

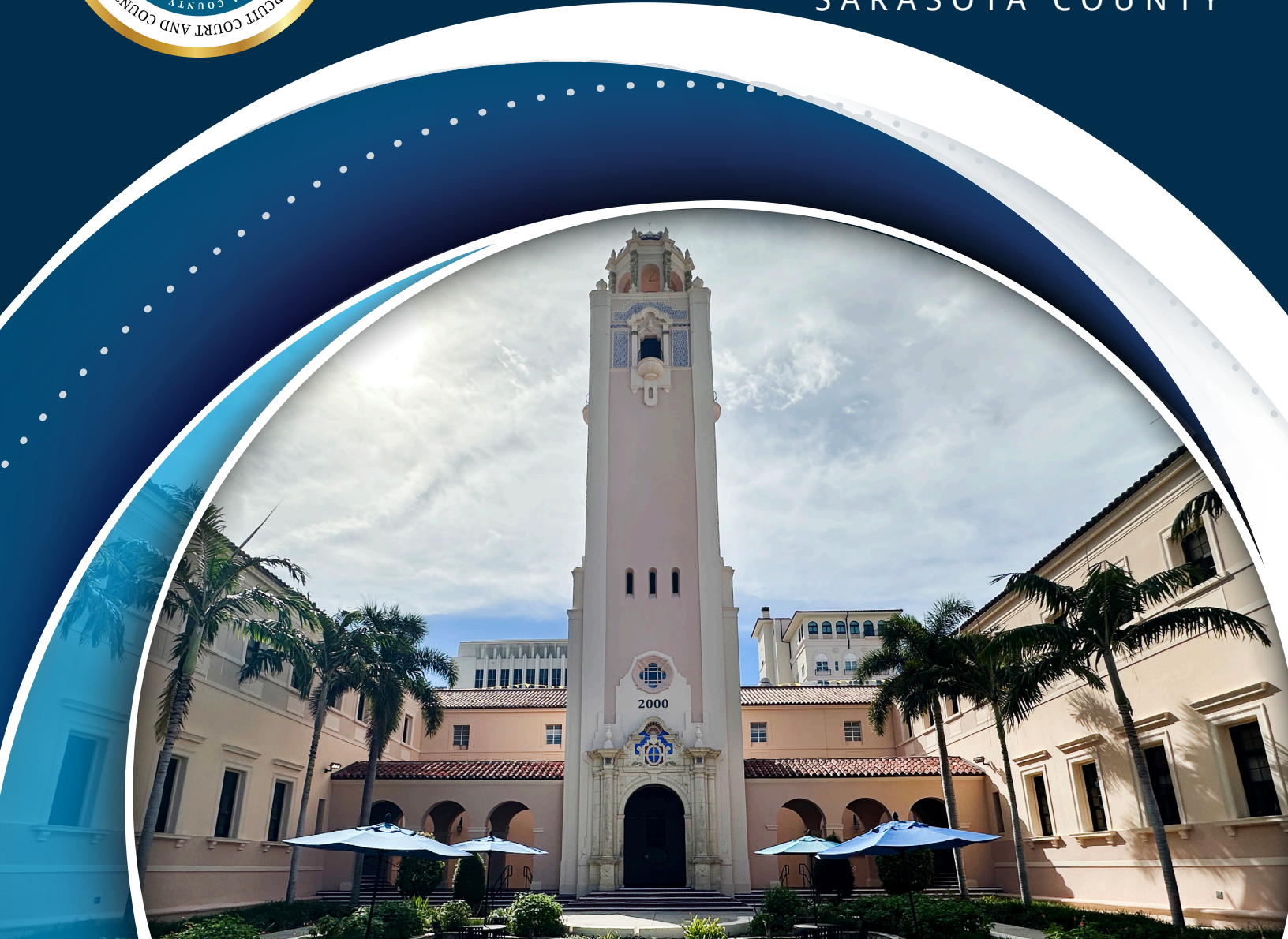
KAREN E. RUSHING Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

SARASOTA COUNTY



To the Citizens of Sarasota County...

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Sarasota County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller. This report highlights our continued commitment to delivering exceptional customer service, strengthening operational efficiency, and upholding the public's trust through transparency, accountability, and fiscal integrity. It reflects our commitment to fulfilling our constitutional responsibilities with professionalism and care.

