



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

FISCAL YEAR 2023 | OCTOBER 1, 2022 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2023



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## CORE VALUES

Protect | Steward | Serve | Innovate | Equity-Driven | Transparent  
Competent | Inclusive | Lead with Integrity

## A MESSAGE FROM



“Equity, transparency, and independence drive our office whether it’s serving the function of the Court, providing important records, or being stewards of County finances. Over the past fiscal year, our team has focused on four strategic priorities, each aimed at enhancing the services we provide: Customer Experience, Community Engagement, People and Training, and Process Review and Innovation.

We take pride in our initiatives that exceed the expectations of both constituents and our employees. These efforts have garnered recognition, having received 11 accolades from Top Workplaces, and being awarded Certificates of Excellence in every category in the Best Practices Excellence Program by Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (page 11).

Our commitment to public service means we aim to meet people where they are by participating in community outreach events to educate the public about our services (pages 12, 18).

To ensure continuous improvement, we track our progress diligently. You can find detailed information regarding each department’s accomplishments here (page 16).

Recognizing the complexities of the court system, we prioritize accessibility and convenience for those who rely on our services. We continuously work to alleviate the challenges people face in navigating the court system (page 14).

We remain dedicated to sharing our innovative work in the coming year and are excited to build upon these achievements. ”

*Cindy Stuart*





# ABOUT OUR OFFICE

The Florida Constitution established the Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller as a public trustee, independently elected to safeguard your public records and public funds. The Hillsborough Clerk of Court & Comptroller serves many roles including Chief Financial Officer, Treasurer, Board of County Commissioners, Clerk of the Court, County Recorder, and County Auditor.



## CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, TREASURER, BOCC

- Prepares County financial reports
- Pays all County bills and pre-audit all County expenditures
- Manages the County's investments to earn investment income on taxpayer funds
- Documents and maintain minutes, records, and activities of the County government meetings



## CLERK OF THE COURT

- Processes and file all civil and criminal court documents
- Protects evidence
- Provides the public with access to court records on paper and online
- Manages the County's jury system



## COUNTY RECORDER

- Maintains official County records
- Records documents such as mortgages, deeds, liens, judgments, and marriage licenses



## COUNTY AUDITOR

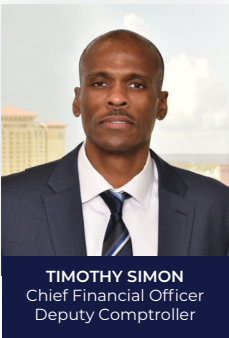
- Assists management in achieving efficient and effective administration of their areas of responsibility
- Makes recommendations to management to improve internal controls and mitigate risks
- Monitors management's corrective action plans
- Offers training to County staff on internal controls and fraud prevention

# MEET THE TEAM

Meet the dedicated individuals who shape the future of our organization. Get to know the faces behind our leadership and learn more about the collective knowledge and vision that propels us forward.



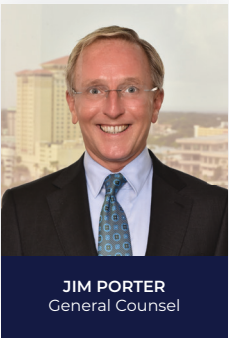
MARYLOU FERNANDEZ  
WHALEY  
Chief of Staff



TIMOTHY SIMON  
Chief Financial Officer  
Deputy Comptroller



CINDY STUART  
Clerk of Court  
& Comptroller



JIM PORTER  
General Counsel



MICHELLE DECKER  
Chief Information Officer



HEIDI PINNER  
Chief Audit Executive



CHRISTINE NAPPI  
Aide to the Clerk



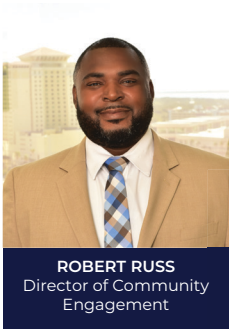
ANDREW BARRIOS  
Chief of Human Capital  
and Talent Development



KIMBERLY RICHARDS  
Chief Deputy Records  
Management



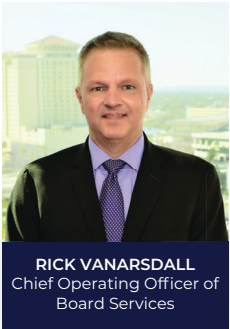
BRANDI WILLIAMS  
Chief Officer of Court  
Operations



ROBERT RUSS  
Director of Community  
Engagement



CARSON CHAMBERS  
Senior Director of  
Communications and  
Marketing



RICK VANARSDALL  
Chief Operating Officer of  
Board Services




JULIAN MENDEZ  
Director of Procurement  
and Operations



KATHLEEN ROCAMORA  
Director of Strategy  
Realization



# BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



The Board of County Commissioners are composed of seven commissioners elected in separate districts. They act as local legislative and executive bodies by setting public policy, levying taxes, and managing funding for public projects and programs. The appointed County Administrator carries out the policies and decisions made and approved by the commissioners.



