



Police Chief

Bartow, Florida



THE COMMUNITY

The City of Bartow, known as the City of Oaks and Azaleas, is known for its vibrant economy that drives the community's wellbeing. Its roughly 20,000 residents benefit from the organizational vision of prosperity for families, and provision of outstanding business opportunities, superior public services, and a safe, friendly community. Serving as the seat for Polk County, the City offers a unique dynamic that blends the best of a small-town environment with that of a bustling center of government and commerce. In addition to City and County offices, there are also a number of regional, state, and federal offices located within Bartow city limits, including the Florida Department of Transportation District One office, which is responsible for south-west Florida's transportation needs.

Bartow is strategically located in Central Florida at the crossroads of US-98, Florida State Route 60, and US-17. Over nine million people reside within a 100-mile radius from the City. The Tampa and Orlando International airports, as well as the Port of Tampa can be accessed within one hour. Other nearby cities and metropolitan areas feature world-class art and cultural activities that are just a short drive away, including some of the top tourism destinations in the world including Disney World, SeaWorld, Legoland, Busch Gardens and more.

Family-friendly community events, accessible cultural opportunities and innovative lifelong learning are vital to Bartow. They help to form a place where individuals can feel cherished, appreciated, productive and fulfilled, resulting in greater health and balance in family, business, school, social and civic settings. Major community events include an annual arts festival, craft fair, science fiction/cos-play extravaganza, parades, monthly downtown Friday evening festivals, and the largest annual pre-1840 living history encampment in the Southeast, just to name

CITY VISION STATEMENT

Bartow 2025 is an attractive, livable city that has a historic hometown feeling, an active expanded downtown, sustainable neighborhoods, and a strong local economy. Residents are safe and have exciting leisure opportunities.

CITY MISSION STATEMENT

To promote high quality of life by providing effective municipal services in a customer friendly and financially responsible manner.

a few. Bartow's historic downtown is experiencing a renaissance, including an expanding array of unique shops and restaurants featuring traditional southern cooking, sports bar cuisine, sandwich shops, cotes, coffee houses and a local craft brewery.

Organized team sports are available for children as young as four years, with soccer, baseball, softball, and football as popular programs. Lighted pickleball and tennis courts are available for night play, and those into exercise have access to the City's fitness center. Bartow's Municipal Golf Course is one of five Polk courses on the Florida Historic Golf Trail with an 18-hole, par-72 layout that measures up to 6,600 yards and is considered a traditional golf course with winding doglegs and small, elevated greens.

The City is also a perfect place for serious nature lovers. At the 460-acre Mosaic Peace River Park, you can take a walk on a wooded boardwalk through century-old cypress trees, majestic oaks, and pines. Birds and wildlife abound in this pristine setting and is also a great place for horseback riding. The nearby Circle B Bar Reserve is home to Polk's Nature Discovery Center, featuring an exhibit hall providing visitors an opportunity to discover Polk County's water, wilderness, and wildlife. Polk County is known as Central Florida's Lakes Country. Those who like to fish, boat and canoe have access to more than 550 freshwater lakes and numerous rivers and streams. Cyclists benefit from miles of roadways with a variety of terrain to enjoy the great outdoors, including the Fort Fraser Trail linking Bartow to Lakeland, with more than seven miles of paved trail and related activities.

The community offers superior education opportunities, with Bartow schools recognized as some of the best in the area. Bartow High School consistently ranks as one of the best high schools in America and Bartow's International Baccalaureate (IB) program is recognized for its rigorous course of study that prepares students for success in post-secondary study and employment. The IB program is consistently ranked as one of the top 10 schools in the nation. Polk County Schools also offer a variety of career academies designed to guide and inspire middle and high school students toward their passions in life.

Known as the "Home of Champions," with both successful athletic and academic programs, Bartow High School offers a wide range of extracurricular activities, including band, drama, chorus as well as clubs and other programs. Summerlin Academy is a rigorous military-style educational setting. A public school of choice, Summerlin Academy offers high school students an experience similar to that at U.S. military academies in Annapolis, Colorado Springs and West Point. The school is designed to prepare young men and women for college through highly academic course work. Round-

ing out Bartow area schools are seven public elementary schools, three private elementary schools and three middle schools. Bartow Elementary Academy and Union Academy are magnet schools with students selected by an application process. Both have been ranked among the best in the county. Enrichment activities include foreign language studies, art, science, theater performances and field trips.

