

The City of Fort Meade, Florida

Invites your interest in the position of

CITY MANAGER



Fort Meade: A Small City with Big Plans

Polk County's oldest city is preparing for the future in many ways: Fort Meade is addressing infrastructure and recreational needs, working to attract new businesses to the area, and involving its residents in important decisions. Fort Meade will celebrate its 175th Anniversary on October 11, 2025.



FORT MEADE, FLORIDA

Located in Central Florida's Polk County and part of the Lakeland—Winter Haven Metropolitan Statistical Area, Fort Meade is set amid colossal sand dunes, rolling hills, and indigenous vegetation. The City covers a total area of 8.55 square miles and has a current growing population of approximately 5,500.

Fort Meade is the kind of City that still maintains the character and charm of living in a place where everybody really does know your name. Spend a few minutes talking to the locals and you will find that the personality of Fort Meade draws you back to a simpler, friendly time when families and friends gathered together to enjoy barbeques at each other's homes. Perhaps Fort Meade's old-fashioned hospitality has something to do with its historic surroundings and its love and celebration of history. The City has over 300 Historic Homes on the National Register, some dating back to the late 1800s. More than 150 Fort Meade buildings have landmark designations. Fort Meade is a community that values where it came from and is optimistic about where it is going. There is still plenty of room for growth, geographically speaking. The prevalent attitude of the residents is that there is always room for one more. In essence, Fort Meade maintains the small-town feel with limited traffic, where residents can use golf carts in the City limits and have the ability to attend festivals when the City closes down Main Street (which makes it almost feel like Mayberry).



History

Fort Meade is the oldest City in Polk County, dating its origins to 1849, when it was established along a new military road from Tampa (Fort Brooke) to Fort Pierce following the Second Seminole War. The town and road were originally sited by then lieutenant George Meade of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, whose commander named it for him. Around the start of the Civil War, a mounted volunteer company nicknamed the "Hickory Boys" was formed at the Fort. The 1880s business district was located on old Wire Street (now Broadway), which was a casualty of four devastating fires. In the 1890s, the Fort Meade Street Railway operated a horse-drawn service in the town.

Fort Meade's Christ Church (Episcopal), located at 1 North Cleveland Avenue, was built in 1889. It is a frame vernacular with Gothic Revival elements and was designed by architect J. H. Weddell. Located within the historic district, the church was used for the HBO motion picture "Judgment," featuring Blythe Danner, Keith Carradine and Jack Warden (1990).

Future Confederate General Stonewall Jackson was stationed at Fort Meade in 1851. The town was burned by Union forces in 1864 and all of the original structures except the second Fort were destroyed.

City Parks and Annual Events

Parks

Fort Meade is home to a number of attractive recreational venues including several City-owned parks. The City's crown jewel is the 430-acre Peace River Park which serves as a focal point of the City and brings many people to Fort Meade. Heritage Park and Patterson Park, both located near downtown, provide the community with a variety of attractive amenities and venues including playground, fishing, hiking, biking and more.

Annual Events

The City sponsors a number of popular events that attract not only returning local participants but visitors from around the country. These events include festivals celebrating the City's

history and culture, a soul music festival, and a community Christmas parade. They include:

- Central Florida Soul Music Festival: This two-day event in downtown Fort Meade showcases soul, gospel, and R&B artists on two performance stages. It also features vendors selling food and other wares.
- Festival de las Americas: Held in downtown Fort Meade to coincide with Hispanic Heritage Month, this event celebrates the arts and heritage of Hispanic cultures throughout the Americas.
- Battle of Bowlegs Creek Heritage Festival: This annual festival commemorates Polk County's only Civil War battle which was fought nearby.
- Meet Me At Museum Park: This celebration of Historic Fort Meade's anniversary includes food and craft vendors, demonstrations, and an art show.
- Christmas Parade: Hosted by the City of Fort Meade and the Fort Meade Chamber of Commerce, this nighttime parade travels through downtown with a "Hometown Christmas" theme.
- A Taste of Agriculture: This fundraiser benefits the Polk County Youth Fair and includes a dinner, live and silent auctions, and a live band.