**Bonnie Wise**  
County Administrator



**Harry Cohen**  
District 1



**Ken Hagan**  
District 2, Chair



**Gwen Myers**  
District 3



**Michael Owen**  
District 4, Vice Chair



**Donna Cameron Cepeda**  
District 5, County-wide, Chaplain



**Pat Kemp**  
District 6, Countywide



**Joshua Wostal**  
District 7, Countywide



## COUNTY GOVERNMENT

	<b>SHERIFF</b> <b>Chad Chronister</b> Protects the community		<b>SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS</b> <b>Craig Latimer</b> Oversees the election process
	<b>TAX COLLECTOR</b> <b>Nancy C. Millan</b> Collects your taxes		<b>PUBLIC DEFENDER</b> <b>Julianne Holt</b> Provides legal representation, consultation, and advice to clients
	<b>STATE ATTORNEY</b> <b>Suzy Lopez</b> Promotes the safety and well-being of the public		<b>PROPERTY APPRAISER</b> <b>Bob Henriquez</b> Assesses your property's value
	<b>CLERK OF COURT</b> <b>Cindy Stuart</b> Keeps records, services judicial system, maintains county finances		<b>13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT</b> Hears all criminal and civil matters not within the jurisdiction of county courts

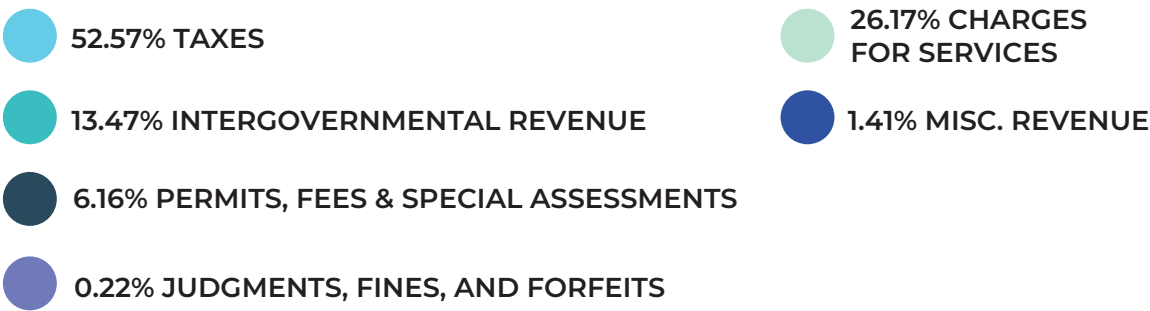


# YOUR COUNTY'S FUNDING

ABBREVIATED HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FY22-23 ADOPTED BUDGET SUMMARY

Hillsborough County generates revenue from multiple sources, with the largest being taxes. Other revenue generators include user fees, grants, and state-shared revenues. The County uses this money to provide necessary services for residents.

