

## Reassignment of Precinct Lines in Charlotte County

### Introduction

Charlotte County has experienced voter turnout that exceeds the capacity of its current polling places. Multiple polling places have significantly surpassed the recommended voter assignments for these locations. This document outlines the necessary changes to each precinct, the adjustments in polling places to accommodate these changes, and the rationale behind these decisions.

These updates also support our ongoing recovery from the impact of the 2022 hurricane, which reduced the number of available polling locations from 27 to 21 due to storm-related damage. Additionally, voter redistribution reflects population growth in emerging areas of the county, such as in the southern region of Punta Gorda, south of Tuckers Grade.

### Definitions

- **Precinct:** The geographic areas that local government has divided for election purposes. The voter's residential address within a particular geographic area determines which issues and offices a voter can vote upon in an election.
- **Polling Place:** The building which contains the polling room where either early voting or Election Day voting occurs. On Election Day, a polling place is designated for each precinct.
- **Polling Room:** The room (or in the case of early voting, the area designated) in which ballots are cast on Election Day and during early voting.
- **Voting Area:** The area designated by the Supervisor of Elections at the early voting or Election Day voting sites where voting activities occur including, but not limited to, the area where voters are in line waiting to check-in and are processed; and cast their ballots.

### Legal Requirements

As per Florida Statute 101.001, precincts are determined by the board of county commissioners in each county with the recommendation and approval of the Supervisor of Elections.

- Each Precinct shall be numbered, as nearly as practicable, composed of contiguous and compact areas.
- The Supervisor shall designate a polling place at a suitable location within each precinct.
- Any precinct established or altered under this section must consist of areas bounded on all sides only by census block boundaries from the most recent United States Census.
- Within 10 days after there is any change in the division, name, number, or boundaries of the precincts, or the location of the polling places, the supervisor of elections shall make in writing an accurate description of any new or altered precincts, setting forth the boundary lines and shall identify the location of each new or altered polling place.
- Any changes in the county precinct data shall be provided to the department within 10 days after a change.

## Changes Made

- Charlotte County will now base their new numbering scheme for precincts off the county commissioner districts. The first number will represent the county commissioner district, and the following numbers will be assigned in subsequential order.
- All old precincts are consolidated into new precincts (see attached documents for full details).
- Polling places have been reassigned and we have added 5 new polling places to help alleviate voter congestion. 21 locations to 26 locations in 2025.

## Reasons for Changes

- **Overcrowded Polling places:** During the 2024 General Election, several polling places exceeded the recommended range of 5,000-7,000 registered voters per polling place, with five locations surpassing 13,000 voters assigned. This resulted in extended wait times and increased voter frustration. For example, Port Charlotte Middle School was assigned approximately 14,000 voters and did not conclude voting operations until around 7:30 p.m., well after the official voting cutoff time.
- **Inadequate District Boundaries and Precinct Splits:** Following the introduction of new districts and changes to county commissioner districts over the years, many precincts were not restructured accordingly. This has led to an excessive number of splits, causing voter confusion and additional costs to taxpayers, as each split requires separate ballot styles and signage.
- **Polling places in Close Proximity:** Several precincts in Punta Gorda are located too close to one another, leading to two polling places with fewer than 3,000 voters assigned, which is inefficient in terms of both resources and voter experience. For example, Alligator Park and the South Punta Gorda Heights Civic Association are located less than two miles apart, with Alligator Park serving a relatively small voter population of only 2,600.
- **Disorganized Precinct Numbering:** Our precincts are numbered from 1 to 80, despite there being only 66 active precincts, resulting in missing numbers. This creates confusion among voters. Additionally, precincts such as 6, 26, 52, and 58 are assigned to the same voting location, further contributing to voter uncertainty.

## Overview of Adjustments to Voting Locations for High-Traffic Areas

To better manage voter turnout and improve efficiency on Election Day, we have made strategic adjustments to several voting locations, particularly those with higher population densities. These decisions have been made on the basis to evenly spread-out voters based on physical voting space, reduce voter's travel time to the location, and avoid creating unnecessary splits.

- **Myakka River Elementary:** As the largest voting location in Englewood, Myakka River Elementary has absorbed voters from smaller sites, such as Tringali Community Center, to help balance voter distribution and reduce congestion.
- **East Elementary:** Given its capacity, East Elementary has taken on voters previously assigned to S. Punta Gorda Heights. It also serves Precinct 105, which includes voters in

remote areas with limited access to nearby voting sites. This area typically sees higher vote-by-mail participation due to geographic challenges.

- **Centennial Park:** To reduce Election Day congestion, the voter count at Centennial Park has been decreased from 15,000 to 10,000. While it still serves a significant number of voters, its function as an early voting center helps ease the burden on election day by encouraging early participation.
- **Rotonda West Association:** This new facility offers a spacious voting area and is expected to manage voter flow efficiently. It also serves to reduce traffic previously directed to L.A. Ainger and the American Legion. This new precinct also cuts down on many of the splits the previous precincts had.
- **Burnt Store Presbyterian Church:** Another new location with a large voting space, Burnt Store Presbyterian is well-positioned to accommodate voters from remote areas in its precinct. Similar to East Elementary, it supports a population more inclined to vote by mail due to the distance from other voting sites.

### Significant Precinct Changes

As a result of new voting locations and improved voter distribution, many precincts have experienced a reduction of over 30% in registered voter totals. These changes are expected to enhance the voting experience by reducing wait times and improving parking availability. The precincts with the most substantial adjustments are listed below:

- **Meadow Park Elementary:** Voter count reduced by **66.2%**, primarily due to the addition of two new voting sites—Murdock Baptist Church and the reinstated Mid-County Regional Library.
- **Port Charlotte Middle:** Reduced by **61.8%** through improved distribution among nearby precincts.
- **L.A. Ainger Middle School:** Reduced by **53.2%** with the introduction of the new Rotonda West Association voting location.
- **South Punta Gorda Heights Civic Association:** Reduced by **39.3%** by reallocating voters to larger sites such as East Elementary School.
- **Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church:** Reduced by **37.5%** through redistribution of voters to the newly added Moose Lodge location.
- **Tringali Community Center:** Reduced by **37.1%** by directing voters to larger nearby locations, as this was previously the second smallest site in Englewood.

### Voter Impact

The upcoming changes to precinct boundaries and names will impact every voter in Charlotte County. As a result, all voters will receive a new Voter ID Card reflecting these updates. To minimize confusion and ensure voters are well-informed, we will distribute newsletters and utilize various social media platforms to notify voters of their new precinct assignments. Additionally, we will emphasize that polling places may have changed, providing clear instructions on where to vote. These proactive measures are designed to ensure a smooth transition and maintain a positive voting experience for all residents.