Over the past year, our office has advanced several new strategic initiatives to enhance the citizen experience. The launch of our new website has been quite an undertaking. One of the most significant projects has been the development of a new, modern website that will provide easier access to court services, financial information, and public records. This citizen-focused platform will make it simpler for residents to find the resources they need and better understand the information that supports Sarasota Clerk and Comptroller's operations.

As the County Comptroller, our office remains steadfast in its responsibility to manage and protect public funds. We ensure accurate and ethical financial reporting, conduct routine audits, and provide oversight to confirm that all economic decisions serve lawful and public purposes.

Protecting county resources from fraud, waste, and abuse remains a top priority. Through the Office of the Inspector General, we conduct comprehensive audits and investigations to identify potential risks to your county's resources. Our participation in statewide partnerships enhances our ability to detect and prevent fraudulent activity, while collaboration with law enforcement agencies helps us respond quickly and effectively to emerging threats. We also continue to educate citizens about scams and provide tools to help protect their financial well-being.

Throughout the past year, our community faced significant challenges in the aftermath of multiple weather-related events. In the face of unprecedented hurricane activity, our office coordinated efforts with federal, state, and local agencies to ensure transparent, responsive access to all storm recovery financial activities. As stewards of public funds, we maintained rigorous controls to safeguard public financial assets while directing resources to address community areas impacted by these storms. We worked with local agencies to administer and distribute Resilient SRQ funds to homeowners affected by Hurricane Ian. Through careful financial oversight, this office helped ensure that eligible residents received timely, accountable, and well-managed support to advance their recovery efforts.

Every day, our team works to uphold the integrity of the judicial process, from managing court records and jury selection to maintaining transparency in the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners. We safeguard thousands of vital public documents—licenses, wills, deeds, and much more—ensuring that citizens have reliable access to the information that supports both their rights and their confidence in local government.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on innovation, service, and stewardship. Together, will continue building a stronger, more transparent, and more connected Sarasota County.

Sincerely,



Karen E. Rushing

*Clerk of the Circuit Court
and County Comptroller*





**SARASOTA COUNTY
COURTHOUSE**

1917-1918
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
The Courthouse was designed by the architect, George B. Keck, and was built by the contractor, J. M. Smith. It is a fine example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The building is made of light-colored concrete and has a tiled roof. The tower is the most prominent feature of the building. It is 100 feet high and has a clock face on each side. The tower is topped with a dome and a cross. The building has a large courtyard in front of it. The courtyard is paved with a walkway leading towards the building. There are several trees and plants in the courtyard. The building is surrounded by a low wall. The sky is a mix of blue and pink from the setting or rising sun. Palm fronds are visible in the top left corner.



FCCC FLORIDA COURT CLERKS AND COMPTROLLERS

Special Recognition Award
Excellence in Leadership Award
Past Chair, Legislative Committee
Past Chair, Strategic Planning Committee
Past President
Clerk of the Year
Excellence in Best Practices
Statesperson of the Year

CCOC FLORIDA CLERKS OF COURT OPERATIONS CORPORATION

Legislative Committee
Florida Courts E-Filing Committee
Past Co-Chair, Revenue Stabilization Workgroup

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA

Statesman of the Year

UNITED WAY OF SARASOTA COUNTY

Past Member, Board of Directors

29TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Women of Light Award

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Distinguished Alumni Award

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT – FLORIDA COURTS TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION (FCTC)

Florida Courts Technology Commission
Committee for Electronic Filing

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Advisor, Commercial Law Department

ACHIEVEMENTS

GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Triple Crown Medallion Award
Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting
Excellence in Financial Reporting Award

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC TREASURERS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Certificate of Excellence for Sarasota County's Investment Policy