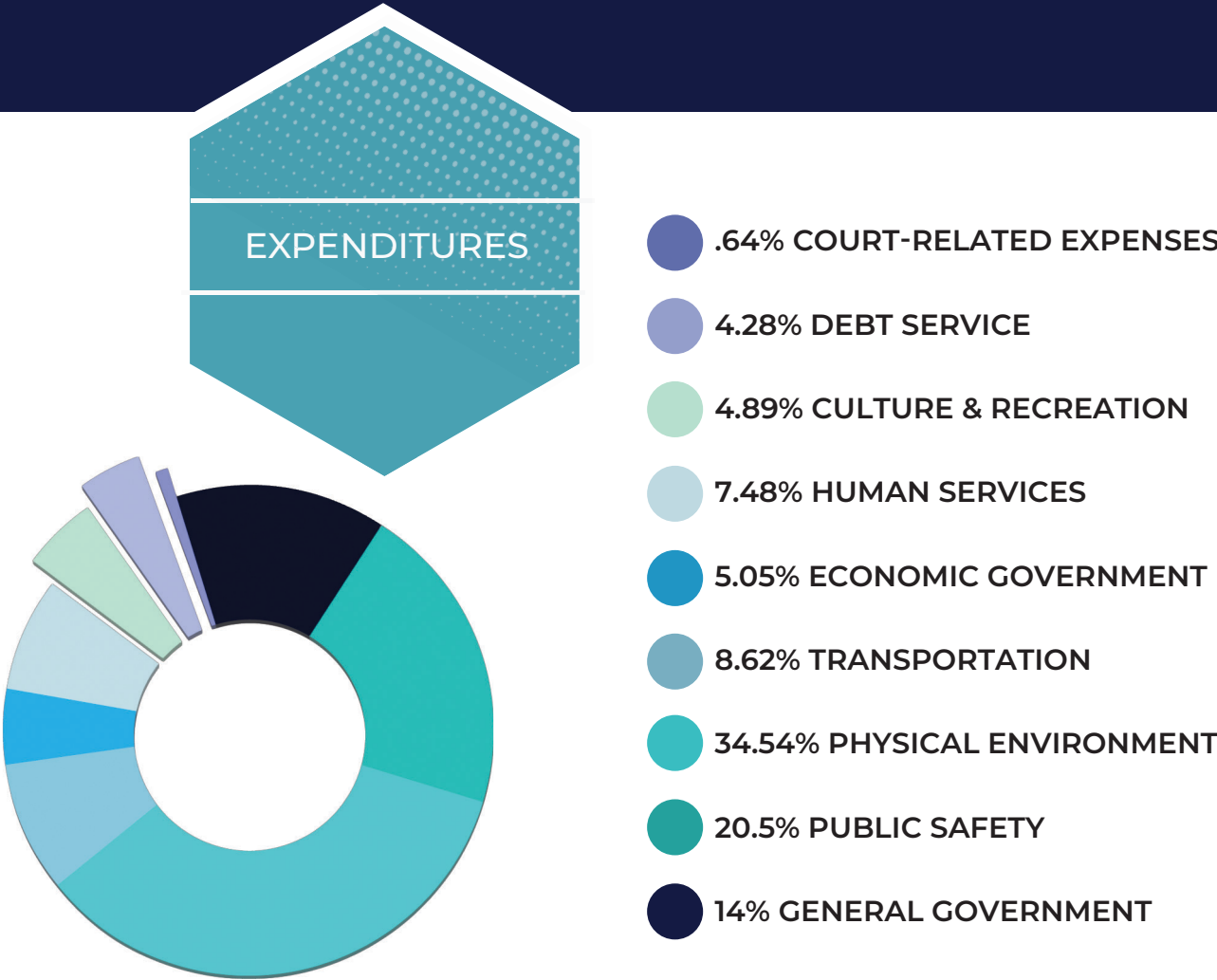
## ESTIMATED REVENUES



# YOUR COUNTY'S EXPENSES

ABBREVIATED HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FY22-23 ADOPTED BUDGET SUMMARY

Tax dollars and other sources of revenue must be spent in accordance with the County's budget. Each year, the Board of County Commissioners creates and approves a balanced budget detailing how public money will be spent on government operations, services, and projects. By law, each fund type must be balanced and may not show a deficit.









# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## Volunteer Events

Clerk staff generously volunteered their time at 40 events contributing to 1,658 volunteer hours throughout the year. Volunteers helped the community by performing a wide range of tasks from painting rundown houses, cleaning up local parks, extending care at animal shelters, and stuffing an impressive 30,000 backpacks with school supplies for children. What an exceptional year of community support!



## Local Parades

The Clerk's office actively participates in local parades to foster connections and raise awareness about valuable services. We proudly join these vibrant celebrations, aiming to educate and engage our community, reinforcing our commitment to serving their needs and building strong, lasting relationships. Look for our decorated Clerkmobile in the next Hillsborough County parade!



## Town Hall Meetings

These meetings hosted by Commissioner Gwen Myers were a pivotal platform for spreading awareness about our free Property Fraud alerts. Our dedicated Clerk staff attended 7 Town Hall meetings across Hillsborough County, educating 350+ residents and continuing the conversation with homeowners associations, realtors, and title companies.



## Government Career Fair

Sometimes it can be hard to know where to start for those seeking a career in local government. Recognizing this challenge, we took the initiative to launch the first-ever Government Career Fair, hosting every local government agency. This event provided an opportunity for 205 attendees to engage in direct conversation with recruiters, allowing them to submit their resumes in person and take that first crucial step toward their government careers.