FORT MEADE DEMOGRAPHICS US Census—2025 Estimates	
Population	5,383 (p 5.55% since 2020 census)
White (Non-Hispanic	54.9%
Black or African American	15.6%
Hispanic	27.6%
Median Age	43.8 years
Median Household Income	\$35,131 (2023)
Poverty Rate	23.9%
Average drive to work time	37.8 minutes
Homeownership	71 of homes are owner-occupied
Median property value	\$141,500 (2023)
Education at high school or higher level	76.5%

- **Spring Curbside Clean Up:** The City of Fort Meade organizes a special curbside pickup event for residents to dispose of unwanted items.

Economy

Economic growth has been evident in Fort Meade. The Mosaic Corporation developed a world class 10,000-acre golf and spa resort named Streamsong nearby. Legoland Florida opened on October 15, 2011, and is having an economic impact on Fort Meade and the surrounding areas. Many of the historic homes are being purchased and restored despite a depressed Florida real estate market. There is a strong possibility that a major data center will soon be locating in Fort Meade. The data center is anticipated to create 100+ well-paying new jobs and to generate over \$30M in increased general fund revenue. The City's tax base increased by 8.9% this year.

Transportation

Major highways in Fort Meade are US 17 north/south highway which runs through the middle of town. North of town, it leads to Bartow and to the South it leads to Wauchula.

US 98 – Cosigned with US 17 on the north side of Fort Meade; US 98 turns eastbound and leads to Frostproof and US 27.

Convenient air service is provided by Tampa International Airport (approximately 63 miles). Orlando International Airport and Sarasota Bradenton International Airport are both about 73 miles from Fort Meade.

Education

Public K-12 education is provided by Polk County Public Schools. Campuses are Lewis Elementary School (K-5) and Fort Meade Middle-Senior High School (6-12). The Middle-Senior High with the District's highest graduation rate, is rated #1 in the county. Polk County Public Schools is one of the largest school districts in the nation, encompassing more than 120 schools and serving more than 117,000 students through both traditional K-12 schools and a variety of other programs. While expanding its physical footprint, Polk County Schools has a reputation for educational excellence as evidenced by its nearly 30 nationally accredited workforce academies, six Florida Arts Model Schools, and rising number of schools offering Advanced Placement and Cambridge International programs.

Private schools in Fort Meade include New Beginnings High School and St. Catherine of Siena Catholic School (K-8).

Higher education facilities within easy reach of Fort Meade include South Florida State College, Polk State College, Webber International University and Southeastern University.

County Public Schools garnered national attention for becoming one of the first districts to launch a school safety guardian program. Developed in conjunction with the Polk County Sheriff's Office, the guardian program ensures every campus has either an armed school district employee or law enforcement officer on site.

Worship

There are 33 churches in the City, representing a comprehensive array of denominations.



ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- The City needs a Strategic Plan. The City needs a cohesive vision.
- Low employee morale (possibly caused by recent senior management turnover).
- City utility rates are low and have not kept up with increasing costs.
- Additional housing and jobs are needed to keep up with the City's current and anticipated growth.
- The Fort Meade on-the-market housing inventory is currently limited and the builders are trying to keep up. Infill construction is booming. It is a matter of time until new commercial accounts and expansion outside of the formal city limits may be necessary. (53 new single-family homes are contracted for construction now.)
- There is currently significant developer interest in both commercial and residential development in Fort Meade in spite of the fact that the price of buildable lots has recently increased from \$8,000 to more than \$40,000. In a little more than a year.

The Vision

The City recently updated its vision plan to guide future growth and is actively pursuing some aspects of that with a \$750,000 Community Development Block Grant. The purpose is to enhance, beautify and improve pedestrian safety on Main Street and MLK Street.

The City is now working with several private businesses on potential land swaps to enable the City to obtain strategic downtown properties. The plan is for the businesses to relocate to industrial areas so as to conform with Fort Meade's Land Development Regulations. These discussions are at the planning stage; The City is bringing in technical staff to guide that vision forward and get it on paper so all parties can agree and pull off the six-parcel swap in the City.

People are moving to Fort Meade to get away from the larger cities and traffic. Fort Meade's cost of living is less than in other parts of Polk County. Fort Meade's low utility rates attract interest from adjacent property owners who are interested in annexation.