UNITED WAY SUNCOAST

Top 25 Most Generous Workplaces, Sarasota Area

FLORIDA GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS ASSOCIATION

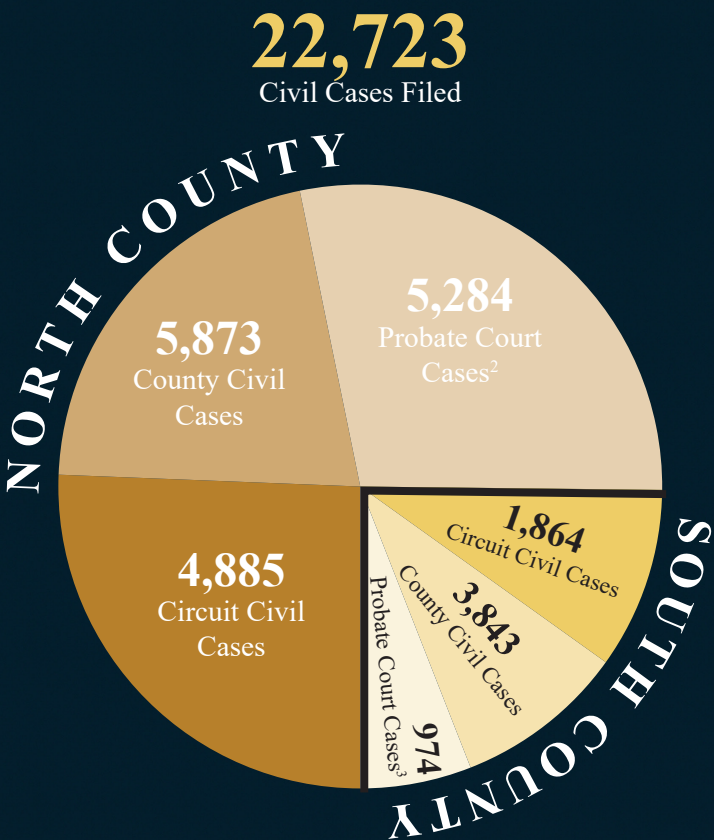
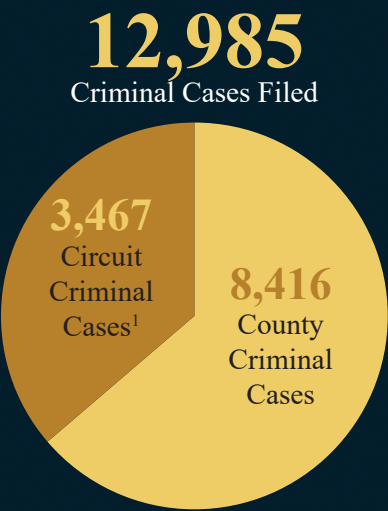
Crystal Award, Online Foreclosures
Second Place Crystal, Annual Report
Special Judges Awards

ASSOCIATION OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS

Gold Winner, MarCom Award, Annual Report
Honorable Mention, MarCom Award, Photography

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT AND COUNTY COURTS

The Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts is an independent elected official responsible for many court related activities. The Florida court system consists of the Florida Supreme Court, six District Courts of Appeal, 20 Circuit Courts, and 67 County Courts. Sarasota is one of three counties in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, which also includes Manatee and DeSoto counties. Serving as Clerk to both the circuit and county courts, trial court records are maintained in an electronic manner and data sharing of important judicial decisions are reported in accordance with law to many different agencies, including the Florida Department of Revenue, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Children and Families, and Bureau of Vital Statistics, to name a few. It has been said that the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts touches the lives in its community from cradle to grave; cases range from adoptions, estate matters, family law, domestic violence, mental illness, small claims, evictions, mortgage foreclosures, and more, which affect every community. Services provided by this office are available to all in need of assistance.



¹Includes **648** Juvenile Delinquency Cases

²Excludes **1,931** Will Deposit Cases in North County

³Excludes **314** Will Deposit Cases in South County



THE COURT

Presiding over cases in Sarasota

13 Circuit Judges **5** County Judges

9 Senior Circuit Judges

5 Magistrates/Hearing Officers



58,954

Civil Citations

54,117 Traffic Infractions

2,710 Parking Tickets

2,127 Civil Infractions



\$11,637,194

Fines & Forfeitures

Total fines, forfeitures, court costs,
and service charges

CRIMINAL LAW

CRIMINAL LAW CASES are governed by the Florida Rules of Criminal Procedure. The Florida Constitution provides that Circuit and County Courts may hold criminal trials within the jurisdiction of the Court as designated by the Circuit's Chief Judge. Circuit Criminal data includes 476 juvenile delinquency cases.