# MEETING THE COMMUNITY WHERE THEY ARE



Clerk Cindy Stuart pictured with 4-H and FFA Students at the Hillsborough County Fair

The transition from high school to the working world can be challenging. The Clerk's office provides support to high school seniors through the Future Career Academy (FCA). Through FCA, we've organized 12 field trips and hosted 600 students! Attending FCA hiring events led to the hiring of 3 high school seniors ready for the workforce. The Clerk's office has also continued the Corporate Work-Study program through Cristo Rey. This gave 6 high school students the opportunity to intern in multiple departments in the Clerk's office. We're committed to helping students make a smooth transition into their careers.



# CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

## ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND CONVENIENCE

### Passport Saturdays

The Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office is authorized by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) to accept U.S. passport applications. While our Official Records department handles these applications during regular business days, Clerk Cindy Stuart periodically extends these services to Saturdays to assist customers who can't visit during the workweek. In FY23, our office processed 575 Passport Applications during Passport Saturdays.

### On the Road Again: April 14, 21, 28, 2023

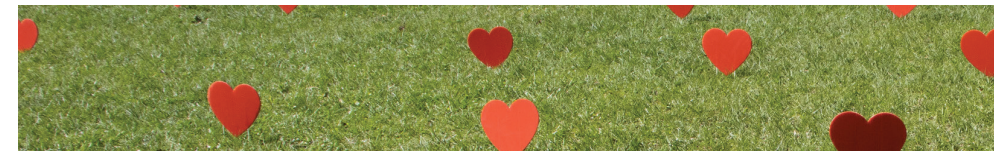
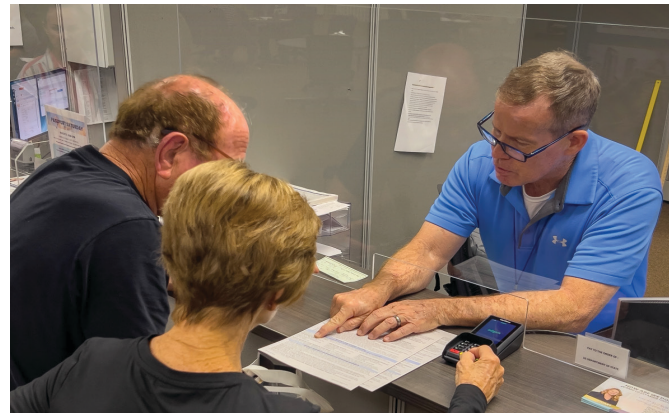
Thousands of Floridians live with the obstacle of suspended driver's licenses because of unpaid traffic tickets, fines, and court obligations. On the Road Again is an initiative that helps community members gain their independence by saving money, settling fines and fees, and getting their driver's license reinstated on-site. During the last event, over \$180k in court costs were waived, 528 cases were removed from collections, and 73 cases were dismissed completely!

### Veterans Court: November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

It's another way to say 'thank you' to veterans for serving our country. We bring court services out of the courthouse and into the community to the James A Haley Veterans' Hospital working with our partners at the Hillsborough County 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court. Veterans were able to resolve fines, legal fees, and other outstanding legal issues in one hearing. During the last event, \$18k in court costs were waived, and 32 cases were dismissed completely. We also honor our heroes by giving them priority in customer service lines all year and waiving fees for passport photos in November!

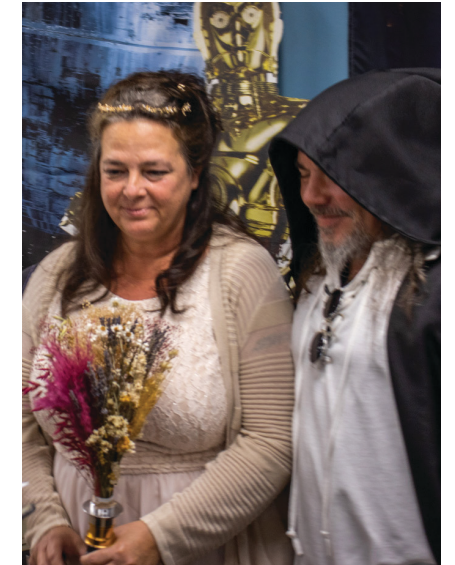
### Bail Bonds Open Houses

Bond agents are mandated to complete their registration with both the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and the Clerk of Court before they can issue bonds in Hillsborough County. In the lead-up to the registration deadline, we hosted a series of open-house events that aimed to streamline the registration process. At these events, bond agents were welcomed at the entrance and provided with all the essential paperwork required for their registration. This one-stop shop succeeded in registering 132 bond agents, which is over half of all bond agents in Hillsborough County.