Opportunities for advanced education are within easy driving distance of Bartow. Polk County is home to six colleges and universities and seven technical schools, including world-class Florida Polytechnic University and the Polk State College Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center. Both institutions offer industry-focused courses of study that leave students fully prepped for career success.

The City's demographics are comprised of 56% White (Non-Hispanic), 19.6% Black or African American (Non-Hispanic), 10.4% White (Hispanic), 3.4% Asian, 2.46% Multiracial, 3.4% Multiracial (Hispanic), and 3.46% Other. Bartow's median household income is \$53,595 with a median sales price of a home of \$307,000.



GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

The City operates under a Council-Manager form of government, with a five-person elected City Commission focused on legislative and policymaking body, with day-to-day operations the responsibility of the appointed City Manager. Two of the City Commissioners are elected at-large, with the remaining three Commissioners elected by district. There are no term limit restrictions regarding their tenure on the governing body. The City Commission appoints the City Attorney and City Manager as Charter Officers, the latter of which is responsible for the City's day-to-day operations. All Department Heads/Department Supervisors, the Clerk's Office, and the Assistant City Manager report directly to the City Manager.

Mire Herr was appointed as Bartow's City Manager in December 2022. His career in public service spans more than 40 years in both Indiana and Florida working in a variety of fields of government, including community development, transportation planning, public works, City-County management, and utility services. Prior to his current post, he served as Polk County's Director of Transportation from 1998 to 2002 and was subsequently promoted to County Manager where he served from 2003 to 2010. During this time, he managed budgets in excess of \$1.2 billion, while leading an organization of more than 2,000 employees providing services to nearly 600,000 residents. Mr. Herr also worked in the private sector as President of ECON from September of 2010 to April of 2012.

The City provides a wide array of local government services including police, fire, utilities, solid waste, roads, and drainage, building permitting and inspections, planning, parks and recreation, library, cemetery, and multiple support functions. Bartow employs roughly 365 full-time and seasonal employees and operates with a FY 2024 General Fund of approximately \$33 million, supported in part with an ad valorem property tax of 4.6080 mills.



ABOUT THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

VISION STATEMENT

To provide a peaceful and safe community where citizens and visitors experience hometown values as well as a superior quality of life.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Bartow Police Department will provide a professional service in an effort to prevent crime, reduce fear, and enforce the law.

The Bartow Police Department's history began with the election of Town Marshal C.C. Gresham in 1882. Over the years, the Department has steadily grown to its present complement of 48 sworn and 29 civilian positions. Specialty units include K9, criminal investigations, street crimes, traffic enforcement and investigations, and the community services team.

The Bartow Police Department is proudly involved in the community and participates in the many festivals and events that take place in the downtown area each year. The Department has an assigned Officer to the downtown core and in selected areas of east and west Bartow in support of the City's Community Redevelopment Agency to address issues as they occur, and to build relationships with residents and local business owners, employees, and patrons. The Community Services Team provides programs to area businesses and churches, including active assailant classes and other safety-related programs.

At 52 square miles, Bartow is the second largest city in land area in Polk County. To patrol effectively, the City is divided into six geographic patrol zones, with each zone determined by the number of calls for service and geographic location within the municipality.

