

# THREE FLORIDA CITIES

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## PORT ORANGE

Population: 50,000

City Workforce: 422 (FTEs)

## SOUTH DAYTONA BEACH

Population: 14,000

City Workforce: 136 (FTEs)

## DAYTONA BEACH SHORES

Population: 4,300; Seasonal: 20,000

City Workforce: 80 (FTEs)

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### Synopsis

Concerned about the talent pipeline for future city managers, three Florida cities — Port Orange, South Daytona Beach and Daytona Beach Shores — teamed up to create a two-year city-manager internship. The model program gives a master's-level intern the opportunity to work full-time in jurisdictions of varying size, under different city managers and city councils, while learning the ropes of city management. In short, the intern gains exposure to both the science and art of "surviving the profession." Individually, these cities might not have had the resources to sponsor an intern, but by collaborating they share costs while giving the intern more varied experience.

### Challenges

Who will be the next generation of city managers? And where can those who want to become city managers get a foothold in the field? There are no easy answers due to two sets of challenges: the need to learn on the job, and the lack of opportunity to do so.

- **The job of a city manager can only be learned through experience.** An effective city manager needs skills that can't be learned sitting in a classroom: Managing an entire City Council of bosses. Dealing with competing interest groups and ordinary citizens. Surviving changes in administration. As city manager in a small city — traditionally the first rung on the career ladder — "you're in charge of a police department, a fire department, a parks department and perhaps a large utility company. You've got an \$11-12 million budget," says William Whitson, assistant city manager for Port Orange. "That's pretty complicated to know how to handle coming straight out school."
- **Career opportunities for younger people are limited.** City Councils, the body that hires a city manager, are often dominated by baby boomers. "Baby boomer councils want to hire baby boomers," says Ken Parker, Port Orange's City Manager. "They're comfortable with people their own age and that puts younger candidates at a disadvantage."

- **Current city managers aren't retiring as soon as they're eligible.** That reduces job vacancies. And because city managers tend to move around, it means that less experienced candidates may compete for the same jobs as those with 30 years of experience.
- **The job also attracts retirees.** Cushioned by a regular pension, a recent, public-sector retiree might be happy to take a city manager job in a small community, even though it pays just \$25,000 per year. While such jobs used to be the entree into the profession, today, "the people getting these jobs are not the young people," says Parker. "At some point, that's got to concern you."

Such generational issues may be more acute in Florida, with its concentration of older adults, than other states. Yet they are not the only factors limiting career opportunities for younger people. The supply of Master's of Public Administration (MPA) graduates has grown significantly. "When most of us went to school, there weren't that many MPAs out there," says Joe Yarborough, city manager of South Daytona Beach. "Now we're inundated with them throughout city government."

### Approach

For all of these reasons, the Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA) recognized the need to attract more young people into the profession and agreed to co-sponsor a new city-manager internship proposed by the three cities, a flagship program that other cities and counties might also adopt. The association helped promote the call for applications on its web site and to local colleges and universities. Applicants were required to have completed an MPA degree or its equivalent. The cities' top-choice candidate began her internship in May 2004.

### Program Description

Mirroring the career path of a typical city manager, the intern moves from a smaller city (South Daytona, population: 14,000), to a larger one (Daytona Beach Shores, permanent population: 4,300; seasonal: 20,000), to Port Orange, a city of 50,000. The rotation—eight months in each jurisdiction—introduces him or her to a range of municipalities, management styles, political, and organizational issues. “By exposing the intern to a network of managers and cities throughout Florida,” says Parker, “we’re increasing the likelihood that this person will be hired after completing the internship. We’re also giving them a network.”

Initially, the three cities considered making the internship just one year, but quickly decided that wasn’t long enough. “Things are so complicated in city management,” says Whitson. “No one could learn what they needed in one year.” Longer rotations also give the intern the chance to get know each community better. Predictably, they’ll also encounter different issues as they move from, say, a resort town to a community with more cultural and economic diversity.

What does it take to create such an internship? In short: time and commitment from the city manager and a willingness on the part of city council to take the long view.

“There’s not an immediate return,” Whitson acknowledges. “You have to have your eye on the bigger picture. We have to start identifying talent and training people now because it takes time to become a city manager. It’s a long-term investment we’re making.”

### Cost

The intern’s annual salary (\$25,000) and benefits (\$9,250) are divided equally among the three cities. Additional support from FCCMA (\$5,200) is enabling the intern to attend both the Florida and the International City and County Management Association conferences and to participate in other executive-level training for city managers.

### Evaluation

Implemented in 2004, the program is too new to have produced any results. After completing the program, an intern should be ready for a job as a city manager of a small community, or an assistant city manager in a medium-sized one. Only by making sure that younger people get such opportunities can cities ensure an experienced pipeline for city managers in the future.

According to Ana Motie, the first intern, the experience is teaching her how to “survive the profession.” It’s not something she could have picked up during her MPA program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Among her assignments thus far: managing Port Orange’s Emergency Operations Center during a three-hurricane season. In Daytona Beach Shores, she helped set up a Community Redevelopment Agency. And when she moves on to South Daytona in October 2005, she will focus on the economic side of city redevelopment.