### Community Wedding Events

We believe in making our services accessible and possible for the public, and one of the ways we achieve this is by hosting special wedding events. On February 14th, Clerk Cindy Stuart presided over the unions of 32 couples, all of whom exchanged vows in the picturesque setting of Courthouse Square. Prior to the Tampa Pride Parade, the Clerk's Office initiated a pre-parade wedding ceremony. The newlyweds were then invited to join the Clerk staff in walking the Tampa Pride Parade. We have hosted several themed ceremonies, including a Star Wars-themed ceremony on May 4th! Our walk-in ceremony room is often decorated for special holidays. These extraordinary moments underscore our dedication to going the extra mile to make our constituents happy.

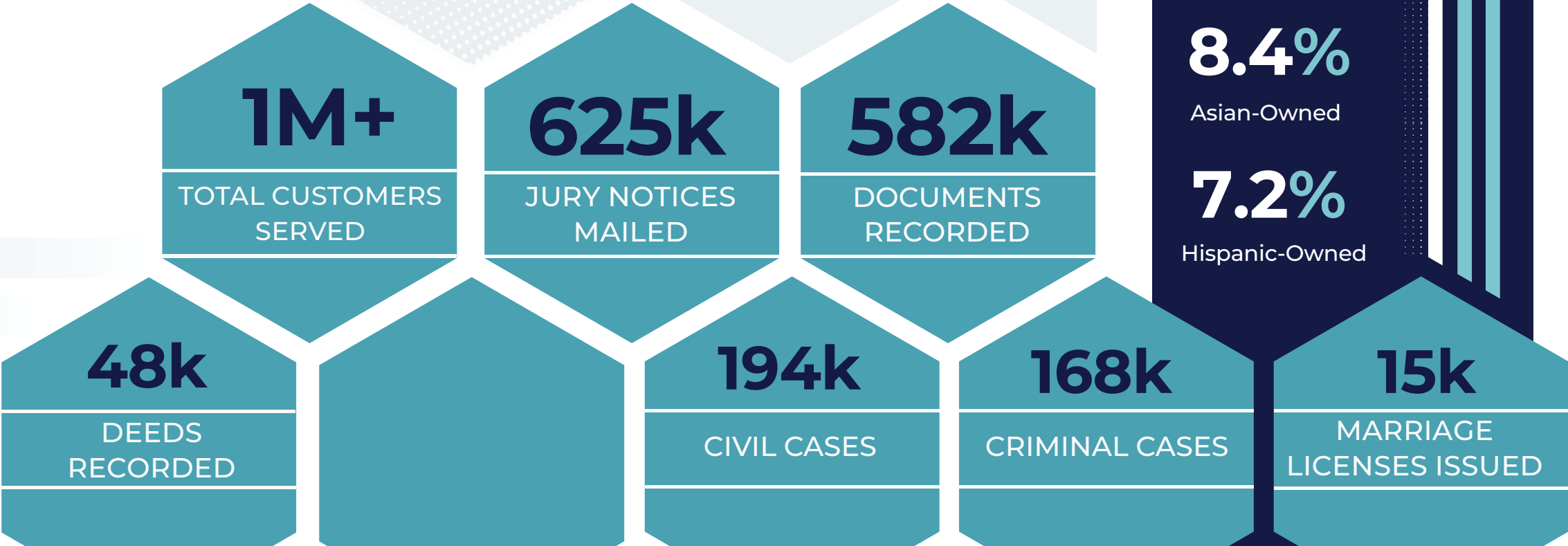
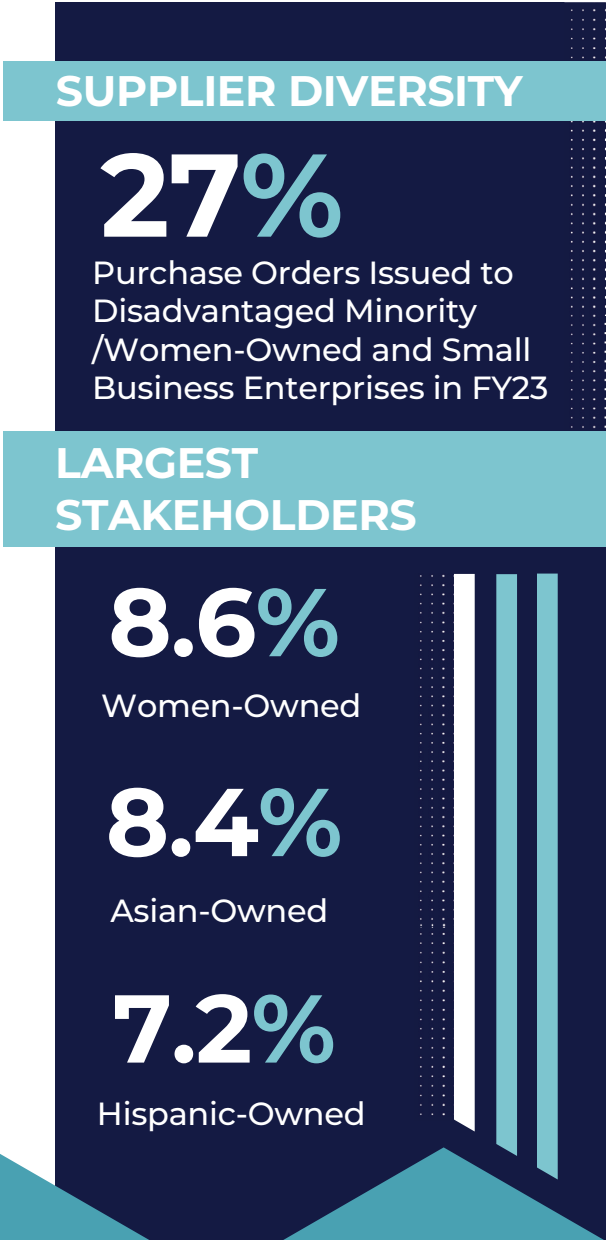
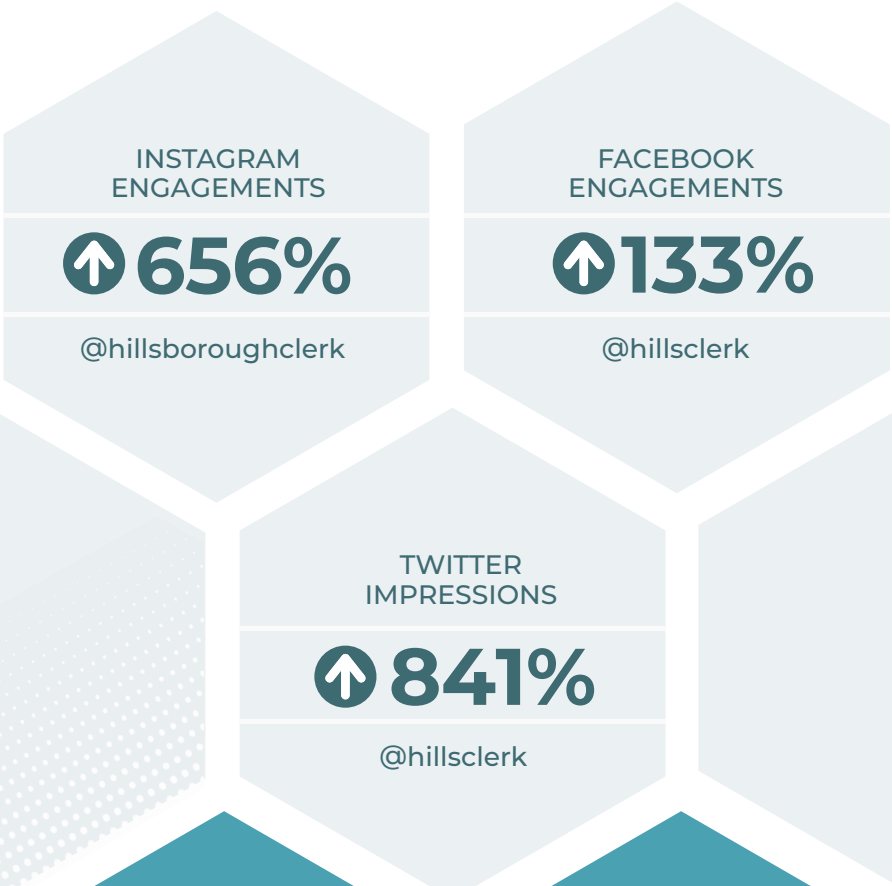




