



2026 DEMOGRAPHIC GUIDE

PLACED 1ST AMONG THE TOP 10 FASTEST-GROWING
CITIES IN THE U.S.

**Population | Workforce Development | Industry Sectors | Major Employers
Wages & Income Taxes | Education | New Industry & Expansion | New Construction
Location Specific Redevelopment & Economic Incentives | Housing | Construction**

LAKELAND

It's a great place to live, work and play — that's why we call it home!

Built upon historic character, philanthropy and volunteerism, Lakeland offers its residents, businesses and visitors a true sense of place. Incorporated in 1885, Lakeland quickly became one of the premier cities in Florida. From the inaugural railroad service in the mid-1890s to being one of the first cities in Florida to have electricity, Lakeland has always been a hub of innovation and progressive ideas. Today, the City continues to thrive as population and business expansions are attracted to this area, the geographic center of Florida. Lakeland's economic base consists of warehouse, transportation and distribution, education, health care, manufacturing and retail.

Lakeland has received the distinction of being on Money Magazine's "Best Place to Live in America" list. In addition, Lakeland is home to Publix Supermarkets, Florida Southern College, which hosts the largest one-site collection of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in the world, and is the winter home to the Detroit Tigers.

The City of Lakeland offers an exceptional quality of life. A firm commitment to downtown development, redevelopment, historic preservation, cultural amenities, and an exceptional business-friendly environment has helped Lakeland to thrive for nearly 141 years. Growth and progress exemplify our City all the while maintaining a sense of history and a hometown feel.

Lakeland placed 1st for fastest growing boomtowns

-MoveBuddah



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LOCATION

- Polk County, Florida, **9th** largest county in Florida
- Central position in Florida's **High Tech Corridor**
- **32** miles to Tampa
- **54** miles to Orlando
- **90** minutes to beaches on both the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts
- **3** international airports within a 1-hour drive

REACH

- **11 million** people live within a 100-mile radius
- **1.5 million** tourists visit annually

ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

2025

City of Lakeland
Population

124,997

Lakeland Electric
Service Area

318,926

Polk County
Population

846,896

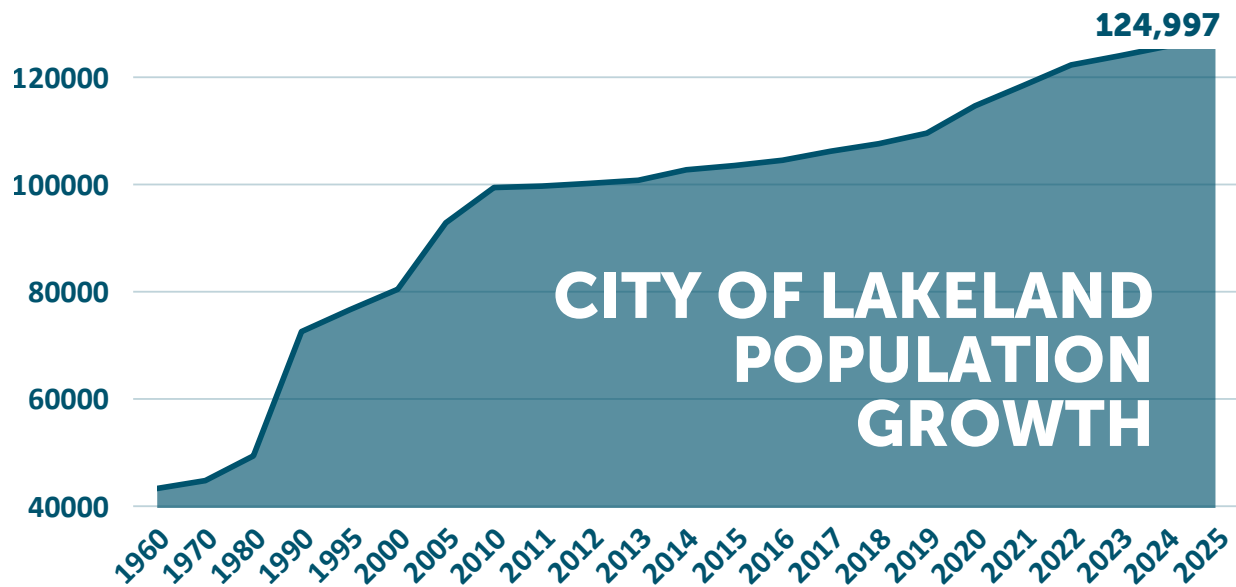
State of Florida
Population

23,379,261

Metric	2025 Estimate / Value
Total Number of Households	49,322
Median Net Worth	\$147,982
Median Household Income	\$65,914
Lakeland Labor Force	53,970
Employed	51,338
Unemployed	2,632
Lakeland Unemployment Rate	4.87%
Average Home Sales Price	\$364,114
Single Family Permits	453
Multi-Family Permits	51
Warehouse/Industrial Sq. Ft. Permitted	426,312 sq. ft.
Commercial/Office Sq. Ft. Permitted	30,320 sq. ft.
Retail Sq. Ft. Permitted	68,709 sq. ft.
Public/Institutional Sq. Ft. Permitted	29,531 sq. ft.