CIRCUIT COURT

CIVIL LAW CASES are governed by the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, Family Law Rules of Procedure, Probate Rules and Small Claim Rules. The Circuit Court is responsible for family, probate, and other matters exceeding \$50,000. Circuit Civil data includes 3,469 circuit cases, 3,280 family cases, and 235 juvenile dependency cases. Probate includes probate, guardianship and mental health cases.

COUNTY RECORDER

In Florida, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller also serves as the County Recorder, sometimes known as the Registrar of Deeds in other states. The responsibilities of the County Recorder include creating the permanent record of all mortgages, liens, deeds, and other documents having an effect on real property. Known as *recording*, this consists of collecting state taxes such as documentary stamps and intangible taxes, assigning a unique instrument number to each document to establish priority, and creating a verified index for each record. The Official Records of the county date back to 1921, when Sarasota was divided from Manatee County. The unified recording system for all of Sarasota County’s Official Records includes filings from agencies and residents within our four municipalities: Sarasota, Venice, Longboat Key, and North Port. The County Recorder’s Office also issues marriage licenses, performs weddings, conducts Tax Deed sales, and serves as an application acceptance agent for the U.S. Department of State for the issuance of passports.



187,003

Documents Recorded

Documents recorded include 15,356 mortgages, 31,272 deeds, 2,611 liens, as well as 24,418 court documents.



\$124 Million

Fees Collected

Fees collected include \$118.8 million in DOC stamps and Intangible Taxes, as well as \$3.2 million in other fees.



3,569

Marriage Licenses Issued

2,681 North County
888 South County



9,219

Passport Applications Accepted

6,281 North County
2,938 South County



114

Tax Deed Sales Conducted

1,660

Marriage Ceremonies Held

1,335 North County
325 South County

9,200

Passport Photos Taken

6,424 North County
2,776 South County



GETTING MARRIED AT THE COURTHOUSE

Thousands of wedding ceremonies take place each year at the 1927 Historic Courthouse in downtown Sarasota, FL.

Extensively restored in 2018, the Courthouse is an icon of Sarasota County's rich history, exemplifying the Mediterranean Revival architecture of the 1920's. Originally designed by architect Dwight James Baum, the courthouse has been included in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places since 1984.





The Historic Courtroom, located in Sarasota, creates a stunning backdrop for your wedding ceremony.



The Marriage Parlor's vintage décor offers an intimate setting to say I Do.



At the South County Courthouse in Venice, the Garden Courtyard with Trellis and seasonal tropical foliage is a perfect setting for a ceremony. The Romantic Mural (not shown) is another lovely option at this location.

COUNTY COMPTROLLER AND TREASURER

While serving as the County Comptroller, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller is custodian of all county funds. Vendors and others who provide services to county government receive payments for their goods and services through this office. We pride ourselves on having a prompt payment process. Although state law establishes 45 days as the threshold for payments, this office has set a goal of seven days after receiving a valid invoice. Rating agencies, Internal Revenue Service, Securities Exchange Commission and financial institutions rely on the records prepared by this office, and the county Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) is prepared and published along with other reports designed to support the community’s interest. As Treasurer, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller manages the overall banking relationships for county government and invests Sarasota County’s public funds to maximize investment earnings while minimizing risk for an average investment portfolio of \$1.7 billion.



77,938

Invoices pre-audited and paid on behalf of
Sarasota County Government

14,590

Deposits verified and entered into the financial
accounting system



76,196

Payroll direct deposits processed on
behalf of the Clerk and Comptroller, Tax Collector,
Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections, and
Board of County Commissioners

3,985

Approximate number of employees paid



\$67.1 Million

Interest earned in treasury performance*

\$1.7 Billion

Average investment portfolio*

**Financial data in this Annual Report reflects the most recently completed and audited fiscal year. Updated FY2024–25 figures will be incorporated once the County’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) is issued, which typically occurs between mid-February and March under current reporting standards and timelines.*