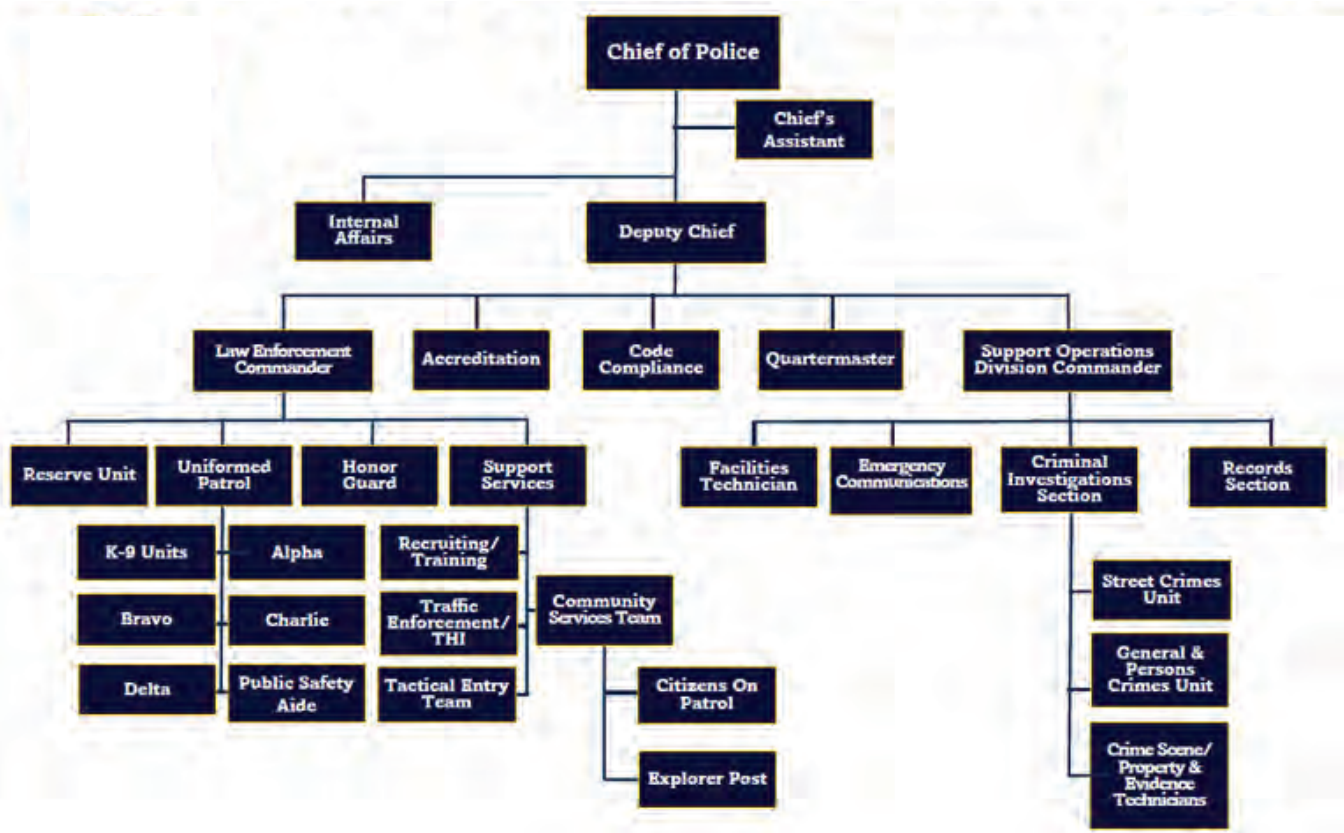
The Department is currently responsible for providing law enforcement services within the City, including answering emergency and non-emergency calls, law enforcement response to calls for service, processing of crime scenes for evidence, investigating crimes occurring (with the exception of major crimes as discussed later), and staffing three School Resource Officer positions. (The SRO program is being phased out, with the Polk County Sheriff's Department assuming all SRO functions in the Polk County School System over the next two years.)

CRIME VOLUME AND RATE

MEASURE	2022	2023	PERCENT CHANGE
TOTAL INDEX CRIME	440	528	20.0
Total Violent Crime	83	77	-7.2
Total Property Crime	357	451	26.3
TOTAL CRIME RATE	2,238.8	2,644.1	18.1
Violent Crime Rate	422.3	385.6	-8.7
Property Crime Rate	1,816.5	2,258.5	24.3

The Police Department attained accreditation through the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA) in 2020 and received re-accreditation in 2023. Additionally, the Bartow Emergency Communications Center is accredited through the Florida Telecommunications Accreditation Commission in 2022.

The Department is staffed by 77 positions (including the Chief) and includes a Deputy Chief, two Captains, six Sergeants, three Corporals, four Detectives and two Street Crimes Detectives, 21 Patrol Officers, two Traffic Unit Officers, four K-9 Officers, one Telecommunications Coordinator, 11 Dispatchers, one Crime Scene Coordinator, one Crime Scene Officer, two Crime Scene Technicians, one CRA Officer, one Accreditation Specialist, one Training Coordinator, one Maintenance Technician, one Code Compliance Manager, two Public Safety Aides, three Records Clerks, two Code Enforcement Officers, and three Administrative Assistants. The Police Department is supported with a FY 2024 annual budget of approximately \$9.0 million.



POLICE DEPARTMENT VALUES

Benevolent - To meet the needs of the citizens of Bartow in a compassionate and efficient manner.

Professional - To provide law enforcement services through education and enforcement in a manner consistent with our goals and objectives, emphasizing strong ethical and moral values.

Dedication - To provide continuous, loyal, and unwavering allegiance to its citizens.