POPULATION



Lakeland's population has nearly **tripled** since 1960.

Since 2020, Lakeland's population has grown by **11%**, adding more than **12,300** new residents in just **5** years.

Between 2010 and 2025, population density rose by **27%**.

Polk County ranked among the nation's top five counties for domestic migration for the fifth consecutive year, adding between **22,000** and **34,000** U.S. movers annually since 2021, although growth has moderated since its 2022-23 peak.

1960
16.78
SQ. MILES

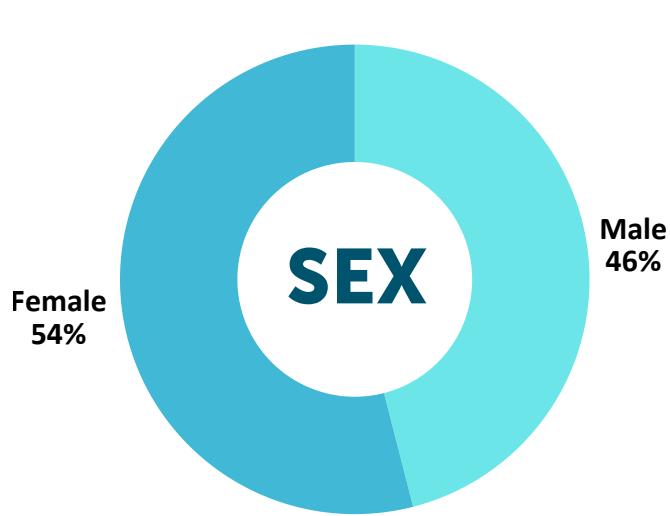
SIZE

2025
75.26
SQ. MILES

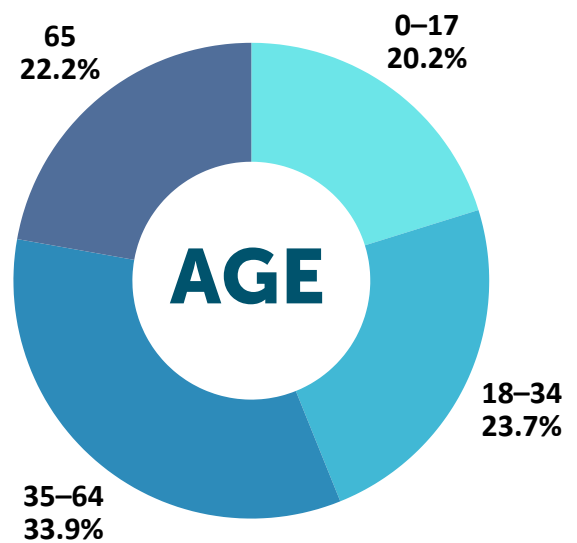
Source: University of Florida 2026



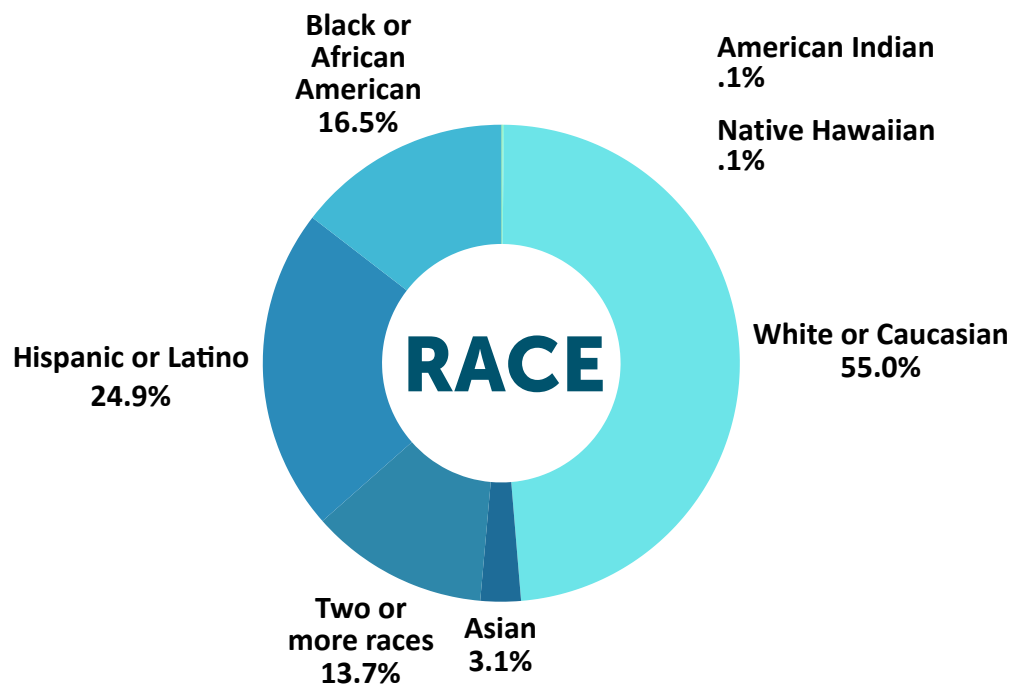
POPULATION



Lakeland has a slight **female** majority, especially in older age groups.