Infrastructure projects include:

- Updating the City's main sewer line (funded by a \$4.4 million State Revolving Fund grant).
- Enhancing some of the older parts of the sewer system. (Funded by a \$6.125 million Department of Economic Opportunity grant).
- An upcoming \$1 million project to resurface and repave streets.
- Refurbishment of the City water tower.
- Implementation of a plan to replace the bridge over the Peace River in 2023.
- Began work to get prepared for a major road project.
- Improvements to the City's electric system to better withstand hurricanes. (This system provides electricity to about 3,000 meters in a five-square mile area.)
- Constructing a new City Library

Attracting New Business

- In trying to attract new business, the City focuses on its low electric rates, its few outages, low cost to develop property and the fact that more than 35,000 vehicles travel through the City daily.
- The City has been in contact with several large companies regarding growth in the City. Although details are not yet available, the projects would potentially change the face of Fort Meade.
- The City has also started foreclosure proceedings on vacant buildings in the downtown commercial corridor and will likely turn those over to commercial interests as it obtains ownership of these properties.

THE CITY GOVERNMENT

The City Commission

By Charter, the City of Fort Meade has a commission-manager form of government. The Commission consists of five Commission seats. Commissioners are elected for four-year terms, with elections held in odd-numbered years. Commission terms begin in January following the year of the election. The position of Mayor is filled each year by a majority vote of the full Commission. The Commission is responsible to ensure that City fulfills its lawful duties. This is accomplished by adopting ordinances and resolutions to direct the City's affairs, including budget responsibilities, handling City business, and making recommendations to improve the community. The Commission appoints the City Manager and the City Attorney. Municipal services provided by the City are Finance; Code Enforcement; CRA, Human Resources & Risk Management; Library; Customer Services and Utility Billing; Fire; Public Works

including Streets, Stormwater and Parks and Recreation; and Utilities which include Water, Wastewater Electric; and Utilities Operations and Support. Law Enforcement services are provided by the County Sheriff. **The City employs 60 FTE's.** The City's current all funds budget is almost \$9.3M of which approximately \$5.2 comprises the General Fund.

CITY OF FORT MEADE, FLORIDA Organizational Chart



FORT MEADE CITY COMMISSION MEMBERS			
Commission Member	Commission Position	Title	Term Expires
James Possum Schaill	Seat #1, Precinct 516	Vice-Mayor	January 2028
Patricia McCutchen	Seat #2, Precinct 517	Commissioner	January 2028
James Watts	Seat #3 Precinct 518	Commissioner	January 2026
Jaret Landon Williams	Seat #4 At Large	Commissioner	January 2028
Samuel Berrien	Seat #5 At Large	Mayor	January 2026

The City Manager (From the City Job Description)

This is a professional administrative position responsible to the City Commission for the proper administration of all affairs of the City in accordance with the policies determined by the City Commission, City Charter and applicable laws and ordinances.

Essential Functions:

- Exercises hiring, control, and direct supervisory authority over all departments and divisions of the municipal government, both existing and those which may be created by the City Commission, including public utilities owned by the City.
- Administers through subordinate department heads such functions as public safety, maintenance of public streets and property, sanitation, utilities operations and related functions, electrical distribution, inspection services, financial operations, and budgets.
- Attends all meetings of the City Commission and participates in discussions/deliberations.
- Makes recommendations to the City Commission on such measures as deemed necessary or expedient to the interests and operations of the City.
- Ensures that all laws, provisions of the Amended Charter, and acts of the City Commission, subject to enforcement by the City Manager, are faithfully executed.
- Keeps the City Commission fully advised as to the financial condition and needs of the City and submits for the City Commission's consideration an annual budget and capital improvement budget, and a projected capital improvement program for a minimum five (5) year period and be responsible for the administration upon adoption.
- Executes contracts on behalf of the City, pursuant to the provisions of appropriations ordinances.
- Acts as final purchasing authority for the City and ensures compliance with the City's rules for purchasing and disposing of City equipment and material.
- Makes such reports as the City Commission may require concerning the operation of City departments, offices, and agencies subject to his/her discretion and supervision.
- Prepares and submits to the City Commission as of the end of the fiscal year, a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the City for the preceding year.
- Maintains community respect through good public relations and by keeping residents informed of City progress and policies. Discusses problems and complaints concerning City operation with citizens or refers to appropriate official for action.
- Directs the media relations activities for the City.
- Represents, or designates a City representative at important conferences and meetings.
- Understanding of Federal and state regulations, and statutes pertinent to City government

Minimum Qualifications:

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Knowledge and basic principles and practices of accounting, engineering, risk management and human resource and modern management
- Knowledge of operation and regulations of water/wastewater system and electric distribution
- Knowledge of common business and accounting software
- Knowledge of grants application processes and requirement
- Skill in dealing with members of the public and clearly understanding the concerns of the citizens of the City.
- Skill in working with other government agencies.
- Skill in developing written documents, including ordinances, contracts, and policies.
- Ability to direct and carry out complex oral and written instruction.