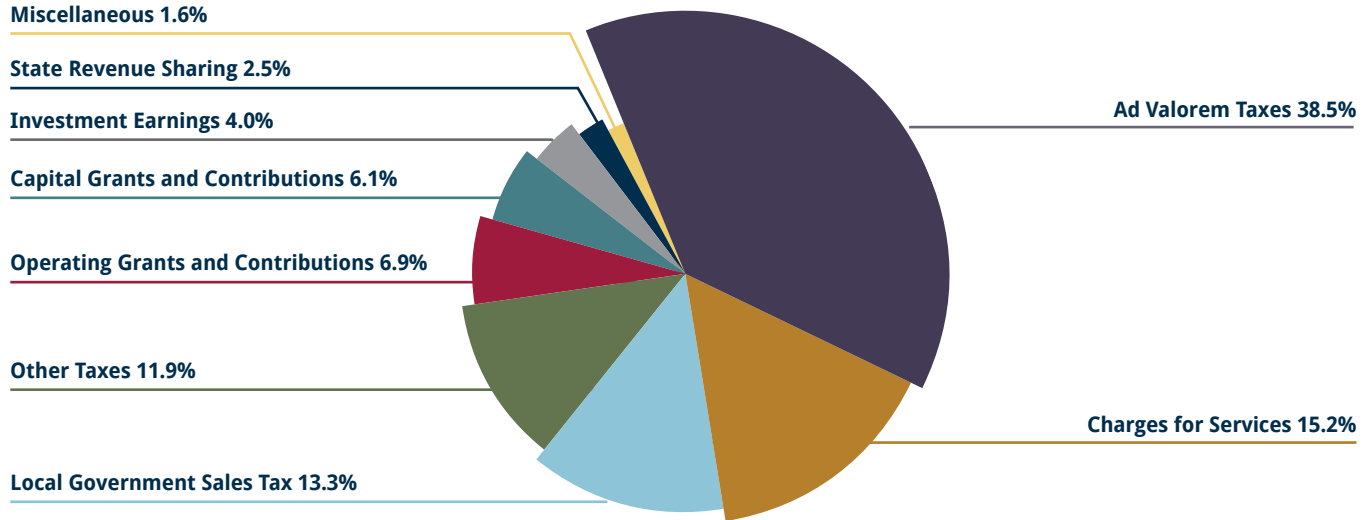


PREVIOUS FY2023 REVENUE*

Sarasota County has multiple sources of revenue. This information is presented on the government-wide financial statements in separate columns referred to as Governmental and Business-Type activities which totaled \$1.147 billion.

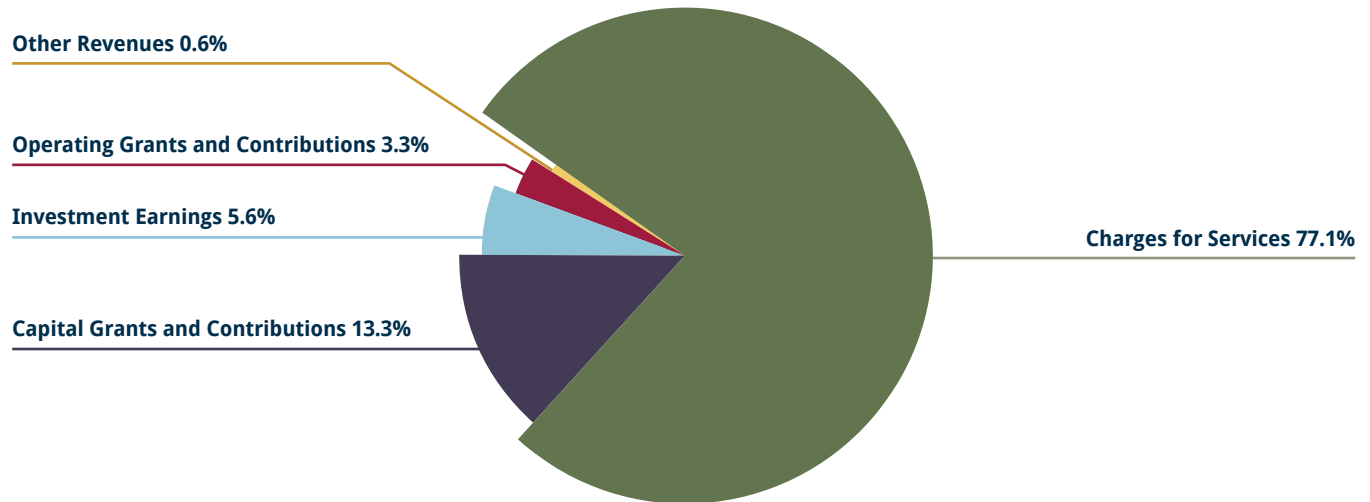
GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Revenues for governmental activities totaled \$824.9 million which primarily includes taxes and charges for services. The largest revenue is Ad Valorem taxes which in fiscal year 2023 totaled \$317.1 million.