From 1990 to 2025, the **85+** population more than **doubled**.



Over **40%** of Lakeland residents are people of color, with multiracial and Hispanic populations steadily increasing.

POPULATION

Florida's Top 25 Incorporated Cities, 2025

City	Population
Jacksonville	1,032,601
Miami	478,799
Tampa	412,684
Orlando	340,681
St. Petersburg	266,153
Port St. Lucie	260,194
Hialeah	232,243
Cape Coral	222,862
Tallahassee	205,623
Ft. Lauderdale	192,338
Pembroke Pines	171,413
Hollywood	156,997
Gainesville	151,275
Palm Bay	146,929
Miramar	140,807
Coral Springs	136,062
West Palm Beach	126,944
Lakeland	124,997
Clearwater	118,327
Miami Gardens	116,192
Pompano Beach	115,813
Palm Coast	110,330
Davie	107,914
Fort Myers	102,060
Boca Raton	100,897

Metro and Non-Metro Population, 2025

Metropolitan Statistical Area	Population
Miami/Fort Lauderdale /West Palm Beach	6,364,623
Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater	3,403,788
Orlando/Kissimmee	2,961,947
Jacksonville	1,802,177
Sarasota/Bradenton/Venice Beach	954,485
Lakeland	846,896
Cape Coral/Fort Myers	839,223
Daytona Beach/Ormond Beach	745,247
Melbourne/Titusville/Palm Bay	667,900
Fort Pierce/Port St. Lucie	560,355
Pensacola	549,173
Ocala	433,765
Naples, Marco Island	413,314
Tallahassee	404,606
Gainesville	364,471
Fort Walton Beach	316,740
Panama City	226,826
Punta Gorda	223,430
Sebastian/Vero Beach	173,013
Homasassa Springs	166,500
The Villages	162,493
Sebring	107,976
Total All MSA's	22,688,948
Total Non-Metro	690,313
Total Florida	23,379,261

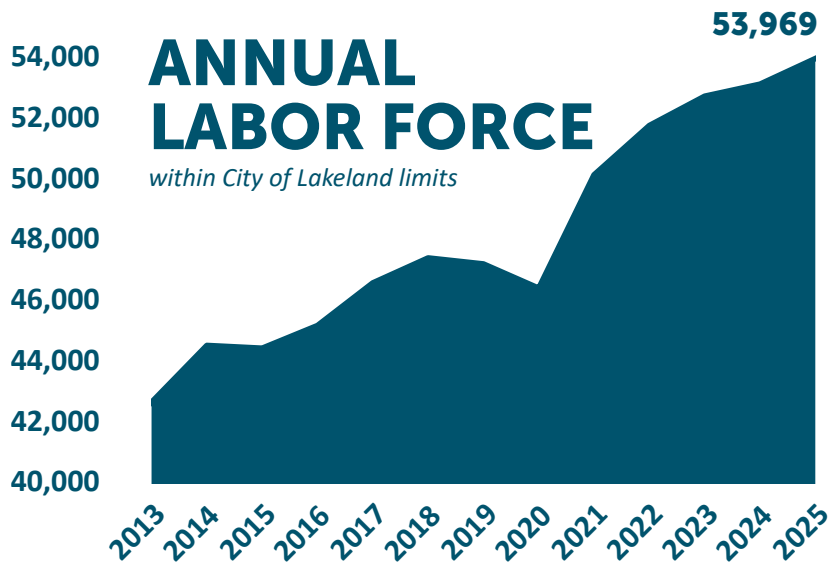
Lakeland's metro area is **6.7x** larger than the city itself. We serve a much bigger region, including nearby places like Winter Haven and Bartow.

Source: University of Florida BEBR 2025

Lakeland-Winter Haven metro area ranked #31 on the Milken Institute's 2025 Best Performing Cities index

Source: Milken Institute

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Lakeland, Florida's Annual Employment Gains Outpace Orlando and Tampa.