PATROL SECTION

The Uniformed Patrol Division provides 24-hour-a-day coverage to protect the life and property of the citizens and visitors in Bartow. The Uniform Patrol Division acts as a first responder to calls for immediate police service. The Patrol Unit consists of four squads, each squad is supervised by a Sergeant, and a Corporal. The Officers patrol six beats within the city. The typical Patrol Officer will work a twelve (12) hour shift which runs from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM (day shift), or 6:30 PM to 6:30 AM (night shift).

K-9 UNITS

There are four K-9 Units assigned to the Patrol Section. These teams assist the Patrol Division with searching buildings, searching for lost or missing persons, evidence recovery, narcotic searches, and crowd control. In addition, K-9 teams are utilized as backup officers for officer safety.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SECTION

The Detective Section is responsible for follow-up on all felony crimes and narcotic investigations. The Section includes six (6) Detectives and one Sergeant. This section also includes the Crime Scene/Evidence Section.

CRIME SCENE / EVIDENCE

The Crime Scene Unit is a support unit under the Criminal Investigation Section. This is a civilian unit that consists of two Crime Scene Technicians. The Crime Scene Unit responds to various crime scenes that require the collection and preservation of evidence. This Unit also processes evidence and transports evidence for more technical processing to the Florida Department Law Enforcement Crime Lab.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

The Emergency Communications Center provides dispatch services for the Bartow Police, Fire, and Electric Departments. The highly trained Emergency Communications Specialists are certified by the State of Florida and receive ongoing training throughout the year to maintain their certification. The City of Bartow is currently one of only two cities within Polk County that maintain its Telecommunications Center within the Police Department. The Communications Center responds to roughly 3,800 Fire and 22,527 Police calls for service per year.

RECORDS SECTION

The Bartow Police Department utilizes a centralized records management section whose responsibilities are to maintain hard copies of all reports and to enter computer data into the Police Department's records management computer system.





COMMUNITY SERVICES TEAM

The Bartow Police Department is committed to establishing and maintaining meaningful and productive partnerships with all groups within the community. This partnership ultimately enhances the safety and quality of life for the citizens of Bartow. The CST Section includes one Sergeant, three Officers and one Crime Prevention Practitioner. The CST members participate in many events throughout the year and communicate with residents and business owners to solve “quality of life” issues.

ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is a voluntary process agencies go through by inviting an Independent accreditation organization to review policies and practices, of the agency. The Accreditation Section coordinates the development of policies and procedures for both the Police Department and Communication operations consistent with Best Management Practices consistent with standards established by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA) and the Florida Telecommunications Accreditation Commission.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code Enforcement Section Mission

In partnership with the citizens of Bartow, the mission of the Code Enforcement Section is to improve the quality of life of our citizens through the preservation of our historic, residential, commercial, and natural resources, and to effectively eliminate blight by encouraging personal responsibility through professional and ethical enforcement of our codes and ordinances.

The Code Enforcement Section was incorporated as a Section within the Police Department in 2023 and is responsible for enforcing the municipal codes and ordinances of the City of Bartow which impact health, safety, and quality of life issues. The Section addresses residential complaints and code violations related to such items as tall weeds, garbage, foreclosure homes, building violations, and property maintenance. The Section also addresses commercial complaints and code violations related to such items as tenant improvements, insect and rodent infestations, and other quality of life related concerns. The Section issues notices, warnings, and citations for non-compliance, when necessary, writes reports and documents enforcement actions, and prepares cases for testimony before the City’s Special Magistrate.

ABOUT THE POSITION

Under the supervision of the City Manager, the Police Chief is responsible for the preservation of the public peace; prevention of crime; apprehension of criminals; regulation of traffic; protection of rights of persons and property; and enforcement of the laws of the State of Florida and the ordinances of the City. The Chief shall serve as the Executive Officer of the Police Department and shall assign all members of the Department to their respective posts, shifts, details, and duties, be responsible for the care and custody of all property used by the Department, and for the efficiency, discipline, and conduct of its members.

The most recent Chief retired in April 2024 after stabilizing Departmental operations following the transition from the former Police Administration, which is discussed later in this brochure.