# PROCESS REVIEW & INNOVATION

## FACTS AND FIGURES: FY23

624,519	Court-Related Notices Mailed
13,249	Full Cases of Records Imaged
581,564	Documents Recorded (In-person & e-record)
15,344	Marriage Licenses Issued (Online & In-person)
126,639	Jurors Summoned
194,081	Civil Cases
168,361	Criminal Cases
247	Jury Trials
246,822	Customers Served In-Person
442,989	Customers Served in Call Center
678,794	Calls handled by phone (IVR)
628,406	Visits to hillsclerk.com
6,493	E-Certify Transactions





# INK & IMPACT

## MEDIA OUTREACH

The Clerk's office has garnered attention in prominent local news outlets, newspapers, and magazines, championing various initiatives. From shedding light on property fraud prevention to providing tips for a seamless passport application process, promoting our unique themed wedding events, and informing the community about our Bilingual Pay policy — our outreach spans diverse facets. We are dedicated to spreading awareness about career opportunities including our partnership with Future Career Academy. Our overarching objective is to create a lasting impact in the community, ensuring that everyone is well-informed about the myriad ways the Clerk's office can serve and empower them.



**Local**

### Hillsborough County Clerk Of Court Joins Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody's 100 Percent Club

From left to right: Jim Porter, Shelby Russ, Robert Russ, Hillsborough County Clerk & Comptroller Cindy Stuart, Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody, MaryLou Fernandez Whaley, Andrew Barrios, Christine Nappi and Julian Mendez.

Staff of the office of the Hillsborough County Clerk of Court and Comptroller display the certificates they received after Human Trafficking Training.

100 Percent Club recognizes organization-wide training to recognize, report signs of human trafficking.

The Hillsborough County Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office is now officially recognized as the largest organization statewide to join Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody's 100 Percent Club.

Attorney General Moody met with Clerk Cindy Stuart and her team in Tampa last week to award a certificate of completion and congratulate staff on the achievement.

The Clerk's Office committed to engaging all 650 plus employees in training provided by the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking.

"Our employees can now act as hundreds of eyes and ears to combat human trafficking in Hillsborough County. My office aspires to be not just the largest to complete the training organization-wide, but to have a lasting impact," said Hillsborough County Clerk of Court and Comptroller Cindy Stuart. "Our employees serve the public on a daily basis, keeping in mind our mission to provide excellent service, but also compassion to anyone experiencing hardship, trauma, and any other adversity."

The 100 Percent Club recognizes entities for taking three simple, proactive steps to train employees about the signs of human trafficking and how to report it.

After completing training, Hillsborough County Clerk employees are now displaying their certificates at our downtown Tampa, Brandon, and Plant City offices to help spread awareness to customers as well.

January is recognized as Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

The Human Trafficking Awareness training, offered by the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking <https://floridallianceendit.com/>, raises awareness through workforce training and provides resources to effectively report human trafficking.

You can find the application at: <https://www.youcanstopit.com/pdfs/100-percent-club-application.pdf>

The Hillsborough County Clerk of Court's Office has also employed alert cards, handbills and posters for organizational awareness. You can Stop HT - How You Can Help.

Florida Attorney General Moody announced the new initiative called the 100 Percent Club in January of 2022.

**FROM THE CLERK OF COURT & COMPTROLLER**  
Cindy Stuart - Clerk of Court & Comptroller, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

### Clerk of Court & Comptroller Working with Local Partners to Combat Property Fraud

New law will change the way deeds are recorded statewide.

Protecting citizens from property fraud is a top priority for my office. We work closely with the Hillsborough County Sheriff and State Attorney to ensure Hillsborough County citizens and government agencies are well prepared to fight property fraud.

House Bill 1419 (HB 1419), entitled "Real Property Fraud," will affect attorneys and real estate professionals. HB 1419 creates statewide changes establishing new requirements for recordings in the Official Records in the State of Florida.

According to the FBI, Florida ranks #3 in the nation for this type of white-collar crime.

HB 1419 is to refine recording guidelines to impede criminal activity associated with real property recordings. Beginning July 1, 2023, anyone recording a deed must include the legal description of the real property. For example, a legal description may include details such as lot numbers, subdivision names, etc.

Also effective July 1, 2023, HB 1419 establishes a new "quiet title" action. The Quiet Title action is available to pro se litigants and attorneys to file in instances where there is an allegation that a fraudulent conveyance of property occurred. The filing would give a legitimate property owner the opportunity to correct that fraudulent activity.

**FREE SERVICE**  
**PROPERTY FRAUD ALERTS**  
Protect your most valuable investment  
Sign up for free today!  
Cindy Stuart

**FROM THE CLERK OF COURT & COMPTROLLER**  
Cindy Stuart - Clerk of Court & Comptroller, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

### Delivering 24/7 Services Online for Your Convenience

Hillsborough County Clerk online innovations save time and money.