Source: CoStar

Unemployment Rate
4.87%

1-Year Job Growth
0.6%

Projected 10-Year Growth
8.1%

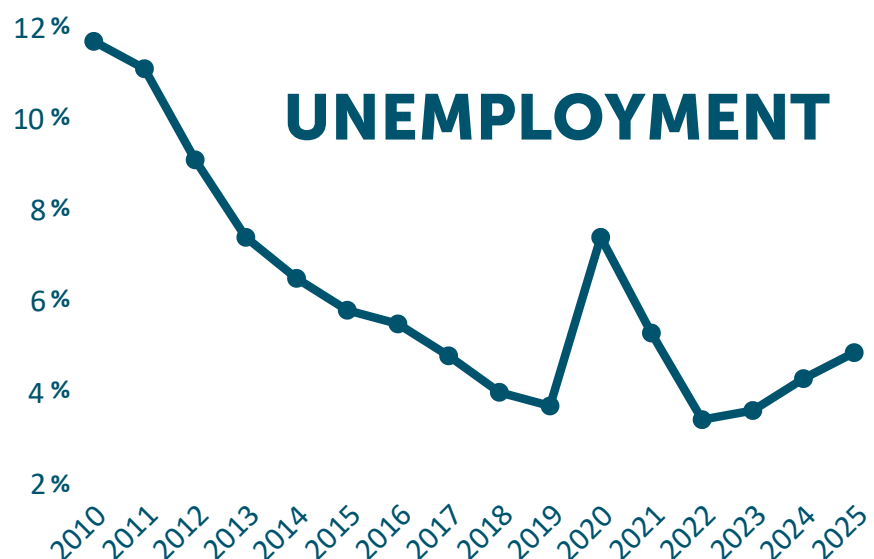
Median Household Income
\$65,914

Per Capita Income
\$46,274

Sales Tax
7%

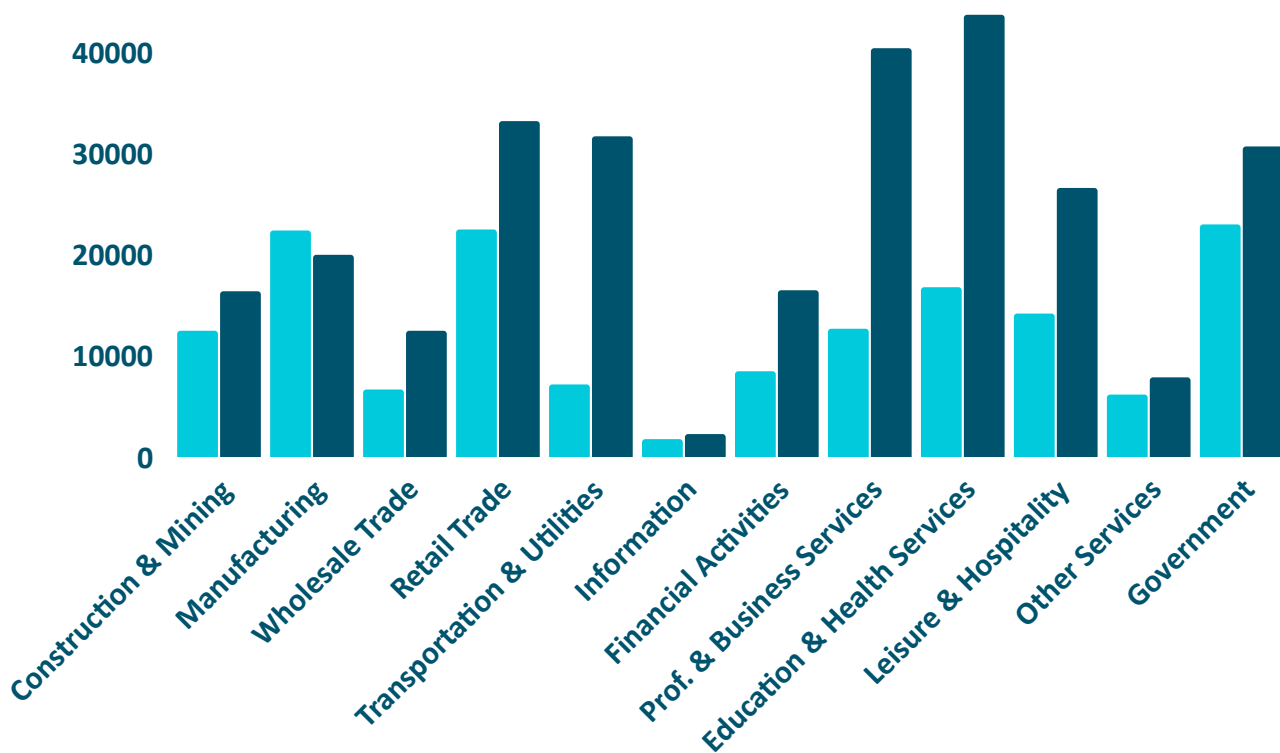
Lakeland placed 4th for best cities for women in the workforce