Examples of the Police Chief's responsibilities includes the following:

- Organize the administration and operating structure of the Police Department.
- Issue orders for the direction and control of the members and employees of the Department, consistent with all applicable Federal, State, or local laws, the ordinances of the City and Department directives.
- Plan and direct the Department's Divisional missions including such activities as patrolling of public areas, the apprehension and arrest of law violators, the investigation of incidents of law violation, the regulation of traffic, special units, and the maintenance of police records.
- Interpret laws, statutes, ordinances, and directives to ensure public safety and execute criminal investigations.
- Generally preserve the peace and enforce all applicable state or local laws and ordinances, and whenever any violation thereof shall come to his/her knowledge, with the proper discretion, shall ensure that the appropriate complaint is made and that the evidence necessary is procured for the successful prosecution of the offender or offenders.
- Direct the selection, staffing, training, and evaluation of subordinate personnel and takes disciplinary action as required.
- May participate in labor contract negotiations. Reviews and acts on grievances filed by labor unions or members.
- Complete and maintain personnel employment records concerning the work of each Officer or other employee of the Department, including the equipment issued to each Officer, and the principal events incidental to the Officer's service in the Department.
- Maintain and have custody and control of all records and equipment of every kind necessary for use in the functioning of the Department in carrying out its assignment.
- Oversee the operations of the Emergency Communications Center and Code Enforcement Sections.
- Oversee the preparation of the Annual Police Department Operating Budget.
- Responsible for the training of members and employees of the Department, as required by law and by the needs of the City and for conducting performance evaluations of all members and employees of the Department.
- Provide consultation and advice to City officials as they relate to law enforcement issues, activities, or operations.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Police Department Organizational Climate Study: In response to internal issues, the City Manager commissioned an Organizational Climate Study of the Bartow Police Department in 2023. The study was intended to provide guidance to City's leadership on emergent service delivery issues or concerns; undertake an organizational climate review through a series of small group and/or individual interview sessions offered to all members of the Department; assess, identify, and prioritize immediate challenges and needs; and assess the relationship of the Department with other criminal justice partners, including the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), Office of the State Attorney, Polk County Sheriff's Office (PCSO), and the FDLE Florida Accreditation Office.

The results of the study revealed a Department that was in turmoil and experiencing a crisis in its former leadership, with visible discord among leadership and an overwhelming lack of respect for its former administrative leadership. The Department culture lacked a sense of urgency, fostered by poor communication and low levels of trust in leadership, resulting in declining morale. Operationally, the Department was lacking in guidance to resolve decades-long concerns regarding quality of major crimes investigations, resulting in the refusal of the State Attorney's Office to accept any major crime investigation conducted by the Bartow Police Department. Additionally, the Emergency Communications Center was at a crisis point, with mandatory overtime resulting in many employees working more than 140 hours every two weeks. Most sworn members expressed concerns about the quality of the Field Training Officer (FTO) program, citing inconsistencies and the sentiment that the program is not taken seriously. Lastly, other training aspects, processes, and equipment seemed to be lacking and/or antiquated.

Following the publication of the report, the then Police Chief and Deputy Chief left the Department and Police Chief Andy Ray was appointed to help stabilize the Department. Chief Ray worked closely with the City Manager's Office and outlined a series of proposed recommendations to restore the operations and efficiencies of the Police Department involving the following points.

- **Focus on Improving Public Safety Accountability:** Following the issuance of the Organizational Climate Review of the Bartow Police Department, the City and Police Administration have developed a two-year program in conjunction with the FY 2025-2026 Budget designed to strengthen its public safety focus through a variety of initiatives. The programs include the deployment of body-worn cameras, improved applicant screening procedures, increased Officer pay to be more competitive with surrounding agencies, signing and recruitment bonuses, evaluating possible changes to the City's health insurance programs, and improving the Department's Community Oriented Policing with improved data-driven analysis. Following the appointment of the most recent Police Chief, the Department has been focused on greater accountability by its members and a more visible level of responsibility by the Police Department leadership. Sergeants have been given memoranda providing clear expectations of the Administration, how they interact with their Officers, the public, and the way they model behaviors desired by all members of the Department.
- **Public Safety Dispatch Services:** One of the important considerations to be made by the Police Department concerns the status of its 9-1-1 Telecommunications Section. The Emergency Communications Center faces staffing concerns, with mandatory overtime resulting in many employees working more than 140 hours every two weeks. Although staffing has improved recently with several staff currently undergoing training and orientation, the City is currently considering the value of contracting with Polk County for emergency call answering and dispatching services. The successor Police Chief will take a lead role in evaluating the possible benefits of contracting emergency communication services.