BUSINESS-TYPE ACTIVITIES

Revenues for business-type activities totaled \$321.6 million for Sarasota County's Enterprise funds which consists of Public Utilities, Stomwater Utility, Solid Waste System, and Breeze Transit. The largest revenue is charges for services which totaled \$247.9 million.

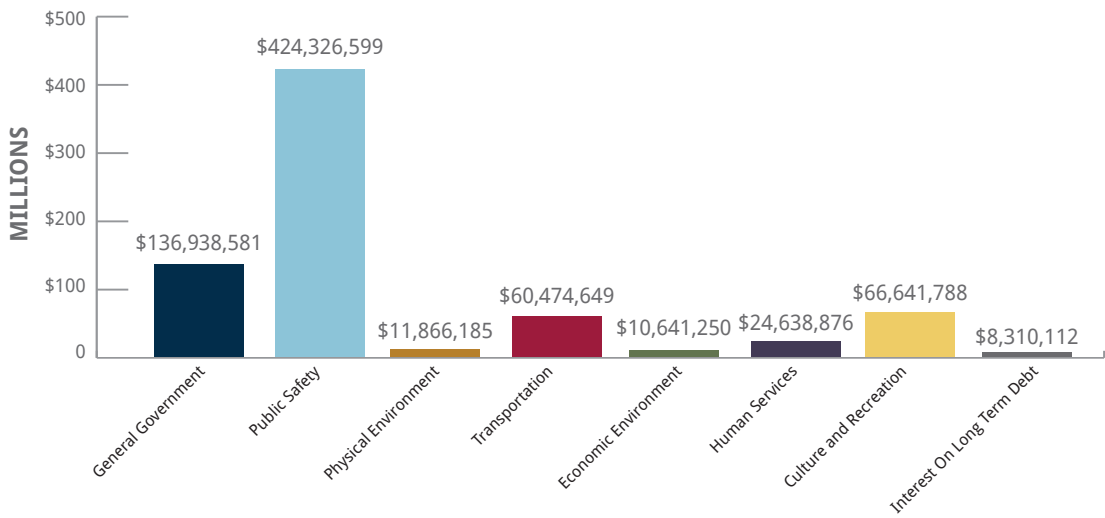


PREVIOUS FY2023 EXPENSES*

Sarasota County presents expenditures on the government-wide financial statement for government funds in functional categories. Each function includes related activities aimed at accomplishing a major service or regulatory responsibility.

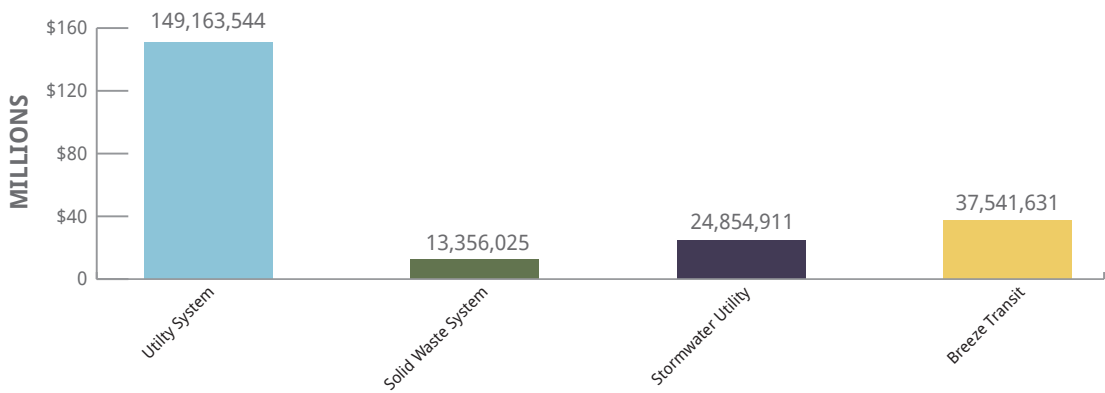
GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

The total governmental activities expense for fiscal year 2023 increased by \$178.4 million from fiscal year 2022 and totaled \$743.8 million. The largest functional category is Public Safety which includes the Sheriff and Fire Departments.