Source: Checkr



INDUSTRY

Industry Sector Comparison 1990 vs. 2026



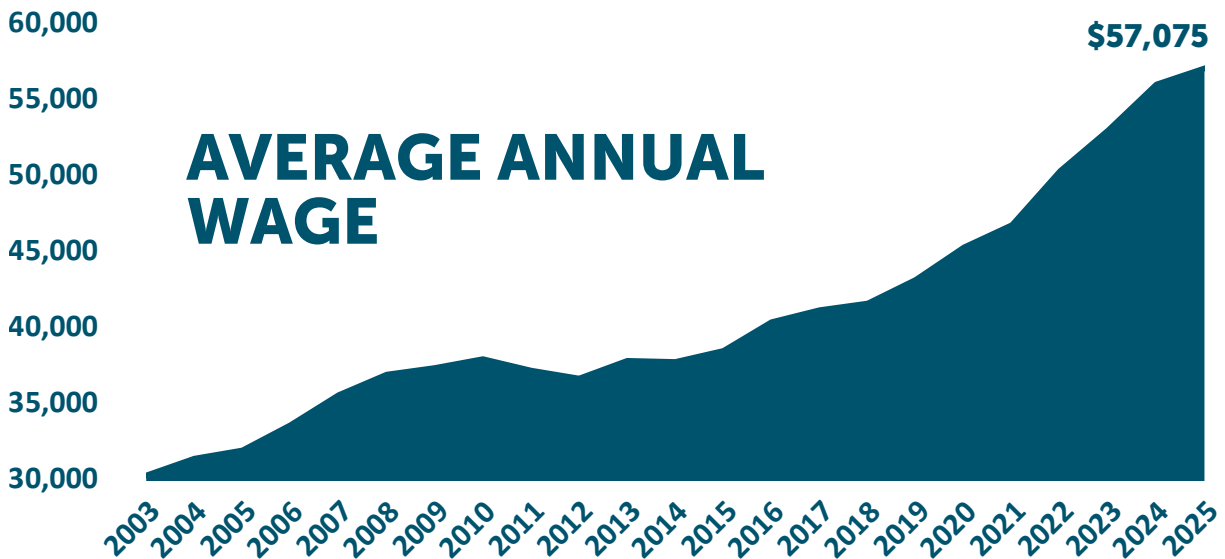
TOTAL LABOR FORCE FOR
LAKELAND-WINTER HAVEN MSA: **281,900**

87% of all jobs in Lakeland are in
service-related sectors.

7th in STEM Employment Growth with a **91.4%**
increase in computer, engineering, and science
jobs from 2019-2023.

Source: Commercial Cafe

WAGES & INCOME



Lakeland Has Experienced **71.4%** Growth in High-Income Households, Ranking 7th in the U.S.

Source: SmartAsset

2025 Average Annual Wage by Industry

Public Administration	\$64,575	Real Estate & Rental Leasing	\$58,340
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$45,535	Professional, Scientific Services	\$82,015
Construction	\$60,885	Management of Enterprises	\$97,490
Manufacturing	\$58,810	Administration & Waste Services	\$51,030
Wholesale Trade	\$66,810	Educational Services	\$57,945
Retail Trade	\$42,820	Healthcare & Social Services	\$69,070
Transportation & Warehousing	\$53,015	Arts & Entertainment & Recreation	\$48,085
Utilities	\$85,250	Accommodations & Food Services	\$35,865
Information	\$69,145	Other Services	\$55,075
Finance & Insurance	\$84,330		

**Estimates based on regional growth data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) / QCEW (Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)*

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Employer	Business	Employed
Publix Super Markets, Inc	Groceries	8,008
Lakeland Regional Health Systems	Health Care	6,000
GEICO	Insurance	3,300
Amazon	Retail/DC	2,000
Watson Clinic	Health Care	1,857
Orlando Health	Health Care	1,500
Saddle Creek Corporation	Logistics	1,289
Southeastern University	Education	1,072
Midstate Michine & Fabrication	Fabrication/machining	900
Rooms To Go	Furniture Distributor	827
Advanced Auto Parts	Auto Parts	615
Florida Southern College	Education	550
Summit Consulting	Insurance	540
Primo Water	Customer Contact Center	500
Southern Wine & Spirits	Beverage Distributor	500
WellDyne RX	Pharmacy Benefits	426
Mission Foods	Tortilla Products	400

Manufacturing

Publix Super Markets, Inc.	Deli, Dairy & Bakery	1,430
Midstate Machine & Fab	Fabrication & Machine	900
Mission Food	Tortilla products	400
Tampa Maid Foods	Seafood Processing	400
Harrell's Inc.	Fertilizer blending	335
Pepperidge Farm	Bakery	325
Keymark	Aluminum Extrusions	318
IGT	Lotto Ticket Printer	300
Flowers Baking Co.	Bakery	225
Carpenter Company	Insulation	200
GMF Steel Group	Fabricator	200
Refresco	Fruit Juices/Re-packaging	190
JBT FoodTech	Citrus Processing Machinery	142
MaxPak	Corrigated Containers	140
Firmenich, Inc.	Flavors & Essence	120
Treat USA	Flavors & Essence	92

Government

City of Lakeland	Government	2,343
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TAX INFORMATION

General Tax Climate

- No state personal income tax, inventory tax, inheritance tax, or state ad valorem tax on real/tangible property.
- Florida's overall tax burden is lower than most southeastern states.
- Lakeland has one of the state's lowest city millage rates at 5.4323.

Sales Tax

- Florida state sales tax: 6%
- Local Polk County sales tax: +1%
- Exemptions: Food, medicine, machinery for new businesses, and R&D equipment.

Corporate Income Tax

- Based on modified federal income using a 3-factor formula (25% property, 25% payroll, 50% sales).
- \$5,000 exemption available.
- Corporate tax rate: 5.5%

Communications Services Tax

- Applies to telecom, cable, satellite, and related data/audio/video services.
- Providers must register and remit taxes.

Homestead Exemption Reforms (2008)

1. Additional \$25,000 exemption (excludes school taxes).
2. Portability: Transfer up to \$500,000 of "Save Our Homes" benefit to a new homestead.
3. Non-Homestead Cap: 10% annual limit on assessed value increases.
4. Business Equipment Exemption: \$25,000 off tangible property like office equipment.

Tax Summary

Polk County	6.6348
School Board	5.296
*Parks MSTU	0.5286
*Library MSTU	0.1985
*Stormwater MSTU	0.0941
SWFWMD	0.1831

**MSTU's are paid by all residential taxpayers of unincorporated Polk County*

2025-2026 Operating Millage Rate

Corporate Income Tax	5.500%
Sales Tax	7.00%
Gross Receipt Tax	2.50%
Unemployment Tax (varies)	2.70%
Communication Services Tax	7.44%

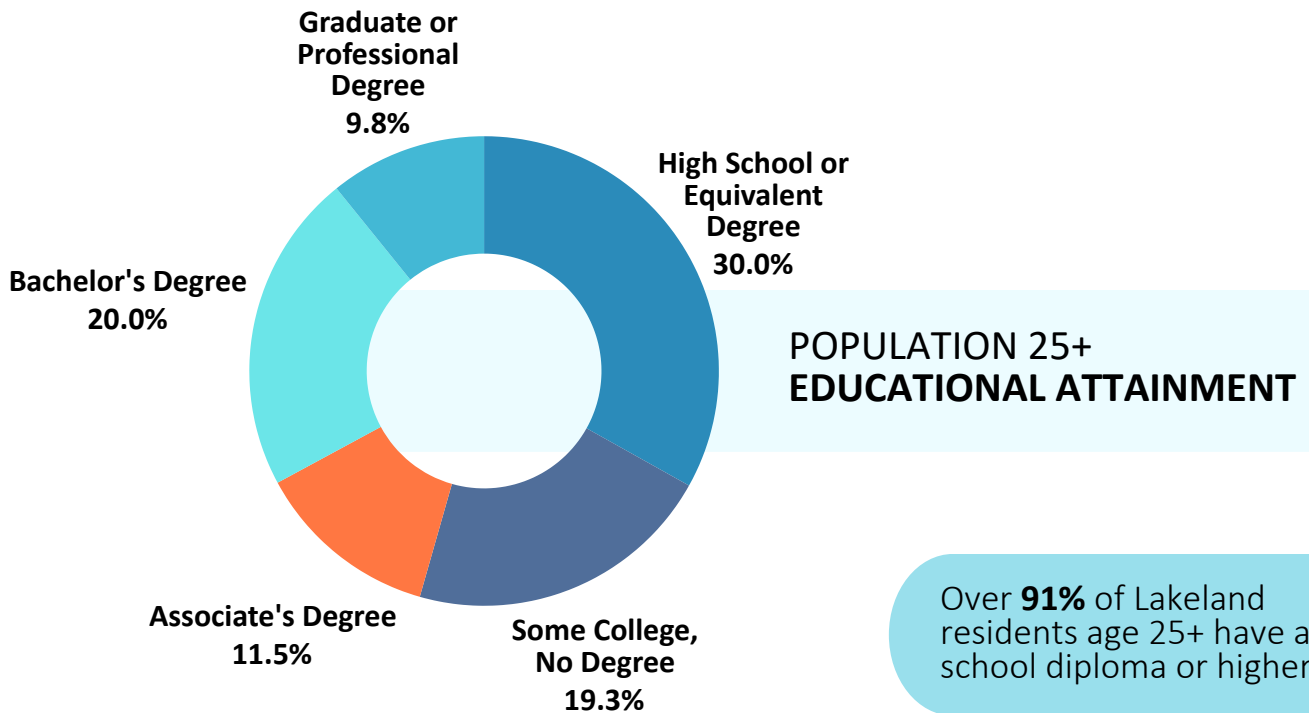
Intangible Tax - 1 mill per \$1000 of assessed valuation

Lakeland's operating millage rate (**5.4323**) is among the lowest in the region, comparing favorably to nearby cities like Fort Meade (**8.44**) and Dundee (**7.9**)

EDUCATION

Polk County serves nearly 100,000 students, offering a wide range of public and private education options. Within Lakeland, there are 33 elementary, 12 middle, and 8 high schools, plus multiple private schools representing various faiths for PreK–12.

The district also features 6 K–8 magnet/choice schools and 30+ specialized academies in middle and high schools focused on college and career readiness. These academies offer training in fields such as STEM, engineering, IT, finance, veterinary science, aerospace, culinary arts, and more.



Colleges and Universities		Enrollment
Southeastern University		13,636
Florida Southern College		3,281
Florida Polytechnic University		1,900+
Polk State College		14,539
Proprietary Colleges and Universities		
Keiser University		1,250
Trade and Technical Schools		
Travis Technical College		741

Over **91%** of Lakeland residents age 25+ have a high school diploma or higher.

29.8% hold a bachelor's or higher

Florida Poly also secured the No. 3 spot for best value public school in the South.