- **Succession Planning & Growth Opportunities:** There is a desire to establish a Succession Planning Program to help develop well-trained, broadly experienced, well-motivated Police Officers who will be prepared to step into key positions in the coming years. The program will need to identify defined career paths, facilitating upward movement to ensure the Department is professionally developing personnel to provide leadership and continuity of law enforcement services. In support of this initiative, the FY 2024 Police Department budget included an increase of \$90,000 in the Department's training and travel budget line item. The additional funding has enabled the Department to send Officers and Detectives to specialized training in areas such as homicide and violent crimes investigations, child victim and sex crimes investigations, fraud investigations, and tactical response to dangerous conditions and situations.
- **Transfer of Code Enforcement to Police Department:** In response to community concerns regarding property maintenance, the Code Enforcement function was transferred from the Building Maintenance Department to the Police Department in FY 2024. The Code Enforcement Section is now fully staffed with a Manager and two Code Enforcement Investigators. The transitions has gone smoothly with improvements visibly seen throughout the community.



IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of Bartow is seeking a committed, decisive leader as its Police Chief who is service-oriented and passionate about directing the City's law enforcement operations, and actively works to ensure the community's trust and confidence in the integrity and effectiveness of the Police Department. The ideal candidate will lead the Department through transparency with a commitment to advancing the principles of contemporary community policing and data-driven deployment of personnel and resources. The next Chief should be an engaging and approachable leader who sets a positive tone for the organization by fostering an organizational culture of accountability, confidence, trust, and honesty. The successful candidate must be a principled leader, exhibiting the highest integrity and moral character.

The Chief should be willing to actively seek and listen to input at all organizational levels and make opportunities to solicit both formal and informal feedback. A candidate with a demonstrated track record of building effective working relationships with local and state law enforcement agencies is strongly desired. The ideal candidate will have developed a strong and wide network of peer professionals and be active in State and National Law Enforcement organizations.

The next Chief will be a visionary who can communicate and help establish the strategic direction of the Bartow Police Department and be a visible advocate for its operations and programs. They will be a champion of the Department's vision with employees, ensuring a clear understanding of their roles in achieving both long-term and short-term objectives. The ideal candidate will set a positive tone for the organization and will empower the command staff and unite sworn and civilian employees with a shared sense of purpose through strong Departmental communications. A team builder who can generate engagement and enthusiasm at all levels, the successful candidate will be committed to succession planning by mentoring, developing, and recognizing future leaders within the Department. A knowledgeable professional who provides ongoing training for Police Officers that effectively prepares them to serve in a complex, highly diverse environment is desired. The ideal candidate will have experience recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing quality Police Officers through a progressive, open-minded approach and will be someone who can relate to a multi-generational workforce.

Ideally, the new Chief will understand the dynamics of social equity while also having experience with diverse, and varied socioeconomic operating environments. The ideal candidate should have a deep understanding of implicit bias impacts, and be committed to the study and implementation of Best Management Practices in law enforcement operations. The chosen individual must be comfortable with the public nature and transparency of this position and become part of the fabric of the Bartow community. The Chief should be approachable and accessible and will actively seek to serve and connect with all segments of community.

An innovative, entrepreneurial problem solver with excellent foresight and planning abilities, the next Police Chief will understand how to best leverage technology as a force multiplier to enhance service and increase efficiency. Ideally, the selected candidate will have experience in accredited Police Departments and have a progressive collective bargaining background to effectively engage labor organizations and maintain positive union-management working relationships.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Criminal Justice, Business, Psychology, Public Administration, or a related field is required (master's preferred), coupled with ten or more years of senior command experience. Candidates with an equivalent combination of relevant education and experience which provides the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other competencies necessary for the position will be considered.



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The City of Bartow offers a competitive starting salary range of \$97,729 – \$122,050 for the Police Chief position, depending upon qualifications and experience. Additionally, retirement is available through a police pension plan with vesting at seven years, coupled with an additional optional 457 deferred compensation plan available. Additional benefits include health insurance with dental and vision insurance options, as well as the availability of accidental death and dismemberment, and long-term disability insurance. Paid annual leave, sick time, and twelve paid holidays are additional benefits. The Chief will also be provided with an assigned take-home vehicle.

APPLICATION PROCESS

[Please apply online](#)

For more information on this position, contact:

Doug Thomas, Executive Vice President

DouglasThomas@GovernmentResource.com

863-860-9314

The City of Bartow is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity in its workforce. Applicants selected as finalists for this position will be subject to a comprehensive background check. Pursuant to Florida law, all applications are a public record once submitted and available for disclosure upon receipt of a public records request.

RESOURCES

City Website

cityofbartow.net

Police Department

cityofbartow.net/departments-services/police

Code Enforcement

cityofbartow.net/departments-services/code-enforcement

Bartow Chamber of Commerce

bartowchamber.com/