Equity, transparency, and independence drive our office — whether it's serving the function of the Court, providing important records, or being stewards of County dollars.

Our organization focuses on four strategic priorities, including Customer address can go online and purchase electronically-certified records and have them delivered as secured, PDF-formatted documents via email. Parties who receive e-Certified documents can authenticate them using the clickable link on the document cover page or by scanning the QR code with a smartphone.



# GOING ABOVE THE LINE OF DUTY

## INITIATIVES THAT SET US APART

### Offering Free Property Fraud Alerts

Property and mortgage fraud is the fastest-growing white-collar crime in the United States, according to the FBI. Our office is here to help anyone who is purchasing, refinancing, downsizing, or making any real estate transaction. This free property fraud alert program notifies a homeowner within 48 hours after a document, like a mortgage or a deed, is recorded using their name or business name. Clerk of Court Cindy Stuart offers this service completely free for any resident of Hillsborough County. We have been working hard to spread the word about this service! During FY23, our new subscriptions jumped from 2,275 to 20,544, which is an 800% increase!



**SIGN UP FOR  
PROPERTY FRAUD  
ALERTS IN UNDER  
5 MINUTES!**

**PropertyFraudAlert.com  
1-800-728-3858**



### Human Trafficking Prevention Panel

Clerk Stuart organized an essential Human Trafficking awareness panel featuring survivors, a judge, and an HCSO representative. Survivors shared their experiences, and Colonel Ura provided tips on spotting trafficking signs. This panel complements existing staff training on identifying and reporting suspicious activities. To reach more employees, we created an online training module that 160 staff members completed.



### Domestic Violence Innovations

Clerk Cindy Stuart joined Attorney General Ashley Moody as she introduced Project Protect, which provides an additional layer of protection for Domestic Violence victims. In addition, our office has expanded with new filing sites, which makes filing for a restraining order more accessible for the 6,500 DV victims who seek help every year. We are excited to play a part in offering accessible and safe locations for victims to file.



### Juror Compensation Program

\$15 a day adds up! The Clerk's office added a new option to juror summons which had never been done before in Hillsborough County. Now, jurors' charitable donations are helping the community with the added option to donate daily compensation to a statutorily appointed non-profit, The Spring of Tampa Bay. During FY23, jurors donated \$31 thousand to the local domestic violence shelter.



### Bilingual Pay Policy

Our bilingual pay policy recognizes and compensates approximately 50 bilingual employees who provide translation and interpretation services to our Hispanic Community in Hillsborough County. Clerk services are now more accessible to non-English speaking members of our community, particularly the more than 45,000 Hispanic customers who request support.



### Clerk's Table Community Food Pantry

Everyone deserves access to nutritious food, so we've partnered with Feeding Tampa Bay to establish a dedicated food pantry, Clerk's Table. This pantry is not only for our employees but for anyone in need, including domestic violence victims we encounter in our offices. On Tuesday, October 3, 2023, the Clerk's Table received its 42<sup>nd</sup> delivery from Feeding Tampa Bay for a total of 34,251 lbs. which equates to 28,543 meals for families. As of October 3, 2023, the Clerk's Table has served 2,035 people and 1,048 children. We track our service through pantry submission forms, topping 547 requests.



# HOW WE SERVE YOU 24/7

SEARCH COURT RECORDS

MAKE PAYMENTS

FIND COURT DATES

FILE CASES

MARRIAGE LICENSES

SET PASSPORT APPOINTMENTS

CHECK JURY STATUS

SEARCH HISTORICAL RECORDS

HILLSCLERK.COM | (813) 276-8100

# WHERE TO FIND US

- 01

PLANT CITY COURTHOUSE  
301 North Michigan Avenue, Room 107, Plant City FL 33563
- 02

BRANDON REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER  
311 Pauls Drive Brandon, FL 33511
- 03

GEORGE E. EDGECOMB COURTHOUSE  
800 East Twiggs Street Tampa, FL 33602
- 04

PAT FRANK COURTS BUILDING  
419 North Pierce Street Tampa, FL 33602
- 05

FREDERICK B. KARL COUNTY CENTER  
601 East Kennedy Boulevard, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor & 13<sup>th</sup> Tampa, FL 33602

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Follow Clerk social media







email newsletter



[hillsclerk.com](https://hillsclerk.com)