Source: U.S. News and World Report

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

New Industry Expansion

- **Polk County Ad Valorem Tax Exemption:** Encourages new and expanding high-value industries like manufacturing and QTI companies. Minimum wage:
 - 115% of avg. wage (\$63,944) or
 - 100% for manufacturers (\$55,633)
 - Final approval by the County Commission.
- **Polk County Bonus Incentive (PCBI):** Local cash incentive of \$500+ per new job for QTI-aligned businesses paying at least 115% of the average wage.
- **Lakeland Electric Economic Rider:** Utility rate reductions over 5 years for businesses with 350kW+ new load and 25+ new full-time jobs.

Construction & Development

- **Lakeland Economic Development Impact Fee Mitigation (EDIFM):** City fee reductions for:
 - a. High-wage job creation
 - b. Industrial job creation
 - c. Building industrial inventory
- **Polk County Impact Fee Mitigation:** County fee waivers/reductions for:
 - a. QTI businesses (115% avg. wage)
 - b. QTI businesses (100% wage + \$10M investment)
 - c. Developers building for QTI companies

Location Specific

Urban Job Tax Credit (UJTC)

- Businesses in designated Lakeland areas can earn \$500 per new full-time job, credited against state corporate income or sales tax. Eligible industries only.

Core Improvement Area Incentive

- Within 2.3 acres of Downtown Lakeland, non-residential and residential projects with a \$10M+ investment qualify for impact fee waivers, excluding water, wastewater, and fire service.

Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ 79)

- Companies can defer, reduce, or eliminate U.S. Customs duties on imported goods. Lakeland businesses may apply for FTZ 79 designation through the City of Tampa.

For more Information

- Please contact the Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC).
LakelandEDC.com



LAKELAND CRA



Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

The Lakeland CRA is a key driver of revitalization in the city's core neighborhoods. Working closely with the City of Lakeland, the CRA focuses on eliminating blight, improving infrastructure, and encouraging public and private investment to strengthen the city's urban areas.

CRA Districts

Lakeland has 3 CRA districts, each established to address specific redevelopment needs:

- Downtown – Established in 1977
- Dixieland – Established in 2001
- Midtown – Established in 2001

Each district is a dependent taxing district. Meaning a portion of the property taxes generated within its boundaries is reinvested directly into the area.

Governance

- Each CRA district has an Advisory Board appointed by the City Commission.
- These boards recommend budgets, policies, and projects, while the City Commission has final approval authority.

Types of CRA Projects

All CRA-funded efforts must serve a public purpose and align with each district's redevelopment plan. Common projects include:

- Street and streetscape upgrades
- Park and public space improvements
- Infill housing development
- Business recruitment and support
- Job training and placement partnerships

How CRA Funding Works

CRA projects are funded through Tax Increment Financing (TIF):

- A base property value is established when the district is created.
- As property values rise, the additional tax revenue (the "increment") is set aside for redevelopment projects.
- The City and County retain taxes on the base value, while the CRA invests the increment back into the district.
- This funding model is designed to leverage private investment and create a cycle of growth and reinvestment.

HOUSING

Median Home Age	45
Average Sales Price	\$364,114
Average Listing Price	\$374,180
Home Appreciation 1-Yr Change (24-Average first three quarters)	-2.30%
Home Appreciation 1-Yr Forecast (25)	-0.60%
Owner Occupied	56.00%
Renter Occupied	44.00%
Median Monthly Rent	\$1,527
Vacancy Rate	7-10%
Millage Rate	5.4323

With **44%** renter occupancy and a median monthly rent of **\$1,527**, the area supports a substantial and active rental population.

The average home sales price is **\$364,114**, while the average listing price is **\$374,180**, indicating sellers' expectations remain closely aligned with market values.

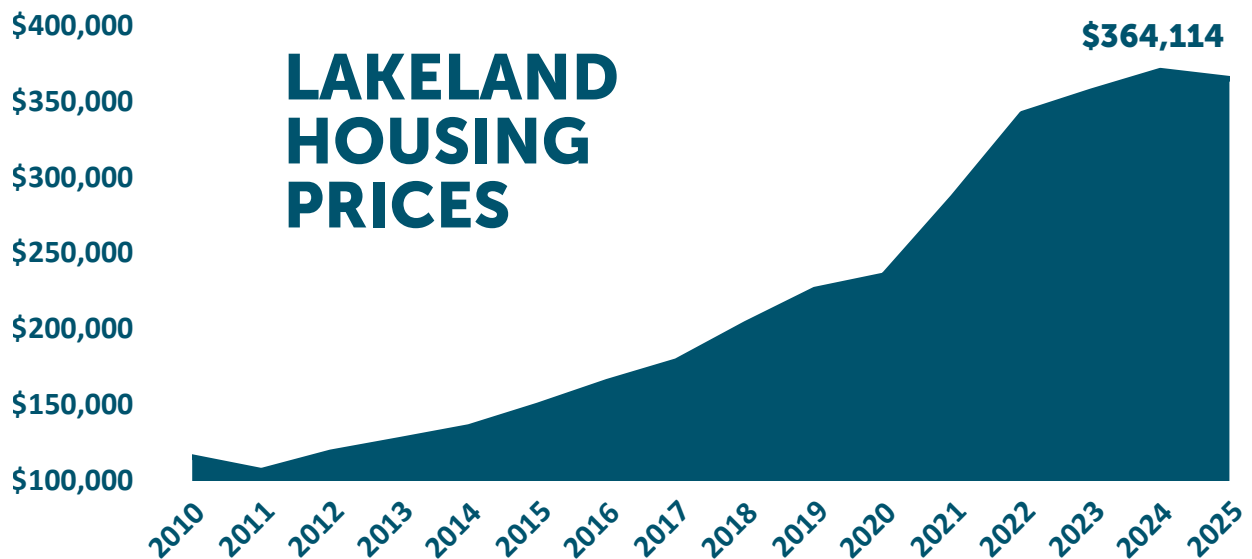
Home values declined **2.3%** in 2024 and are forecast to dip just **0.6%** in 2025, suggesting the market is stabilizing after years of rapid appreciation.

Lakeland ranks **9th** best city for first-time homebuyers.

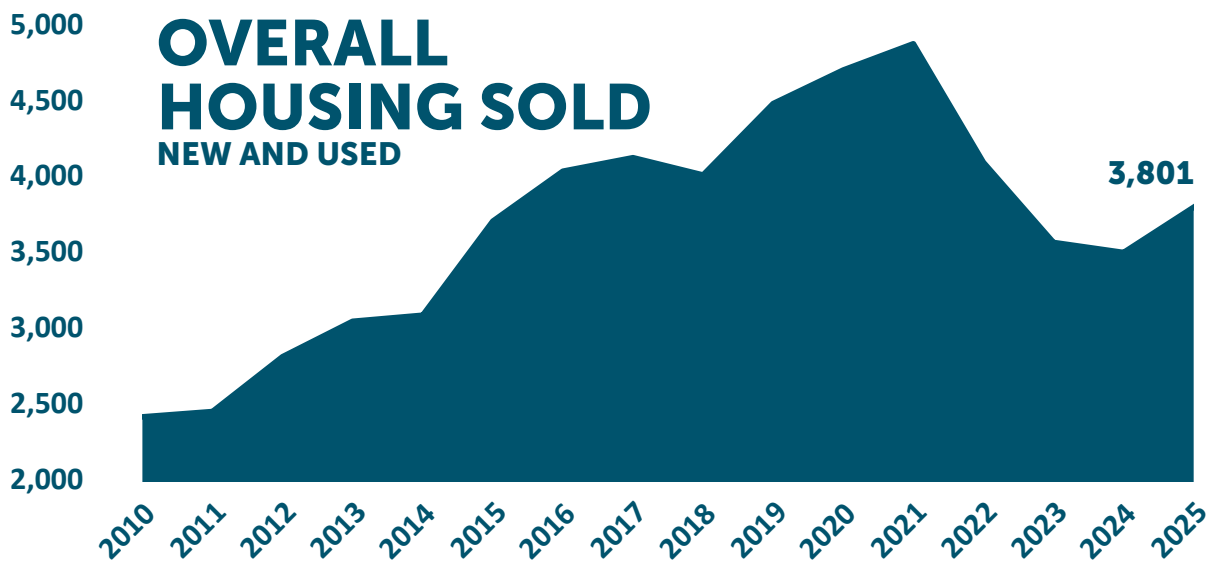
Source: Realtor.com



HOUSING



Lakeland's average home sale price increased from \$115,075 in 2010 to \$364,114 in 2025, a rise of more than **216%** over 15 years.



Home sales remain strong, with 3,801 homes projected to sell in 2025, up 57% from 2010 despite cooling from the 2021 peak.

CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT



Permit valuation increased by **340%** from \$35.7M in 2013 to over \$157M in 2018, reflecting rising home values and construction costs.

Source:

Commercial/Industrial Sq. Ft. Permitted

Year	Industrial	Office	Retail
2011	890,718	11,522	50,031
2012	192,409	61,996	132,887
2013	1,479,327	7,223	161,138
2014	1,369,759	12,000	305,856
2015	1,083,291	89,462	211,149
2016	920,805	91,206	75,243
2017	159,893	72,193	100,326
2018	2,035,924	98,503	145,943
2019	2,594,389	301,756	90,806
2020	2,708,490	17,864	122,883
2021	820,820	12,271	16,029
2022	113,419	12,673	6,332
2023	132,639	19,688	11,666
2024	98,083	16,124	6,952
2025	426,312	30,320	68,709

2025 Concept Reviews
102

2025 Approved Site Plans
34



Median Age

40

Median
Household Income

\$57,075

Lakeland Electric Customer
Service Area Population

318,926

Neighborhood
Associations

70+

Households

49,322

Average Home Sale Price

\$364,114

Playgrounds

27

3
Libraries
including over
1 million
Titles

9
Non-Stop Avelo
Flights from LAL