BUSINESS-TYPE ACTIVITIES

The business-type activities expense which consists of Public Utilities, Stormwater Utility, Solid Waste System, and Breeze Transit totaled \$224.9 million in fiscal year 2023.



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COUNTY INTERNAL AUDITOR AND OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Sarasota Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller also serves as the Inspector General (OIG) and County Internal Auditor, responsible for preserving public confidence by promoting accountability, integrity, and transparency in county government. We accomplish this through the following functions:

- Audit and investigative strategies that manage risk to county taxpayers and ensure accountability and compliance for the use of tax dollars
- Investigate allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse of county resources reported by citizens and employees
- Monitor and respond to complaints received through the Fraud Hotline
- Safeguard assets and resources through internal audits of county programs and operations management practices, and governance activities
- Collaboration with law enforcement to implement initiatives that safeguard county resources
- Carry out court-ordered and randomly selected audits to protect vulnerable residents under the guardianship programs
- Conduct audits to test for compliance with resolutions, ordinances, statutes and contracts
- Produce audits, attestations, and other reports for public review
- Ensure proper training and certification of Internal Audit Department staff and the training of all employees on fraud prevention techniques



33

Audits, Investigations,
and Inquiries



410

Employees Trained in
Fraud Awareness and
Prevention



70

Fraud Hotline Calls
Received



18

Recommendations
and Opportunities
for Improvement
Identified



11

Licensed CPAs
and Certified
Fraud Examiners,
Investigators &
Auditors



AUDIT

REPORT

FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE
OF SARASOTA COUNTY RESOURCES



CALL TOLL FREE

(855) 506-0304

SARASOTA COUNTY FRAUD HOTLINE

YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS

(when following proper reporting protocol)

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller also serves as Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners (the Board). The *ex-Officio* designation is bestowed to an individual by way of another office they hold or because of a particular status. In this capacity, the Clerk and Comptroller maintains for public inspection a record of all matters coming before the Board (such as minutes of their deliberations) and applies the official seal to records that require such certification. In addition, the Clerk and Comptroller takes minutes for several other boards within the county.



65

Public Meetings Attended
(Board of Commissioners,
Charter Review, Planning
Commission)

24

Code Enforcement
Hearings Attended



1,120

Value Adjustment Board Petitions Filed

4

Value Adjustment Board Public Meetings
Attended And Official Minutes Produced

495

Value Adjustment Board Hearings
Coordinated, Scheduled And Attended



286

Resolutions Processed

43

Ordinances Processed

169

Contracts Processed

816

County Administration
Signed Contracts Processed





MAIN OFFICE

Historic Courthouse
2000 Main Street
Sarasota, FL 34237-6022

From I-75, take the FL-780/Fruitville Rd. (Exit 210) toward Sarasota/St. Armands. Turn onto FL-780/Fruitville Rd.; left onto S. Washington Blvd./US-301, left onto Main St.

FINANCE, INTERNAL AUDIT/OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, AND BOARD RECORDS

Sarasota County Administration Center
1 Apex Road
Sarasota, FL 34240

From I-75, take the FL-780/Fruitville Rd. (Exit 210) toward Sarasota/St. Armands. Turn onto FL-780/Fruitville Rd. East; right onto Lakewood Ranch Blvd.; left on Apex Road.

JURY OFFICE

Judge Lynn N. Silvertooth Judicial Center
2002 Ringling Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34236

From I-75, take the FL-780/Fruitville Rd. (Exit 210) toward Sarasota/St. Armands. Turn onto FL-780/Fruitville Rd.; left onto S. Washington Blvd./US-301, left onto Ringling Blvd.

SOUTH COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Venice Branch
4004 S. Tamiami Trail
Venice, FL 34293

From I-75, take the Jacaranda Blvd./County Hwy-765 (Exit 193) toward Englewood/Venice. Travel south on Jacaranda Blvd.; turn right onto Tamiami Trail S./US-41 N./FL-45, left onto Annex Road.