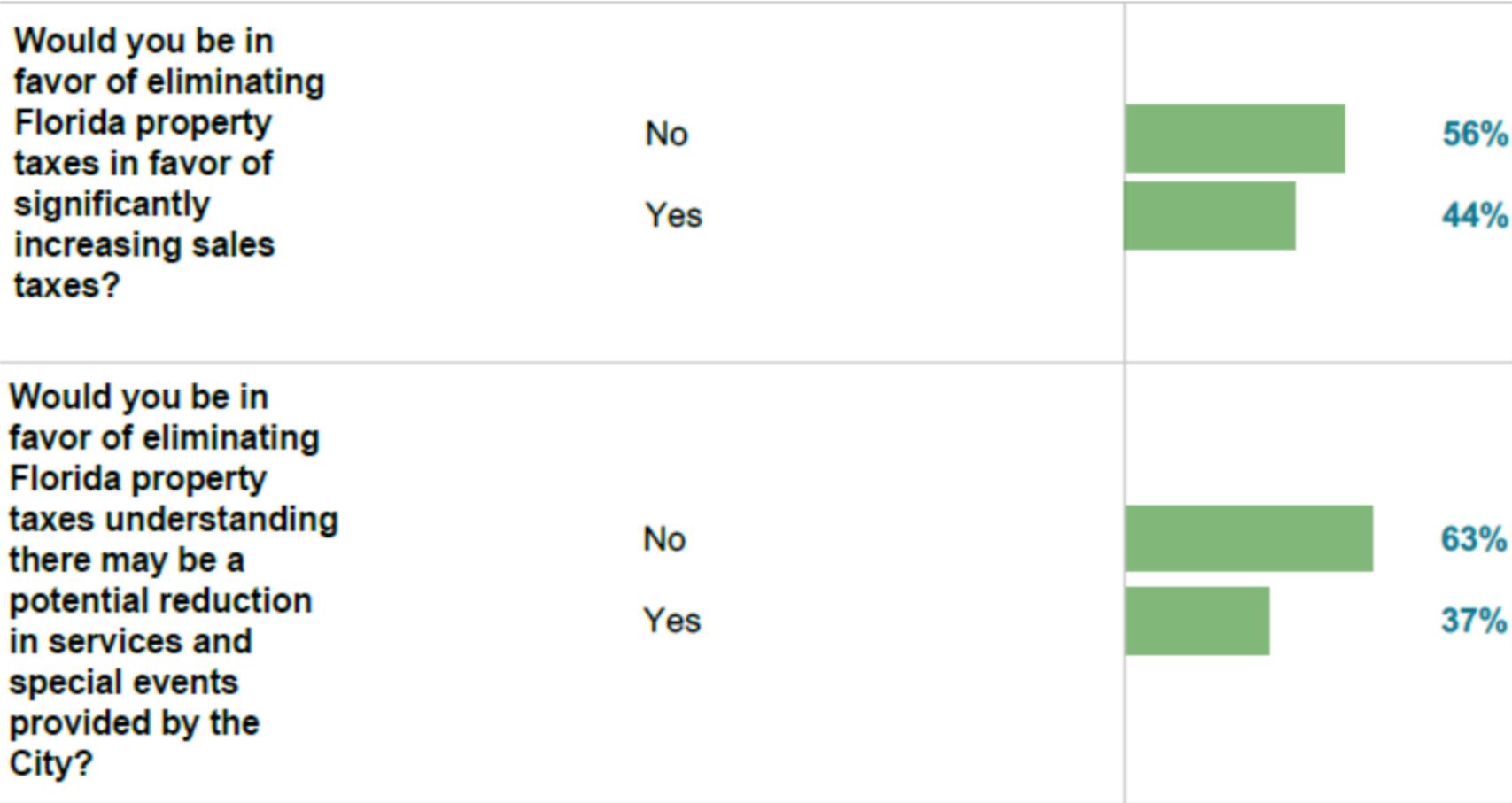
## Entities with Fire Assessments:

- Lake County (unincorporated areas)
- Town of Astatula
- Town of Howey-in-the-Hills
- Town of Fruitland Park
- Town of Mascotte
- Town of Montverde

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- Part of Town of Lady Lake
- City of Minneola
- City of Tavares (considering)
- City of Leesburg
- City of Groveland
- City of Clermont (considering)
- City of Umatilla (considering increase)
- City of Winter Garden (considering)
- City of Ocoee
- Town of Windermere
- City of Kissimmee
- City of Sanford (considering)
- Brevard County (unincorporated)
- City of Cocoa
- West Melbourne
- Melbourne Village
- Palm Shores
- Grant-Valkaria
- Marion County (unincorporated)
- City of Ocala

# City Survey Results – April 2025



# City Survey Results – April 2025

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<b>The NCS™ Question/Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Percent Positive 2019</b>	<b>Percent Positive 2021</b>	<b>Percent Positive 2023</b>	<b>Percent Positive 2025</b>
Quality of services provided by the City of Winter Garden	89%	86%	84%	82%
Quality of services provided by Orange County	N/A	N/A	N/A	60%
Quality of services provided by the State of Florida	N/A	N/A	N/A	49%
Quality of services provided by Federal Government	46%	46%	37%	37%

Closing Comments

Questions?