Steamsong Resort



* Designed by David M. (S.A.)

- Ability to set a vision for the future.
- Ability to build a strong leadership team that is capable of implementing the vision and goals of the City.

Education and Experience:

Graduation from an accredited four (4) year college or university with a Bachelors Degree in Public Administration, Business Administration, Engineering, or a related field supplemented by course work in management. Must have at least three (3) years of demonstrated management experience as a city or county government chief executive officer, an assistant city manager or deputy city manager or in a senior management position with a-like size organization and significant work in the public sector. A Master's Degree may be substituted for one (1) year of required experience.

Licenses, Certificates, Special Requirements

Possess a valid Florida driver's license on date of hire.

Residency within the City of Fort Meade within three months of hire is highly preferred.

Preferred Leadership and Management Skills, Abilities and Characteristics

- Listens carefully and with a receptive mind.
- Decisive - willing to make tough decisions regardless of negative pressure.
- Skilled in identifying improvement opportunities for the City operations and in facilitating their introduction, execution, and integration into the overall operational capability of the City.
- Ability to communicate effectively using speaking, hearing, writing, and vision skills.
- Ability to deliver presentations and speeches.
- Ability to manage multiple priorities and projects and meet established deadlines.
- Willing to stand on his/her own merits.
- Always holds what is best for the City as paramount.
- Experience with utility management – prefer some electric utility experience.
- Leads with and consistently demonstrates honesty, integrity, fairness, equality and trust.
- Politically astute but not politically active.
- Leads with diplomacy, tact and exhibits empathy and professionalism in every interpersonal interaction.
- Effective communicator with the City Commission, staff, and the community – able to adapt message to individual audiences.
- Will take the time to develop relationships with community stakeholders.
- Skilled at understanding and communicating complex information with clarity and transparency,
- Values high staff morale and a positive organizational culture as a priority and recognizes the value of the existing staff as a vital part of the team.
- Views self as a servant leader who personally contributes to the overall mission of the organization and as- a “first among equals” and a mentor to the staff.
- Clear ability and willingness to delegate assignments and not micromanage.
- Maintains an open-door policy where employees feel welcomed, providing a safe space to openly share thoughts, ideas, concerns, exhibiting emotional intelligence.
- Expertise in finance and budget with an emphasis on creating financial and strategic plans pertaining to
- infrastructure, including utilities, public safety, and parks.

- Expertise in negotiations, completing development agreements with fair outcomes for the community.
- Sees and can articulate a vision for the City's future with the ability to develop a strategic plan and establish a path that elevates Fort Meade to the next level.
- Is calm under pressure, unflappable to criticism.
- Values the importance of and understands the need for a healthy work/life balance both personally and for staff.
- Recognizes the critical value and importance of regular communications with the City Commission and each Commissioner.
- Demonstrates independence and professional approach to elected officials by treating all fairly, in a nonpartisan manner.
- Demonstrates humility and the professionalism, tact and diplomacy when having to say "no" or make an unpopular recommendation.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Compensation for the position will be highly competitive. Beginning compensation is negotiable based on qualifications and experience. The City provides excellent employee benefits which include generous paid time off, medical, dental vision, an Employee Assistance Program, life/AD&D, long term disability, a fully City paid defined benefits retirement, an optional deferred compensation retirement plan and more.



Visit Fort Meade on the web at:

www.cityoffortmeade.com

TO APPLY

The recruitment will remain open until the position is filled. The first review of resumes is scheduled for November 14, 2025.

Please send a letter of interest, a detailed résumé, and salary expectations to:

Robert E. Slavin, President.

SLAVIN MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

E-mail: slavin@bellsouth.net

www.slavinmanagementconsultants.com

Electronic submissions are required.

THE CITY OF FORT MEADE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER