

2011 Annual Report
Valdosta, Ga



VALDOSTA CITY HALL

From the City Manager



It is my pleasure to present the 2011 City of Valdosta Annual Report, our 17th consecutive report, designed to inform our citizens, elected officials and other interested individuals of our city's activities, progress, challenges and accomplishments last year.

Valdosta saw a 24.7 percent growth in population, nearly 11,000 residents, over the past ten years, according to the 2010 Census—which accounts for the highest growth in Valdosta's history. Lowndes County's population grew by 18.6 percent county-wide; and the State of Georgia grew 15.5 percent.

In 2011, the city continued to operate in a fiscally challenged economy. Similar to individuals, businesses, and government systems across our state and nation, the City of Valdosta continued to reduce its budget while responsibly seeking alternate funding sources. The city was fortunate to receive more than \$1.2 million in grant funding in 2011 for public safety, neighborhood development and traffic management purposes. Furthermore, city employees continued to make adjustments to accommodate economic conditions while maintaining quality services for our citizens.

The City of Valdosta maintained its 4.11 tax millage rate this year, which is among the lowest of any major city in Georgia. The city has not had a property tax increase since prior to 1995—a remarkable feat given the continued economic hardships experienced by communities across the state and nation.

Throughout the year, city employees continued to provide top-notch municipal government, public safety and quality of life services to our citizens and visitors through our customer-centered departments. Our Fire Department maintained its ISO rating of 2—one of the highest ratings in the state—and proudly serves as the Georgia Search and Rescue Team, Task Force 2, serving all of Southwest Georgia. The Valdosta Police Department, a "Flagship Agency" was re-accredited this year for the fourth consecutive time by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and served our community in 2011 with impeccable investigative, crime-solving capabilities and an unyielding public presence. Both departments were resourceful with grant funding to maintain the best public safety services for citizens. The city's Public Works Department and Utilities Department also continue to excel. Valdosta's water system now delivers over 3.3 billion gallons of water each year to its customers. The city continued to work with state and federal officials to resolve a nearly three year old FEMA claim for partial or full relocation of the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant, which was severely damaged by the 2009 regional flood event.

Valdosta continues to excel as a regional retail hub. In 2011, the City of Valdosta ranked 24th out of 363 Metropolitan Statistical Areas, according to a study by the Civic Economics and the American Booksellers Association on the share of retail sales captured by local, independent retail businesses.

Years of research demonstrates that locally-owned and independent businesses recirculate substantially more money within the local economy than do their chain competitors. These independent businesses help to define the character of our city and are instrumental in the economic success of our community.

Realizing the struggles that our local businesses have endured in the economic downturn, the city maintained its pro-business attitude by streamlining the permitting processes, provided opportunities for area businesses through the Valdosta Small Emerging Business program, and by encouraging development and redevelopment with incentives and state job tax credits for qualifying businesses.

The city received the Gabe Zimmerman Award for Public Service from the National Community Development Association this year for its Single Family Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Housing Program, which assists eligible low-to-moderate income families that live within the city's Designated Revitalization Area rehabilitate or reconstruct their homes. In June, the city welcomed 370 youth from around the country for the Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp, who continued the city's home improvement efforts by performing basic home repairs, painting and minor construction, at no cost to elderly or disabled homeowners of 34 homes in our city.

This year, the city partnered with Lowndes County and Moody Air Force Base to host a community-wide 10th Anniversary of 9-11 Ceremony in historic downtown Valdosta, where over a thousand attended to remember the lives lost and pay tribute to those who continue to guard and protect our freedom here and abroad.

The city provided citizens with information on demand through our award-winning website, quality programming on Metro Valdosta 17, timely newsletters and E-News blasts and a host of other citizen engagement opportunities and resources. It remained committed to protecting our environment through the region's most comprehensive recycling and e-recycling programs, neighborhood clean-ups, grant funding for brownfield assessments and redevelopment and a commitment to public education.

Thank you for taking the time to review the work of your local government throughout the pages of this report. Special mention should be given to the 580 dedicated city employees for the tremendous service each provides to the citizens of Valdosta, to our elected officials who provide us with leadership and direction, and the fine citizens of the Valdosta community to whom we are privileged to serve. I invite you to take a closer look at our organization by reviewing this report and by visiting us at www.valdostacity.com.

Sincerely,

Larry H. Hanson
City Manager



Mission

To be known by our customers and others for high quality municipal services.



www.valdostacity.com

Purpose

To provide public services that meet or exceed the expectations of citizens.

To improve the quality of life in the community by a sincere commitment to the ideals of public service.

To be creative and innovative in our approach to the needs of citizens, recognizing the trust and confidence that our citizens place in us as caretakers of governmental services.

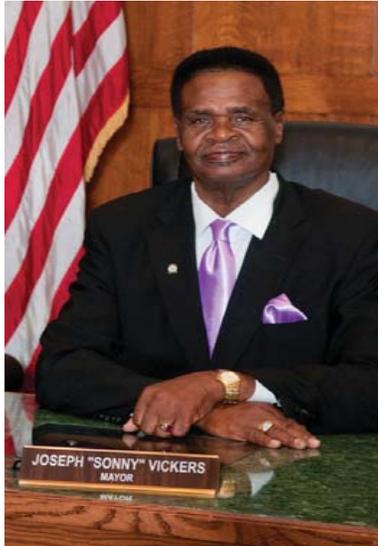
To be efficient and effective and use wisely the public resources we are entrusted to manage.

Quality Service by Quality People
Valdosta — A City Without Limits

Table of Contents

Mayor & Council.....	4-5
City Organization Chart.....	6
Department Heads.....	7
Economic Development.....	8
Public Involvement Department.....	10
Community Development Department.....	12
Utilities Department.....	14
Fire Department.....	16
Engineering Department.....	18
Public Works Department.....	20
Human Resources Department.....	22
Police Department.....	24
Finance Department.....	26-28
Grants Awarded.....	30
Municipal Court.....	31
Accolades.....	32-33

Valdosta Mayor & City Council



Mayor Joseph "Sonny" Vickers
 jvickers@valdostacity.com
 (9/9/2011-12/31/2011)



Mayor John Fretti
 (1/1/2004-9/2/2011)



Councilman Ben Norton
 At-Large
 bnorton@valdostacity.com



Councilman James R. Wright
 District 1
 jwright@valdostacity.com



Councilwoman Deidra A. White
 District 2
 dawhite@valdostacity.com



Councilman Joseph Vickers
 District 3
 (1/1/2011 -9-5-2011)
 jvickers@valdostacity.com



Councilman Hoke Hampton
 District 3
 (9/9/2011 -12-31-2011)



Mayor Pro-Tem Alvin Payton, Jr.
 Councilman District 4
 apayton@valdostacity.com



Councilman Tim Carroll
 District 5
 tcarroll@valdostacity.com

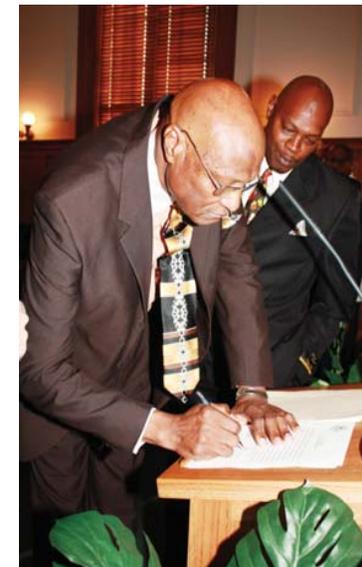
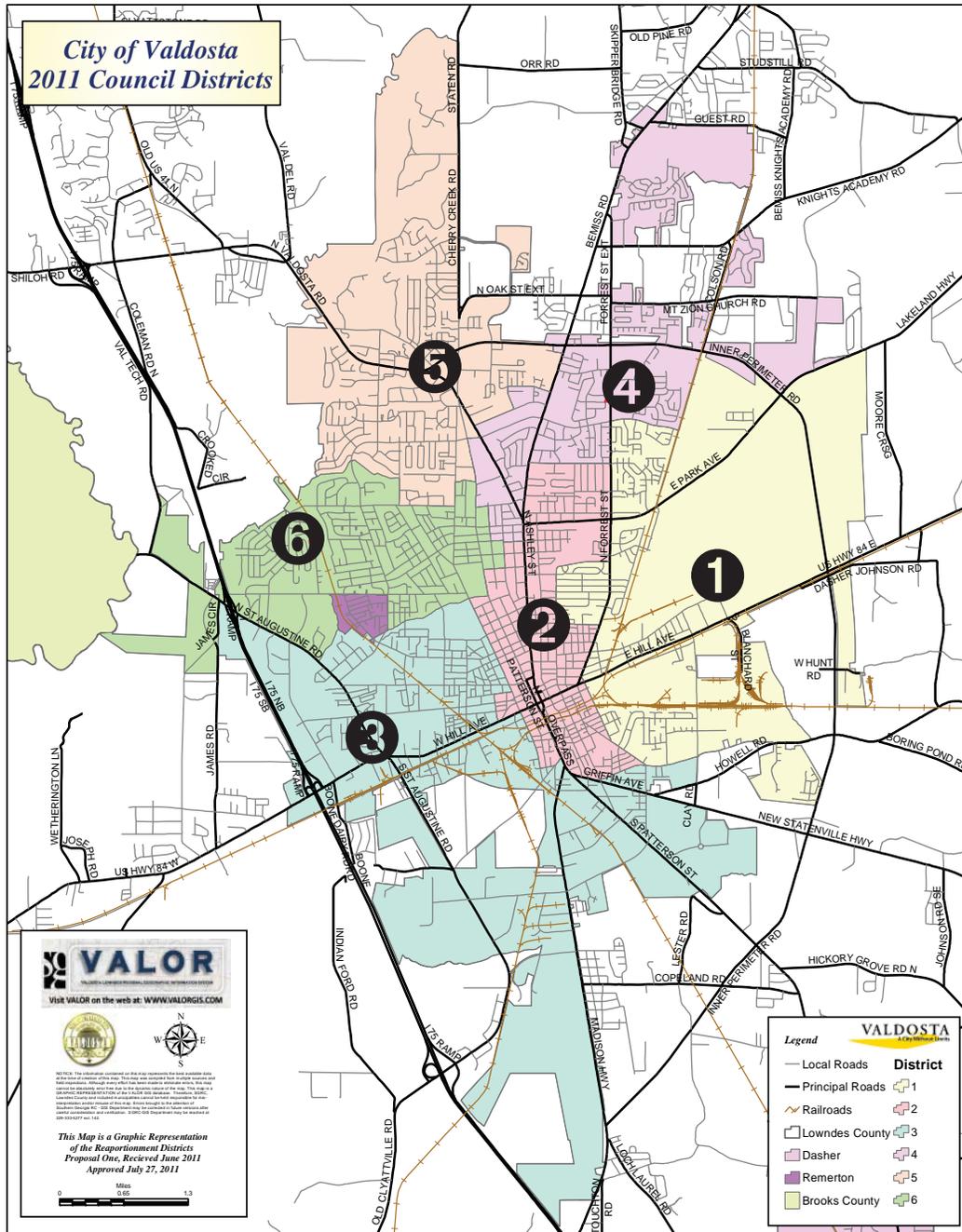


Councilman Robert Yost
 District 6
 ryost@valdostacity.com

The Mayor and members of the City Council invite and encourage the citizens of the City of Valdosta to attend City Council meetings whenever possible, because good government depends on the interest and involvement of citizens. City Council meetings are held on the first and third Thursday following the first Sunday of each month, at 5:30 p.m., although changes may be necessary to avoid conflicts with holidays. City Council Work Sessions are held on the Tuesday before the first City Council meeting of each month. Meetings are held on the second floor of City Hall, located at 216 East Central Avenue, in beautiful Downtown Valdosta.

Citizens are also encouraged to visit the City of Valdosta website at www.valdostacity.com for agendas, minutes, and other valuable information about our city government and services.

www.valdostacity.com



A Proud Moment in Valdosta History

Mayor Joseph "Sonny" Vickers (in photo above) was sworn into office by Judge Richard Cowart on Sep. 9, 2011, in the presence of his friend, Laverne McHellen, who held the Bible for the oath. The Valdosta City Council unanimously voted then Councilman Vickers, to serve the unexpired term of former Mayor John J. Fretti. Mayor Vickers, who served as the District 3 Councilman for over 24 years, became the first African American to serve in the top elected position in the history of Valdosta and received a standing ovation by citizens in the crowded council chambers. Councilman Hoke Hampton (in photo on left) was sworn in on Sep. 9, as well, to fill Councilman Vickers term for the remainder of the year.



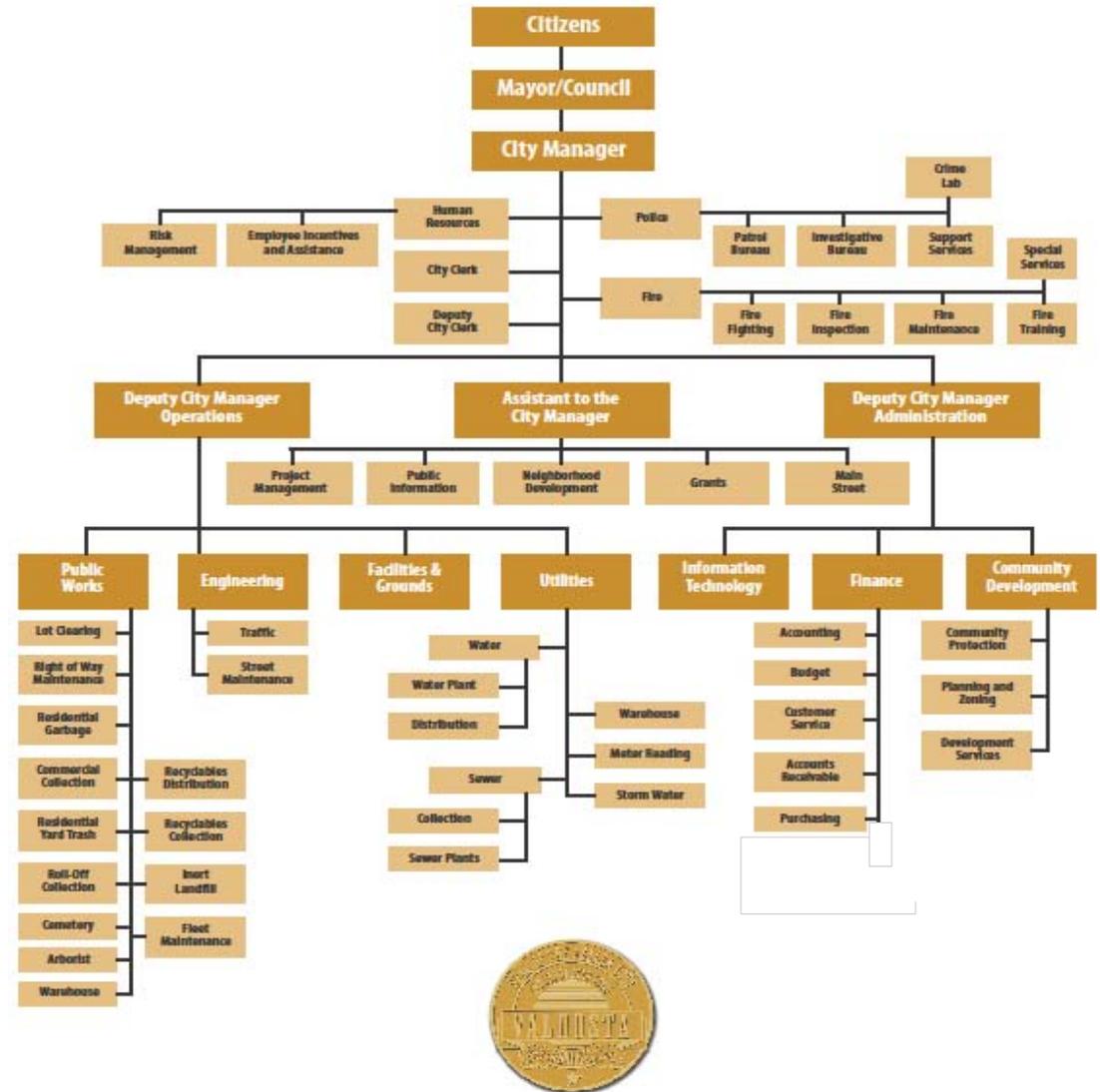
City of Valdosta Organizational Chart

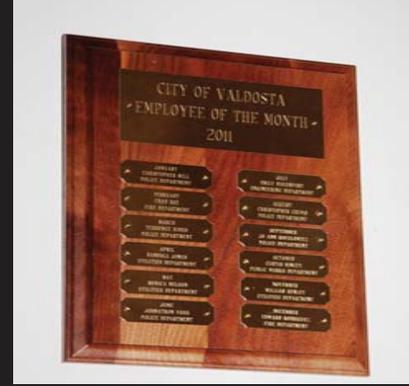
The City of Valdosta operates under a Council-Manager form of government. The elected officials are the policy makers who establish a vision for our city, and together they hire the manager to carry out policy and ensure that all citizens are equitably served. The manager coordinates the work of the department heads and other employees, who help ensure the smooth and efficient delivery of services. The manager also has the responsibility of preparing the budget, directing day-to-day operations, managing personnel and serving as the council's chief policy advisor.

Valdosta citizens may participate in accomplishing the business of the city by serving on a variety of boards, commissions, authorities and advisory committees. A policy, adopted by the Mayor and Council in 2008, established the process for making appointments and has provided greater opportunities for more citizens to participate in their local government.

The city also hosts the Valdosta City Government 101 Orientation Program each year, an initiative of the Mayor and City Council that gives City of Valdosta residents age 21 and older an inside look at how their city operates daily. The six-week program exposes participants to all city departments and their services.

More information about our city government and the various opportunities to serve the community may be found by visiting www.valdostacity.com, where citizens and other interested individuals may also sign up to receive regular E-news notifications.





Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager

The primary function of the Assistant to the City Manager is to provide direct support to the City Manager in city-wide public policy development, project development and management. The office oversees the Public Involvement Department, which consists of four specific divisions: the Public Information Division, which includes Metro Valdosta Channel 17; the Neighborhood Development Division; the Grants Administration Division, and the Valdosta Main Street Program. Contact Mara Register at (229) 259-3571 or mregister@valdostacity.com.



John Whitehead, III, Deputy City Manager for Operations

The primary function of the Deputy City Manager for Operations is to provide the City Manager with city-wide operations support. The office specifically oversees the areas of Public Works, Automotive/Fleet Center, Fuel Center, Engineering, Utility Services and Facilities and Grounds. Contact John Whitehead at (229) 259-3585 or jwhitehead@valdostacity.com.



Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager for Administration

The primary function of the Deputy City Manager for Administration is to provide the City Manager with city-wide administration support. The office oversees the operations of the Finance Department, which includes the offices of Accounting, Budget, Customer Service, Accounts Receivable, and Purchasing; the Community Development Department, which includes Community Protection, Planning and Zoning and Development Services; and the Information Technology Division. Contact Mark Barber at (229) 259-3518 or mbarber@valdostacity.com.



City of Valdosta Department Heads

L-R: Community Development Director Mike Martin, Deputy City Manager for Operations John Whitehead, III, Deputy City Manager for Administration Mark Barber, City Manager Larry Hanson, Assistant to the City Manager Mara Register, City Engineer Pat Collins, Fire Chief J.D. Rice, Police Chief Frank Simons and Utilities Director Henry Hicks. Not pictured: Human Resources Director Charlie Felts.





Economic Development in Valdosta

Valdosta, the principle city of the Valdosta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), offers regional residents and consumers a stable economy, with a wide-ranging mix of industries. Valdosta is home to 54,518 residents in the city proper, approximately 140,000 in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (which includes the counties of Lowndes, Brooks, Lanier and Echols), and hundreds of thousands of regional consumers within its retail pull of 15 to 17 counties in South Georgia and North Florida.

Valdosta's Opportunity Zones (OZ) provided strong incentives for local economic development, which contributed to positive growth in the city's underdeveloped areas in 2011. Through the program, job tax credits are offered to businesses that are certified through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Opportunity Zone Certification program—a program that targets community areas in need of redevelopment and revitalization.

One noteworthy accomplishment in 2011 is the DCA OZ certification of Azalea Health Innovations—a cloud-based electronic health records software company—who became the first business in downtown Valdosta to be OZ certified and to begin utilizing the job tax credits. Additional job creation in the medical industry occurred in the zone adjacent to the South Georgia Regional Medical Center. The city also continued significant efforts in the area of public project investment and neighborhood development in the various zones, to include single-family housing rehabilitation, park projects, drainage improvements, water and sewer projects, and road improvement projects.

In 2011, Valdosta took great strides in economic development as a result of the OZ program, as indicated by the 426 building permits issued through the program. The estimated value of the private investments of these new buildings is over \$5.6 million. The city also issued 1,405 business and/or occupational licenses which in turn created an estimated 84 new jobs directly related to Valdosta's OZ opportunities.

During 2011:

► Valdosta saw a 24.7 % growth in population over the past 10 years, according to the 2010 Census data released this year—which accounts for the highest growth in Valdosta in over 40 years. In comparison, Lowndes County's population grew 10.5 % in its unincorporated area, 18.6 % county-wide; and the State of Georgia grew 15.5 %.

► The value of new residential single family construction permits issued during 2011 totaled \$5,780,467 million, a 43.9 % decrease from the prior year, and yet still a positive indication of growth in Valdosta. New commercial construction increased 28.2 % from 2011 figures—from \$11,515,851 to \$40,803,085—along with \$5,638,339 expended on commercial additions and expansions, meaning more than \$46,441,424 of business growth occurred in our city during 2011.

► Valdosta ranked 24th out of 363 MSAs across the nation, according to a groundbreaking study by the Civic Economics and the American Booksellers Association. Valdosta's ranking is based on the share of retail sales captured by our local, independent retail businesses and on years of research that demonstrates that locally-owned and independent businesses recirculate substantially more money within the local economy than do their chain competitors.

► Valdosta welcomed the construction of The Grove Apartments, College Station and Brooktrace Apartments; two new banks, South West Georgia Bank on North Valdosta Road and Heritage Bank on Inner Perimeter Road; several new restaurants, including Zaxby's, McDonald's and Olive Garden near the mall; the Drury Inn, on St. Augustine Road and the addition to the Hampton Inn on Meeting Place; over \$14 million in expansion permits to South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC), Valdosta State University (VSU) for athletic fields, and numerous other permits for renovations and new office buildings in our community.

► The City of Valdosta monitors and manages the growth of Valdosta's historic downtown area through the state and nationally recognized Main Street program. In partnership with our local downtown merchants, Valdosta's Main Street district saw an increase of 52 employees. More than 40 events were hosted downtown, attracting over 100,000 visitors to the heart of our city. Also, seven buildings in the downtown district were renovated and four new housing units were developed.

► VSU grew to a 13,089 student enrollment in 2011, a new record and part of the 40 % growth over the past five years. Students this semester represent 157 Georgia counties, all 50 states, and Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Washington, D.C. The regional university had two buildings officially completed in 2011: the 15,700-



square-foot Jerry and Kay Jennett Lecture Hall, valued at approximately \$1.9 million, and the \$5.5 million, 33,000-square-foot Psychology and Counseling Building. During the year, construction also began on the \$5.5 million, 15,000-square-foot addition to the Bailey Science Center. This project is expected to be completed by fall 2012, at which time the \$5.5 million Ashley Hall project will also be completed. These additions represent more than \$80 million in new construction and renovations within the last three years. VSU's annual economic impact is approximately \$331 million.

► With the region's highest annual economic impact of more than \$601 million, SGMC is the area's largest non-governmental employer. The 380-bed hospital has 3,000 employees and 300 affiliated physicians and provides general medical services and specialty services—including comprehensive cancer care, open-heart surgery and angioplasty, women and children's services, neurology and neurosurgery, behavioral health, emergency services and rehabilitation and the region's only stroke program and neonatal-perinatal medicine program. In 2011, SGMC opened its new Imaging Center and Women's Imaging Center and acquired SMITH Northview Hospital, which operates as a 45-bed campus of SGMC. Construction projects underway include renovation and expansion of the Pearlman Cancer Center, a five-story parking deck and a five-story patient tower that will house a new Dasher Heart Center.

► Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (WGTC) was the recipient of one of the largest grants given to a technical college in the state. The \$3.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Community Job Training Program funded the Regional Education and Careers in Healthcare Project that recruits, trains, and places individuals who are unemployed or underemployed into health-care sector jobs. WGTC was also named a Top Military Friendly College for their work with Moody Air Force Base and all branches of the military. WGTC enrollment for 2011 topped out at more than 10,000 full-time students.

► Moody Air Force Base continues to expand to meet the needs of the more than 5,000 military and civilian personnel and their family members. The base awarded \$13.8 million in contracts during the year, completed construction on \$33.9 million and has an annual economic impact on Valdosta in excess of \$448 million.

► In 2011, the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority (VLCIA) continued to drive and maintain an aggressive business strategy aimed at the recruitment, retention and expansion of new and existing firms in Valdosta's target business sectors. The VLCIA invested over \$5.2 million to develop two new industrial parks, consisting of approximately 350 acres with the required infrastructure to attract new industrial development. Over 120 jobs were created for local contractors, sub-contractors and professional service providers to complete this work. The VLCIA was also instrumental in locating a Southeastern U.S. industry leader in reconditioning key process equipment to support renewable/sustainable forest products industry and agricultural feed production, and assisting local industries in expanding business operation. These industry locations/expansions resulted in the creation of over 150 jobs, utilizing approximately 12 acres and 450,000 square feet of manufacturing/logistics operations building capacity and over \$12.9 million projected capital investment in facility construction and operating equipment.

► Wild Adventures Theme Park celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2011, with a \$4 million Splash Island Water Park Expansion and a dozen concerts, including country legend Dolly Parton. In 2011, this regional theme park employed more than 750 employees. Wild Adventures continues to be one of the region's number one family destinations, attracting guests from all over the Southeast, the majority traveling from up to three hours away.

► The Valdosta Regional Airport experienced nearly \$2 million in airfield improvements and has six new corporate hangars ready to house new and existing business flight departments. The airport hosted 19,189 total flight operations and nearly 76,000 commercial airline passenger enplanements and deplanements.

► In 2011, the unemployment rate averaged around 9% on average but was consistently lower than the state's unemployment rate of more 9.7%. Furthermore, the average weekly wage in Lowndes County, according to the Department of Labor, rose from \$575 to \$584.

Valdosta continues to be a regional hub and a viable choice for new residential and commercial interests. Valdosta's economic development goals for the future are to continue to enhance future growth by attracting new and supporting existing businesses, encouraging economic prosperity and diversity, and to further assist in the creation of additional jobs within the Valdosta MSA.



Public Involvement Department

Engaging the Community

The Public Involvement Department is managed by the Assistant to the City Manager. The department is comprised of the Neighborhood Development Division, the Public Information Division, which includes Metro Valdosta Channel 17, the Grant Administration Division and the Valdosta Main Street Program. The Assistant to the City Manager also conducts research and drafts public policy on behalf of the City Manager, and assists the City Manager in a variety of special projects and city initiatives. The department began the year by receiving the Gabe Zimmerman Award for Public Service from the National Community Development Association (NCDA) for its exemplary ability to secure and utilize federal and state grants that funded the city's Single Family Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Housing Program.

The Neighborhood Development Division had a successful year as they continued to promote reinvestment in the city's neighborhoods through owner occupied repair assistance, homebuyer education and down payment assistance. The Division continued to assist in the preservation of existing homeowner housing in the Designated Revitalization Area (DRA) through the repair, rehabilitation and reconstruction of homes either through the Southern Hospitality Work Camp

or through the city's major repair program. Thirty-four families were assisted through these programs in 2011. More than 100 citizens attended homebuyer education and skills classes through programs funded through the division and a total of eight families were assisted in purchasing their first home.

The Grant Administration Division successfully pursued and secured more than \$1.23 million in grant funds from numerous state and federal agencies to support programs, equipment and staff needs in the Fire Department, Police Department, Neighborhood Development Division, the Utilities Department and the Public Works Department. These funds are a vital resource implementing and supporting critical services to our citizens.

The Public Information Division continued to provide accurate and timely information to the citizens and the news media through the use of traditional communication tools which included the Annual Report, press releases, newsletters, the city's website, E-news blast program, community videos, special events, community tours and Metro Valdosta Channel 17. Some of the special events celebrating our local community included the Annual Bird Supper that hosted hundreds of attendees from the local, state and national level; a community-wide 9-11 Tenth



"I am extremely proud of the outstanding effort of all Public Involvement Department staff in serving our citizens. They continue to show their commitment to improving the quality of life for all of our citizens through effective communications, hard work and dedication. The year 2011 was a banner year for securing resources for our neighborhood development efforts. We are extremely grateful to the leadership of our city for their constant support of these efforts."

— Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager

Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony, attended by over 1,000 citizens; and Georgia Cities Week that included a variety of events, including activities for youth, adults and employees. The city's governmental access channel, Metro Valdosta 17, continued to produce multiple local programs to include the City Focus show and other shows highlighting all of the various departments and programs of the city.

The Main Street Program, nationally accredited for the 16th consecutive year, in partnership with the Central Valdosta Development Authority (CVDA) and other important stakeholders, continued to enhance Valdosta's historic downtown district as the cultural and economic center of Greater Lowndes County by giving attention to business recruitment and retention, marketing and promotions, assistance in private rehabilitation projects, and the coordination of numerous special events. This program worked tirelessly to market the downtown district through advertising and hosting events to include the Brown Bag Concert Series, First Fridays, Art After Dark, 100 Black Men of Valdosta Annual Barbeque Contest, the Holiday Open House Festival and the Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade. The Division also held its first Downtown Farmers Market, called Farm Days, which was a huge success.

Mission

The mission of the Public Involvement Department is to enhance the quality of life in the City of Valdosta through neighborhood revitalization, community development, public awareness, and protection of the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens.





Community Development Department

Comprehensive Development Services

The Community Development Department, which includes the Community Protection Division, Development Services Division and the Planning and Zoning Division, continues to provide the coordination and collaboration of all development services for the Valdosta-Lowndes County development community.

The Community Protection Division is comprised of six city marshals and one technician who support a comprehensive “property line-to-property line” enforcement concept that encompasses all code enforcement responsibilities in the city. All of the six marshals have obtained the highest Level 11 certification. The division is responsible for processing over 4,954 cases in 2011 and for streamlining standard forms to ensure accuracy and professionalism. The division also helped coordinate the Great American Clean Up and Make a Difference Day which helped beautify our city neighborhoods.

The Development Services Division provides building code enforcement, plan review, and permitting services and provides the coordination and collaboration of all development services for the development community. The division remains a joint city-county service provider and serves the city of Hahira, as well. Five field inspectors make up this division, who are certified and cross certified. While striving to minimize the time it takes for plan review, staff monitors a tracking system which enables other departments to enter comments and review others. Along with the online permitting capabilities, permit holders have the ability to monitor their permits, inspections, and to track their progress. Utilizing this technology fosters better communication for ultimate project success. Permit clerks use an updated program which helps them better



Quick Stats

3212	Building Inspections
2401	Electrical Inspections
1914	Plumbing Inspections
1968	Mechanical Inspections
2285	Building Permits
1227	Electrical Permits
669	Plumbing Permits
1532	Mechanical Permits
495	Business Licenses Processed
444	Business Applications Approved
116	HPC Applications Processed
109	Sign Permits Processed
32	Annexation, Rezoning and CUP Applications Processed
25	Administrative Variances
29	Subdivisions Processed
13	ZBOA Variances Processed

“The Community Development Department staff pledges to continue to look for ways to improve our services, during and in spite of these trying times. Our staff is dedicated to providing our construction and development community with quality customer service to insure the safety of our citizens, as well as the investment in the future of our community.”

— Mike Martin, Community Development Department Director

serve the customers and provides a better record keeping system for permanent records and archives.

The Planning and Zoning Division ensures quality growth and development consistent with the Greater Lowndes 2030 Comprehensive Plan, by efficiently processing land use cases, business licenses, development plans, subdivision plats, sign permits, and other zoning matters for current and projected developments. The division continued to make significant improvements to the new Land Development Regulations in 2011, as well as major amendments to the Comprehensive Plan's Future Development map and 5-year short-term work program. Staff also continued working on several projects such as the Brownfield's Assessment Grant and implementation projects among others.

The Community Development Department continues to make advancements toward positive changes through ad-

vanced technology and continued relationships with local, state and national organizations within the construction industry. We provide the training to staff necessary in all divisions to achieve the proper certifications needed in their fields of responsibility.

The year 2011 proved to be as challenging for the Community Development Department as any year experienced recently. With the economy still recovering, new residential and commercial development continued to suffer considerably. In spite of that, department professionals completed over 10,495 inspections and issued over 5,613 permits. Some highlights for the year, however, included the Drury Inn project, the Olive Garden Restaurant, and SGMC's addition of their new Patient Tower -- a very large expansion to their existing facility. The department also received plans for some exciting projects for 2012.

Mission

The mission of the Community Development Department is to be known by our customers, citizens, and others for high quality service, to protect the safety and well being of citizens, and to ensure the quality, integrity, and code compliance of the built environment in all of Lowndes County.





Utilities Department

Preparing for the Future

In 2011, the Utilities Department continued to build upon upgrading and improving its critical facilities and infrastructure by implementing specific strategies to rehabilitate its aging sewer collection system, as well as planning for future upgrades of its water, sewer and stormwater systems.

As a result of surface water intrusion into portions of the city's Water Treatment Plant's (WTP) existing wellfield, the department has taken a two-pronged approach to address the city's short and long term drinking water needs, as well as ensure its long term sustainability for a safe, high-quality water supply in the future. There is an ongoing search for an appropriate alternative wellfield location to loop existing large water mains and to evaluate the feasibility of upgrading the WTP to meet surface water treatment standards. Construction of a new 30-inch water transmission main was completed in February 2011 and will allow for improved drinking water distribution, improved flows within the entire system, and will maintain enhanced firefighting capabilities throughout the city.

Water and sewer construction was completed in three of the priority annexed islands in early 2011, and the plan is for the majority of the remaining annexed islands to receive water and sewer services by the end of 2013. The analysis for the Hydraulic Water Model was completed in January 2011. This model identified current and future capacity needs with recommendations to improve water flow and quality within the distribution system, enhance the flushing program to significantly reduce fire hydrant flushing for water quality purposes, identify closed valves within the system, perform a water use audit and develop a short and long term Capital Improvement Plan. The outdated and deteriorated Savannah-Fry Street elevated water storage tank will be replaced in March 2012 with a new 2-million gallon tank. The department also worked closely with the Valdosta Fire Department in December to ensure a successful ISO inspection and evaluation.

Thirty percent of the design for the new Withlacoochee Wastewater Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) force main, pump station, equalization basin with a new influent receiving station and headworks was completed in 2011. The department is currently awaiting EPD approval to move forward with the full design and development of specification and bid documents. The city has also submitted a new project worksheet to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the relocation of the Withlacoochee WPCP. This 1,100-page document is currently under review in FEMA's Office, in Washington D.C. The proposed cost of relocation is approximately \$95 million and should be fully eligible for federal funding under FEMA guidelines.

The sewer collection rehabilitation action plan, implemented in 2010, incorporates the initial phase for remote monitoring of all sewage pump stations through use of a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system, annual replacement or rehabilitation of outdated sewage pump stations, and remote televising and smoke testing of the sewer collection system. The results of this work will significantly reduce sewer spills, inflow and/or infiltration (I&I) of ground and surface water into the sewer systems, as well as development of a prioritized long-term sewer collection system rehabilitation plan. Contracts for a closed-circuit television inspection of the Mud Creek and Knights Creek sewer interceptors, which transports all sewage to the Mud Creek WPCP, were completed in 2011 and were in need of only minor repairs. Over 30 seriously deteriorated sewer manholes were either replaced or rehabilitated in 2011, and an additional 30 manholes will be out for bid in early 2012. Implementation of a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) began in 2011 to improve work flow, and will track and maintain historical documentation for all work performed within the department. In addition, this program can be utilized by other city departments to meet their work load management needs.

The Mud Creek WPCP expansion plan was initiated in November 2009 and qualified for \$10 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. The expansion will meet the sanitary sewer needs resulting from continued growth in



“The Utilities Department continues to implement its short and long term plans, laying the foundation upon which to build a state-of-the-art water and sewer system. The future—and the economy—offers us ever-changing and more-demanding challenges if we are to protect our environment and meet the growth needs of our community, while delivering the level of services expected by our customers and citizens. Through perseverance and steady implementation of these plans over the next several years and decades, Valdosta will be well prepared and ready to meet our needs for the next 20 to 30 years.”
— Henry Hicks, Utilities Department Director

the developing service areas and the regulatory requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The improvements include new technology to ensure optimum and efficient operations and will move the department one step closer to its automation plan for all treatment plants and remote facilities. The construction of the solids handling treatment process will be complete in February 2012, and the completion of the liquid treatment portion of the expansion will be complete by March 2012.

The department’s highest priority is the need to rehabilitate and replace seriously deteriorated sewer infrastructure throughout the sewer collection and treatment systems, as well as implement water quality improvement projects to ensure a long term, sustainable and safe water supply for the future.

Utilities Department Quick Stats

Drinking Water Treated	3.2 Billion Gallons
Wastewater Treated	2.9 Billion Gallons
Water Customers Billed	19,886 Customers/Month
Sewer Customers Billed	18,587 Customers/Month
Storm Water Customers Billed	18,803 Customers/Month
Water Revenues	\$ 5,433,347
Sewer Revenues	\$ 7,012,356

Mission

The mission of the Utilities Department is to be known by our customers for delivery of the highest quality municipal utility services possible through continuous improvement.





Fire Department

Rising Above the Challenges

The Valdosta Fire Department (VFD) continues to be rated one of the best fire protection and service providers in the State of Georgia, according to the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) who evaluates and measures the services each fire department can deliver to their community by national standards. The department has maintained a Class 2 status for over a decade and has one of the highest ratings in the state.

The year 2011 was challenging as the department had two major incidents that occurred within weeks of each other. The first was a dramatic rescue of six victims from the second and third floor balconies of an apartment building fire at The Commons apartments. This was followed by the tragic deaths of three children in a house fire on N. Forrest Street. These events led the fire department to plan and implement a "Smoke Detector Awareness Blitz" in identified target areas of the city. The fire department canvassed an area that covered a one mile square: from Cypress Street, north along Forrest, to East Moore Street. The event was successful in educating residents of the importance of having a working smoke detector installed in their homes.

The fire department also made adjustments as the city grew with additional annexations, new apartment complexes and high rise buildings at Valdosta State University, and hotels around the Valdosta Mall. Our traditional way of responding to alarms no longer met the needs of our customers; therefore, our department had to learn many new concepts to maintain the excellent customer service to both our new and existing customers. One of the adjustments made involved how

the department would respond and handle calls for service. Prior to 2011, the fire department would put an average of no less than 12 firefighters on every structure fire in the city. Adjustments made in 2011 required additional personnel at the fire scenes of all second and third alarm calls for service, which helped the department maintain quality service and satisfaction to all our customers. In addition, the decision was made for one additional fire truck to be dispatched to all calls.

Currently, the department operates seven fire stations, equipped with a total of 16 fire trucks, nine pumper trucks, three ladder trucks, one air/light truck, one airport crash/rescue truck, one urban/search and rescue truck, and one 2,000-gallon tanker truck. The department was recently designated by the State of Georgia Governor's Office to provide regional coverage to all weapons of mass destruction for the Southeast Georgia area. Areas of service provided by the department include Fire Suppression, Fire Safety Education and Prevention, Code Enforcement, Hazardous Materials Mitigation, Confined Space Rescue and First Responders. The department has 96 nationally- and state-certified (NPQ) level 1 firefighters, and all certified members are trained to the highest level of hazardous material response and handling offered by the State Fire Academy. The department's response area covers approximately 71,000 citizens and as many as 500,000 residents of South Georgia and North Florida who utilize Valdosta as a hub for business, culture, education, leisure, and retail.

The VFD provides full-time, paid, professional fire protection and educational services for the City of Valdosta. This has helped the city earn a Class 2 Rating by the Insurance Services Organization. This low rating allows for very low property insurance premiums for city residents.



“Our mission of responding in a safe manner to all reported emergencies, to protect lives and property through our efforts in fire prevention and public education, and to mitigate those emergencies and/or disasters—whether natural or man-made—is what sets us apart from other fire protection providers in this state.” —Fire Chief J.D. Rice

In 2011, the VFD celebrated several significant achievements. The Exchange Club of Valdosta named VFD Firefighter Aaron Jacob “Jake” Lyons as the Firefighter of the Year. Battalion Fire Chief Tom Robinson was elected to serve on the Executive Board of the Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation. Staff conducted over 163 Community Partners in Education (CPIE) visits to local elementary schools, resulting in Fire Stations # 1, 3, 5 and 6 receiving the CPIE service award for their work in the city’s program. Several other community projects allowed staff to collect and deliver gifts to the Georgia Southwestern State Hospital for the “Mayors Motorcade;” raise over \$5,500 to purchase a Fire Safety Educational “Bounce House” for kids; host the Annual “John H. Baty” Jr. Fire Marshals Fun Day at McKey Park for this year’s selected students in our fire prevention program; distribute over 70 bicycles received from Wal-Mart to underprivileged area children; and host the 3rd annual “Shop with a Firefighter” campaign to provide underprivileged children with Christmas toys. In addition to our staff successes, six Valdosta City Schools students were selected as statewide winners in the Georgia State Fire Marshal’s Essay contest—the second year in a row that our local school kids have won in the statewide contest.

Quick Stats

- ▶ Responded to 2,784 alarms last year—an increase of 5.2% over 2010.
- ▶ Average response time was 4 minutes 17 seconds—well below the national average of 6 minutes and a decrease of 8 seconds compared to 2010.
- ▶ Conducted 1,195 fire inspections of buildings and facilities.
- ▶ Educated 8,503 students in Fire Prevention and Safety through 164 programs.
- ▶ Serviced and inspected 2,901 city fire hydrants in preparation for the 2011 ISO evaluation.
- ▶ Pre-fire planned 2,124 city businesses for occupant load and potential fire load hazards.
- ▶ Received a combined total of 25,000 hours of training in CPR Recertification Training; Hazardous Material Technician Refresher Training; State of Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training Mandated Core Competency; ISO Mandated Training; Emergency Vehicle Operator Training; Airport Rescue Firefighter Training; and over 300 street/map familiarization tests for all drivers and operators
- ▶ Partnered with the Moody Air Force Base Fire Department and the City of Albany Fire Department for a joint aircraft firefighter training exercise.
- ▶ Raised over \$10,751 for the Georgia Firefighter Burn Foundation through our annual “Fill the Boot” and Boston Butt fundraisers.
- ▶ Awarded a \$35,000 grant from the Office of Homeland Security for our Regional Georgia Search and Rescue Team (GSAR).

Mission

The mission of the City of Valdosta Fire Department is to respond in a safe manner to all reported emergencies of our customers, to protect their lives and property through fire prevention, public education, and the mitigation of emergencies and disasters, whether natural or man-made.





Engineering Department

Paving the Road for the Future

In 2011, the Engineering Department reorganized. The revamped organization includes three (3) divisions: Engineering Services which performs project management, development review and GIS/real property management; Streets and Traffic Management which performs signal maintenance, signs & markings, street & sidewalk maintenance, and operation of the Traffic Management Center; and the Stormwater Utility which performs stormwater maintenance and environmental services.

Department personnel continued to provide professional civil engineering and surveying services for all types of municipal public works projects throughout the year. Projects included water and sewer extensions, drainage, land acquisition, traffic control and road projects. The department also manages and coordinates all Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) projects. Private development plans are reviewed to ensure conformance to various city ordinances. All construction performed on city rights-of-way must be approved and inspected by city engineering personnel.

Our primary goal is to provide the best services at the lowest cost to the taxpayers. Customer service is paramount.

Water and Sewer Main Extensions

Annexed Island 35A (Pine Point Subdivision) Water & Sewer
 Annexed Island 69C1 (Beck Street) Water & Sewer
 Annexed Island 77A (St. Augustine) Water & Sewer
 Annexed Island Cherry Creek Utility Extension Project 2
 Buena Vista Water Main Extension
 Drury Inn and Olive Garden Complex
 Madison Highway Utility Extension

Drainage

Country Club Culvert
 Freedom Park Dam Breach
 Brown's Canal
 Melody Lane Drainage
 Miller Business Park Regional Detention Pond
 Park Avenue Culvert
 SGMC Detention Pond
 VSU Detention Pond

Road Projects

E. Park at Pineview Intersection Improvements
 Jerry Jones Radius Improvements
 Lamar Street Bridge Repairs
 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Corridor Road Renovations
 Signal Timing Project
 Wendover Road Reconstruction

Land Acquisitions Started

Annexed Islands 23 & 24 - Bridlewood and Trimblewood
 Annexed Island 27 - Highland Heights
 Annexed Island 69B - Rose, Lankford and Parker Mathis
 Fry Street Ditch Piping
 Woodrow Wilson Extension Project Right of Way
 Twin Street Easement and Right of Way

Land Acquisitions Completed

Annexed Island 85A - Leila Avenue
 Annexed Islands 56, 59 & 63 - Springhill and Baytree
 Baytree Culvert improvement
 Crawford Lane drainage
 Right of Way for Gordon at Lamar Intersection

Other

Bland Park Parking
 Central Avenue Sidewalk
 Miller Business Park (Industrial Park) Infrastructure
 Patterson Street VSU Sidewalk



"There's a culture within the Engineering Department that questions are answered accurately and completely, and that employees are expected and empowered to solve a customer's problem within the context of city values and outcomes."

— Patrick S. Collins, P.E., City Engineer

Engineering Services

Driveways Inspected	76
Land Disturbance Permits Issued	10
Soil Erosion Inspections on Permitted Sites	175
Soil Erosion Inspections on Non-Permitted Sites	25
Corrective Actions Taken on Soil Erosion	7
Potential Soil Erosion Problems Being Investigated	3
Pond Inspections Performed	104
Rights-of-Way Authorization Numbers Issued	239
Certificates of Occupancy Issued	40
NPDES, Construction and Site Plans Reviewed	117

Street and Traffic Management

Signals	
Bulbs Replaced	50
Loops and Detectors Repaired	22
Emergency Call Out	113
Loops Installed/Repaired	13
Overhead Signs Installed/Replaced	6
Signal Heads Installed/Replaced	15
LEDs Installed	177
Traffic Counts	29
Misc Equipment Replaced/Install	133
Pedestrian Lights Installed/Repaired	36
Pedestrian Lights Replaced	85
Banners Installed/Removed	103

Signs & Markings

Signs Installed	360
Traffic Counts	155
Painting Removed	1,280 ft
Stop Signs Repaired	620
Street Signs Repaired	1,084
Trimming of R.O.W.	725
Stop Bars/Arrow Painted	56
Painting	20,607 ft
Thermo Arrow/Stop Bars	68
Over Head Signs Made	13
Reflectors Installed	74
Barricades Installed	193
Bumps and Humps Installed / Removed	44
Sign Upgrades	602

Traffic Center

Fiber Modems Replaced	3
Fiber Repairs (Test/Installed in TMC)	12
Fiber Repairs (Test/Ends Install in Field)	50
Data Changes	48
Miscellaneous Equipment (Installed/Replaced)	33

Streets & Sidewalks

Potholes Repaired	717
Washouts	2,370 ft
Trench Lines	959 ft

Root and Base Cuts	157
Water and Sewer Cuts	64
Driveways Repaired	180
Edge Washouts	138
Sidewalks	1,881 ft
Base and Root Repair	22,772 ft
Asphalt Base and Root Repair	15,238
Locations Saw Cut	757
Storm Drains Cleaned	194
Concrete Curb and Gutter	175
Trip Hazards	148 ft
Asphalt	328 tons
Concrete	542 yds
Millings	470 tons

Stormwater Utility Maintenance

Storm pipe cleaned	13,311 ft
Canals cut	245,970 ft
Catch basins inspected	1,295
Catch basins cleaned	469
Catch basins repaired	69
Beaver dams	1,904 hrs
Streets swept	1,671 mi
Outfalls inspected	181
Rainfall (10 rain guage average)	46 in



Mission

The mission of the Engineering Department is to provide the highest quality engineering services for the community that involves transportation, street maintenance and the survey, design, and construction oversight of street, water, drainage and miscellaneous public works improvements.



Public Works Department

Caring for the Environment

The Public Works and Sanitation Department is responsible for the daily operation of sanitation services and repair and maintenance of city vehicles and equipment. The department's primary responsibility is residential and commercial sanitation and recycling services. However, in recent years, the Public Works and Sanitation Department has expanded services to include all of the following: Residential Yard Trash, Right-of-Way Maintenance, Right-of-Way Street Maintenance, Neighborhood Recycling, Mosquito Control Program, Automotive/Fleet Maintenance Center, City Fuel Center, Small Engine Repair, Mathis City Auditorium, Sunset Hill Cemetery, Facilities Maintenance (City Hall, City Hall Annex, Customer Service), Arbor Division, Code Enforcement/Property Abatements, Special Pick ups, Wetherington Lane Landfill Maintenance and the Compost Landfill.

In 2011, a significant effort was made to reduce and conserve fuel consumption, as prices for diesel and unleaded fuel hit record highs once again. Staff in all city departments were asked to implement fuel conservation measures that included better planning of work activities, carpooling when an option, and monitoring tire pressures. These conservation efforts have become standard practices with all city vehicles and equipment.

Environmental awareness and education efforts have resulted in an increase in recycling participation from both residential and com-



Quick Stats

17,355	Residential Sanitation Customers
1,869	Commercial and Small Business Customers
17,603	Residential and Commercial Recycling Customers
286	Miles of Right-of-Way Maintained
80	Miles of State Right-of-Way Maintained
882	Miles of Streets Swept and Cleaned
4,036	Number of Special Pick Ups
3,385	Tons of Recyclable Materials Collected
26,087	Tons of Solid Waste Collected
8,327	Tons of Yard Trash Collected
64,621	Pounds Collected from Electronics Recycling Events
8,327	Tons of Yard Waste Processed for Mulch
5,664	Fleet/Maintenance Work Orders Completed
1,468	Automotive Services Completed

"My vision and goal for the department is to be a customer-driven department delivering consistent services of the highest quality for our customers and to capitalize on our ability to create excellence through efficient integration of personnel, equipment and material while meeting our citizen expectations."

—John Whitehead III, Public Works Department Director & Deputy City Manager for Operations

mercial customers, as well as the local school systems. The recycling center has stepped up their efforts to reduce the amount of recyclable material going to the landfill and is processing over 90 percent of all recyclable material coming into the recycle center.

In addition to the highlights of 2011, the Public Works and Sanitation Department is also proud of the following achievements:

▶ The department hosted two Electronics Recycling events with Atlanta Recycling Solutions and Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB), saving over 64,621 pounds of garbage from the landfill.

▶ The Arbor Division pruned over 2,133 trees and planted another 185 trees along city streets.

▶ The City of Valdosta received the Tree City designation for the 25th consecutive year and is one of only three cities in the state who have held this honor for over 25 years.

▶ Through the Yard Trash division and a partnership with KLVB, the department provided assistance with the following community service and neighborhood beautification programs:

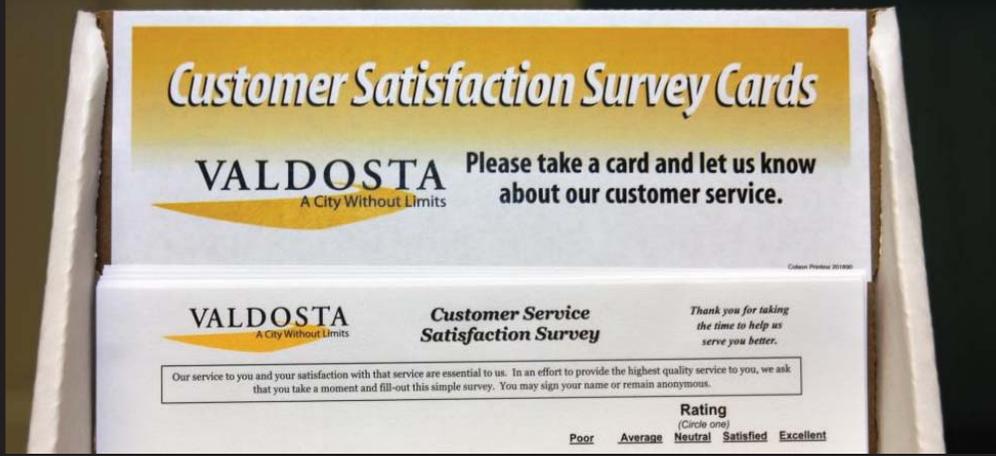
- Great American Clean-up
- Keep America Beautiful/Make a Difference Day Clean-up
- Rivers Alive
- Southern Hospitality Work Camp
- Bring One For the Chipper
- Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade

The Public Works and Sanitation Department continues to participate in the Government 101 Orientation Program, Georgia Cities Week, school career days, and other public information opportunities, while also maintaining important information for customers on Metro Valdosta Channel 17 and the web page located at: www.valdostacity.com/recycle.

Mission

The mission of the Public Works Department is to provide consistent and quality customer service in all aspects of daily operations to our customers and citizens of the City of Valdosta.





Human Resources Department

Supporting the City Team

During 2011, the Human Resources Department received approximately 1,520 applications and resumes for employment and processed 26 new hires.

Training opportunities in 2011 were offered in the areas of Defensive Driving and Safety and Loss Management, with 74 employees attending the training events.

Each month, the Employee Relations Committee nominates an employee for the Employee of the Month award. Winners are honored at the first City Council meeting of each month, have their names engraved on a plaque which is displayed in City Hall, receive a framed certificate, and are given a check in the amount of \$200. The award recognizes employees who have reached a milestone regarding their career with the city or have gone above and beyond in the performance of their duties.

The committee provided assistance with the annual Blood Drive and Georgia Cities Week activities held in Saunders Park, in April. The Employee Relations Committee also provided assistance in planning and serving at the city's annual Thanksgiving Luncheon which was attended by over 300 employees.

In May 2011, the city opened CareHere—a primary health care clinic serving the needs of city employees, retirees, and their dependents who are enrolled in the city's health insurance plan. In addition to medical care, the clinic also provides a variety of prescription medications, lab work and physicals at no



"Success in Human Resources requires a strategic vision...and boundless enthusiasm."
 —Charlie Felts, Human Resources Department Director

cost. Since its opening, approximately 1,330 patients have utilized the clinic's services in 2011.

Wellness continues to be an important function in the Human Resources Department with the start of the Connect Program in November offered through the CareHere Clinic. Employees participating in this program may partner with a personal health coach who provides assistance with health-related goals such as smoking cessation, weight loss, diabetes management and many others.

Continuing its involvement with other public sector organizations, the Human Resources Department provided assistance in the area of human resources to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Convention and Tourism Authority, the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority, and the Airport Authority.

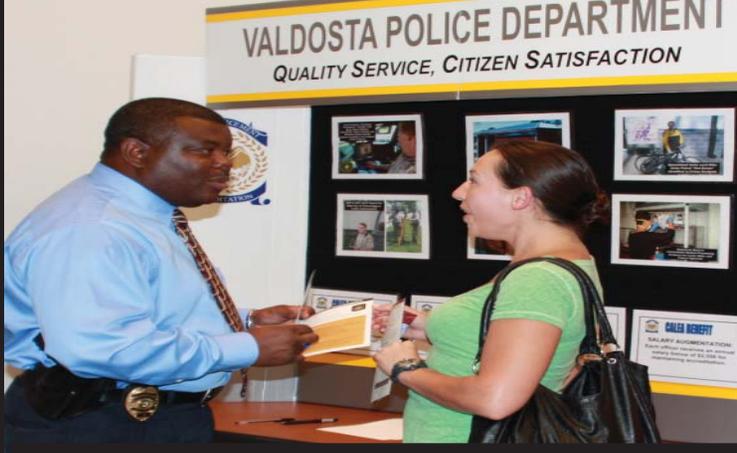
Quick Facts

- 1,520 Applications and Resumes Processed
- 1,330 CareHere Clinic Visits
- 74 Employees Trained
- 26 Employees Hired

Mission

The mission of the Human Resources Department is to offer quality, efficient and courteous service to all customers.





Police Department

Award-winning Law Enforcement

The Valdosta Police Department (VPD), consisting of 146 sworn personnel, 24 non-sworn support personnel and 19 part-time employees, is comprised of four bureaus: the Bureau of Patrol Services, the Bureau of Investigative Services, the Bureau of Support Services and the Valdosta-Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory.

The Bureau of Patrol Services, considered the backbone of the organization, works with the investigative and support bureaus to maintain a safe community. The department received 81,657 calls for service, made 21,722 total arrests (including traffic citations), issued 17,331 traffic citations and 4,500 traffic warnings, investigated 2,646 traffic accidents (including roadway and private property accidents), made 443 DUI cases and investigated over 500 cases involving some type of family violence. As part of this mission, the department also utilized community policing activities to reduce crime in the city to include the Neighborhood Watch and Crime Prevention programs. The Bureau of Patrol operates a street-level crimes unit within the bureau--referred to as the Power Squad; K-9 units--which include an explosives detection canine; and a traffic unit which consists of officers who have had specialized training in traffic enforcement and accident reconstruction.

The Bureau of Investigations (BIS) has four units within the bureau which are the Person Crimes Unit, Property Crime Unit, Narcotics Unit, and the Gang Unit. The BIS posted outstanding clearance rates for the year 2011 as compared to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) national averages. The department maintained clearance rates above the national average in every Part 1 Crime Category to include burglary, homicide, aggravated assault, rape, robbery, and theft by taking motor vehicle. During 2011, the bureau was responsible for 787 arrests with 844 felony charges and 402 misdemeanor charges. Recovered property for 2011 was valued at \$210,700 and the value of seized property was \$588,400.

In 2011, the Person Crimes Unit investigated six homicides which occurred in the city, and within days of the cases offenders were arrested in each case. The unit also solved a 2009 cold-case homicide in May 2011 which cleared the last of 10 homicides for 2009. Several other major cases were also investigated and solved. Notable cases for the unit included three bank robberies in 2011: Guardian Bank in July, the Certus Bank in August,

and Southeastern Federal Credit Union in November. With the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the Certus Bank robbery, arrests were made in each of the armed robberies.

Burglaries were a priority for the Property Crimes Unit and for the entire investigative bureau in 2011. While both the patrol and investigative bureaus took proactive measures to reduce burglaries with the assistance of the SABER Program (a street level burglary suppression unit), the investigative bureau strived to clear as many burglaries as possible while attempting to maintain a clearance rate above the national average. The unit exceeded the national clearance rate for burglaries in 2009 and 2010 and improved clearance rates in 2011 by 7.77% from 2010. The number of burglaries reported in Valdosta dropped by 70 burglaries from 2010 to 2011. Further, as part of our burglary reduction and suppression efforts, we identified "hot spots" via crime analysis and deployed officers and detectives to help prevent and apprehend offenders. The department also used undercover surveillance equipment for indoor and outdoor surveillance of businesses and designated areas in an effort to identify offenders in areas identified as having multiple incidents of burglary.

The Property Crimes Unit investigated and solved several major cases. One notable case was in October 2011, when the unit identified and arrested a male offender for stealing four different air conditioners from residences and businesses. After the arrest, the string of air conditioner thefts slowed down dramatically.

The Gang Unit is assigned to a multi-jurisdictional and federal task force headed by the FBI. The Gang Unit and Task Force, along with the members of the VPD Power Squad (a specialty squad assigned to combat street crimes), were successful in combating gang-related crimes in the city and the surrounding areas. The Gang Unit investigated approximately 100 cases, made 50 arrests and participated in multiple community gang awareness programs.

The Narcotics Unit had a successful 2011. Unlike the property and person crimes units, the majority of cases investigated by the unit are self-generated, and personnel assigned to this unit must be highly motivated in developing informants and identifying persons who sell and deal in narcotics. The unit seized 45 guns, 191.4 grams of crack cocaine, 315.7



"The Valdosta Police Department is dedicated to service and committed to justice. The men and women of the VPD strive each day to deliver the quality service that our citizens deserve. I truly believe that some of the best people in law enforcement work here in the Valdosta Police Department."
— Frank Simons, Valdosta Police Chief

grams of powder cocaine, over 44,000 grams of marijuana and made 219 arrests which resulted in 199 felony charges and 108 misdemeanor charges in 2011.

The Bureau of Support Services is responsible for the records division, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) officers, school resource officers, truancy operations, court operations and training. The department prides itself in having a high standard of training both new and experienced personnel. In 2011, the VPD training division provided over 3,597 hours of in-house training for personnel for core training in addition to over 564 hours spent orienting and training new personnel. In house training was augmented by over 3,472 hours of off-site or adjunct training. Personnel received training in a variety of basic and advanced courses, including homicide investigation, gang schools, fingerprint identification, narcotics investigations, basic hostage negotiations, burglary suppression, DUI enforcement, traffic accident investigations, domestic violence issues and criminal procedure updates. School resource officers, DARE officers, and truancy officers work under the Bureau of Support Services and worked diligently to provide a safe learning environment for our children. These officers also are trained to deal with and help reduce the number of truant students in our school system. The two officers assigned to DARE work throughout the year to educate school children about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

The Valdosta-Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory is responsible for receiving, safeguarding, processing and analyzing property/evidence received from area law enforcement agencies and preparing documented results for possible criminal prosecution. The crime laboratory staff come from varied backgrounds and consists of a property/evidence custodian, crime scene technicians, latent print examiners, ballistic examiners, a forensic biologist, a forensic chemist and various administrative personnel. Recently, a second detective graduated from the prestigious Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, and Tobacco Firearms Examiner Academy. This grueling training process requires a 6-month school in Maryland and another six months to a year of on-the-job training and peer review. Our newest examiner has completed his offsite training and is now in on-the-job training. The laboratory is on the cusp of introducing a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) which will benefit the department with evidence management and hopes to apply in the near future for the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors certification.

The VPD continually works to maintain Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the State of Georgia Accreditation status. In July 2011, the department was awarded its third CALEA recertification, and the department was recognized for excellence in maintaining an outstanding level of compliance by being awarded the CALEA "Accreditation with Excellence"—the fourth consecutive recognition of excellent performance awarded to the department by CALEA. The CALEA reaccreditation was presented to the department at the international CALEA conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio. The department was evaluated for the State of Georgia Law Enforcement Recertification in December 2011 and was found to have excellent files and documentation and in complete compliance with state law enforcement standards. The VPD is examined by CALEA on site assessors and state assessors every three years to verify compliance to standards.

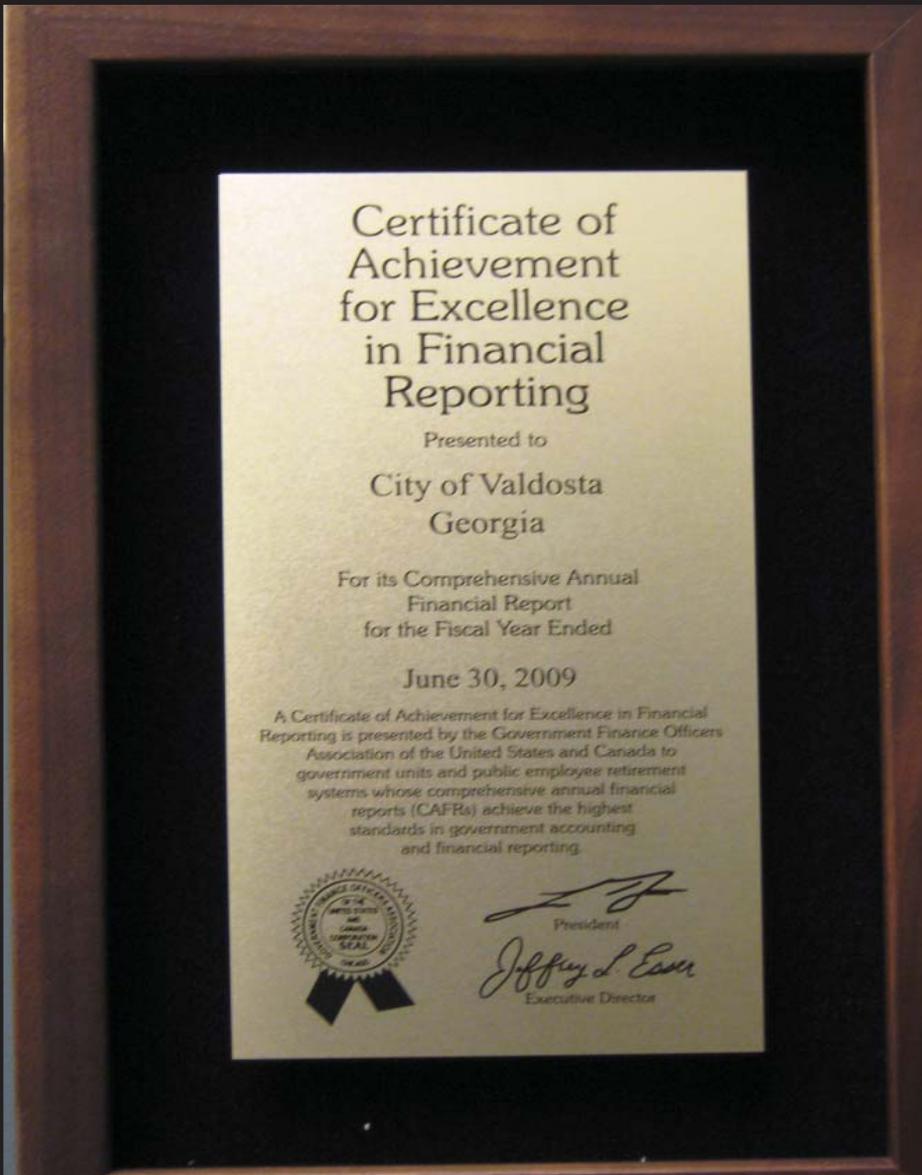
The VPD continues to be proactive in pursuing grant funding from various state and federal organizations to meet department goals, while reducing impact on city operating costs. In 2011, the department received grants and/or maintained the following grants: the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (HEAT) for \$46,800; the Georgia Emergency Management (GEMA) Bio-Metric Fingerprint Scanner Grant (2010) for \$21,350; the GEMA Bomb Dog Continuation Grant (2009-2010) for \$7,438; the Federal Appropriation Request Grant from Congressman Jack Kingston's Office for \$500,000; the COPS Federal Recovery Grant (2009-2011) for \$1,055,957; the Edward Byrne Memorial Grant for \$53,916 (2009), \$48,249 (2010) and \$27,370 (2011).

Community policing is a concept embraced by the VPD. The department has a community policing officer who works throughout the year to educate citizens about public safety concerns. There are multiple Neighborhood Watch groups in Valdosta, and citizens are continually encouraged to report anything that looks suspicious. During summer 2011, the department heavily campaigned the message "Don't Hide It, Provide It" in an effort to encourage community involvement in public safety.

The Valdosta Police Department looks forward to the challenges of 2012 as the department continues to pride itself on "Quality Service" and "Citizen Satisfaction."

Mission

The mission of the Valdosta Police Department is to maintain social order within prescribed ethical and constitutional limits while providing professional law enforcement services to the citizens and visitors of Valdosta.



Finance Department

Efficiency and Accountability

In 2011, the department continued its tradition of excellence in properly managing the city's funds, while providing the highest level of customer service to citizens.

The department was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2010. This is the 25th consecutive year that the city has received this award.

The department also received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010, for the 15th consecutive year. The award is the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting. In order to earn this award, a government must publish a budget document which meets program criteria as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide and as a communications device.

Each year, Georgia requires an annual audit of the books of accounts, financial records, and transactions of all administrative departments of the city by independent certified public accountants selected by the Mayor and City Council. The Finance Department is pleased to report that it has once again successfully completed a financial audit for the fiscal year with outstanding remarks. Furthermore, the city has no general fund debt and less than \$23 million in total enterprise debt, a remarkable accomplishment achieved by sound financial management.



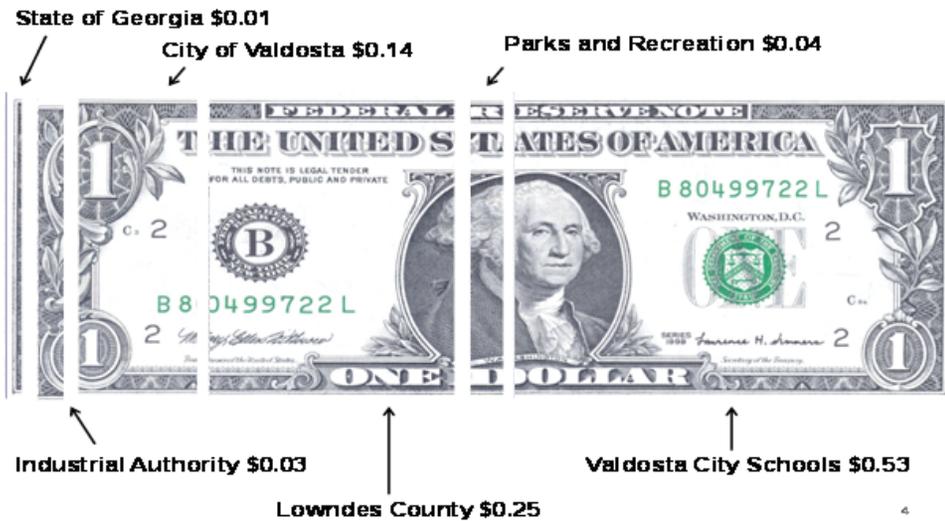
"In an increasingly uncertain economy, the City of Valdosta has searched for innovative ways to meet the needs of citizens with the financial resources available to it. This commitment to quality and fiscal conservatism has left the city with a sound financial outlook."

— Mark Barber, Finance Department Director & Deputy City Manager for Administration



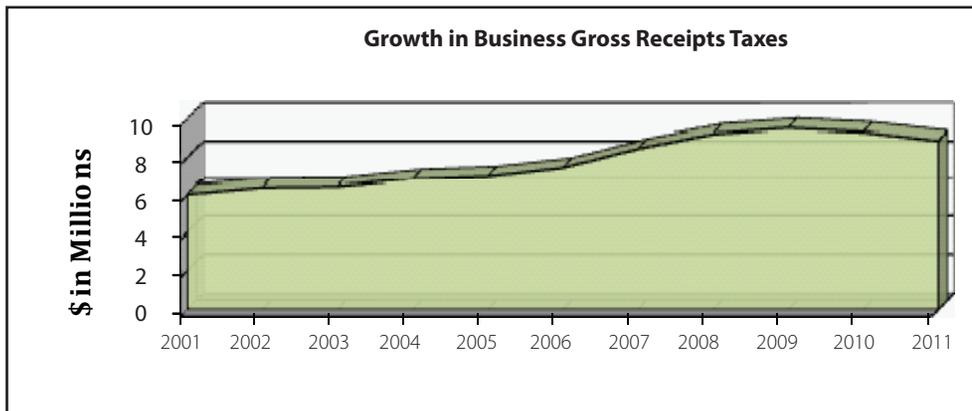
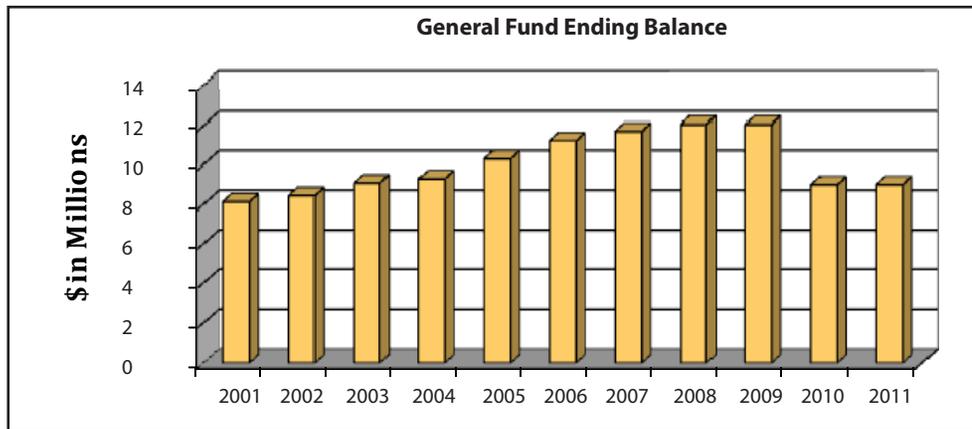
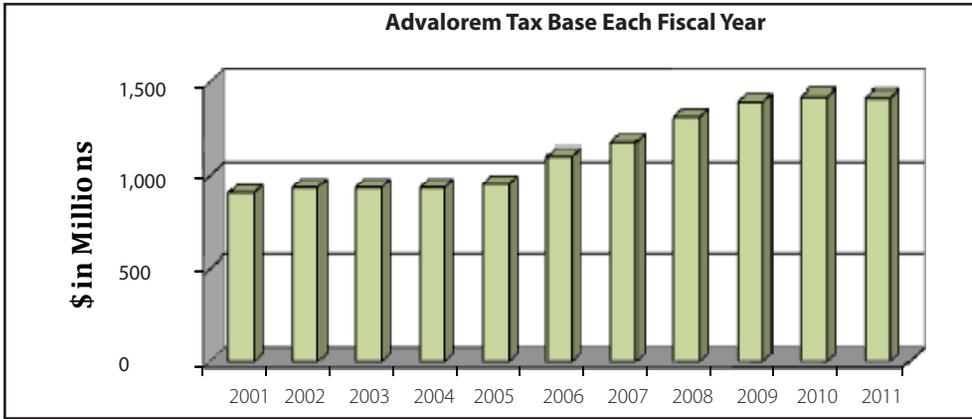
Where Does Each City of Valdosta Resident's Property Tax Dollar Go?

Property taxes make up 7.05% of the funding necessary to operate the city. Although the city's budget is approximately \$78.4 million, less than \$5.5 million of this is generated from property taxes. The largest sources of revenue in the city are sales taxes, water and sewer fees, sanitation fees, franchise fees and property taxes.



Mission

The mission of the Finance Department is to provide financial reporting and excellent customer service for all internal and external customers, while developing innovative and cost-effective ways of financing city services and facilities.



Optimistic Financial Outlook

The financial condition and long term outlook for the city are better than most local governments. The sustained growth of three primary economic indicators supports this view. The adjacent graphs evaluate the growth trends of these factors.

Property Values – Property values represent growth in construction and development.

General Fund Ending Balance – The General Fund ending balance reflects the city’s ability to meet ever-increasing demands for general services while remaining financially sound and fiscally responsible by providing a buffer for short-term fluctuations in the economy.

Business Gross Receipts Taxes – These taxes are based on business gross receipts. As the receipts from the taxes increase, it reflects the health of Valdosta’s economy.

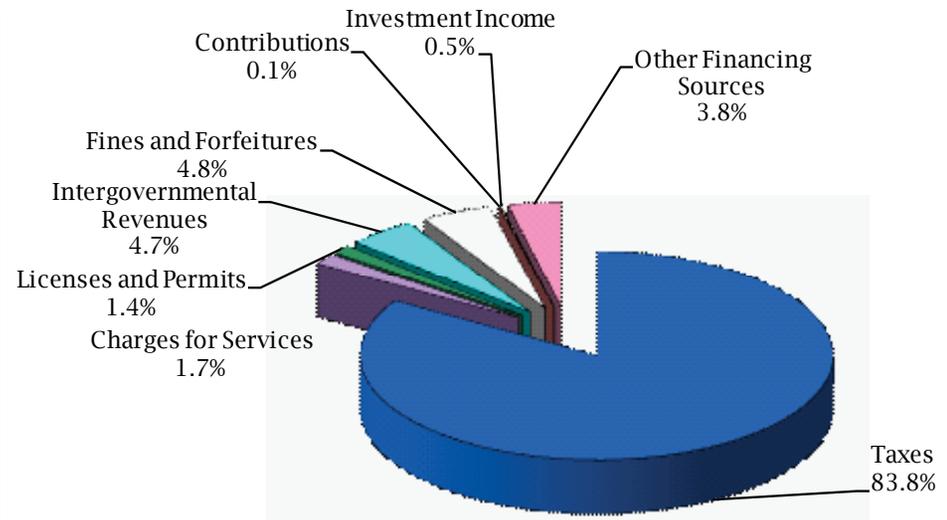
The City of Valdosta has survived the recent economic downfall significantly better than surrounding communities, the State of Georgia and the nation as a whole. The city has been able to maintain its workforce as well as provide longevity increases to employees, while other communities have implemented wage freezes, employment reductions and reductions in services for citizens.

While the city has certainly been affected by the economy, conservative budgetary policies and adherence to sound financial policies and philosophies have provided a hedge against anemic property tax revenues, increased fuel and energy costs and surging healthcare costs.

General Government Revenues

The majority of General Government Revenues is generated by the collection of sales tax. The amount of this tax collected represents a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) that funds General Fund operations and a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) that funds various capital projects for the city.

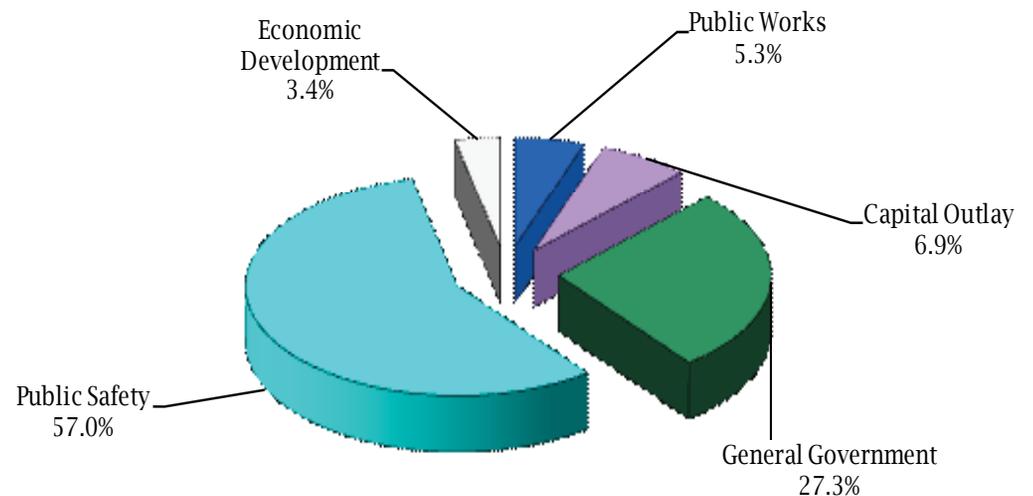
These revenue sources tend to be relatively stable; however, projections of revenue for the upcoming year are extremely conservative. The general outlook for Valdosta has improved steadily over the past 10 years and it is anticipated that growth in real estate, industry, and agricultural development will slowly rebound as Valdosta emerges from the negative effects of the economy.



General Government Expenditures

The General Government Expenditures group is broken down into the following five areas:

Public Safety	Police and fire protection
Public Works	Costs associated with street and road maintenance
General Government	Costs associated with the administration, legislative and financial aspects of city business
Capital Outlay	Costs associated with new infrastructure
Economic Development	Costs associated with the administration of building rehabilitation, ordinance enforcement, grants and public information





Grants Awarded

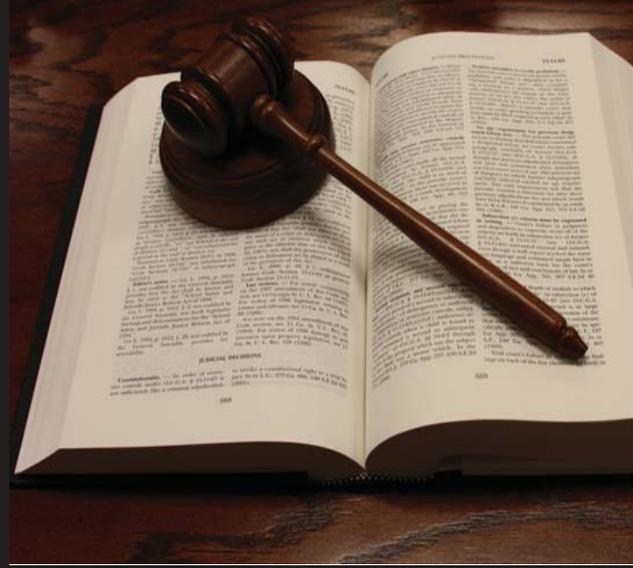
Grants Funded Since January 1, 2011

	Amount of Grant
2011 Local Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)	\$27,370.00
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	\$523,199.00
Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS)	\$46,800.00
2011 Bullet Proof Vest Grant	\$13,650.00
Police Department (GEMA) Grant	\$7,438.00
Police Department (GEMA) Grant	\$3,500.00
Project Safe Neighborhood Grant	\$29,656.00
Fire Department (GEMA) Grant	\$20,000.00
Fire Department (GEMA) Grant	\$15,000.00
Fire Department (GEMA) Grant	\$35,000.00
Fire Department (GEMA) Grant	\$20,000.00
Transportation Enhancement (TE)-North Patterson Street	\$250,000.00
Safe Routes to School-Valdosta City Schools	\$274,769.60

Total

\$1,266,382.60

***From the records of the City of Valdosta Grants Administrator



Municipal Court for the City of Valdosta

The State of Georgia has over 400 municipal courts with the City of Valdosta Municipal Court being one of the largest. Cases handled by the Municipal Court and heard by Judge Vernita Lee Bender include misdemeanor traffic violations and misdemeanor criminal cases, including possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, shoplifting and city ordinance violations.

The City of Valdosta Municipal Court is housed in the former Fire Station No. 1, located at 100 S. Oak Street, and is the first dedicated court building owned by the City of Valdosta. The Municipal Court houses a large renovated court room and offices for the Municipal Court Judge, Court Administrator, Clerk of Court and staff.

Payments for traffic citations that do not require mandatory court appearances may be made at the Valdosta Police Department, located at 500 N. Toombs Street. Information regarding the payment process and contact information is located

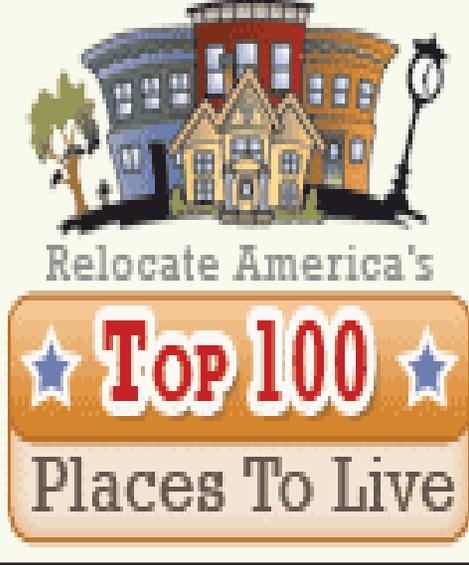
on the back of the citation. The arraignment date to appear in Municipal Court is located on the front of the citation near the bottom for individuals who wish to contest a traffic citation.

General operating hours of the Municipal Court are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and court sessions convene at 9 a.m. each day, Monday through Friday.

In addition to a full court schedule, the Municipal Court staff remains involved with the youth in our community through mock trials, the Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) program, the Lowndes Youth Leadership League, Georgia Special Olympics, Georgia Cities Week Job Shadow Day, Valdosta High School Students Mentorship in Leadership Education (SMILE), local school career days, and a variety of other special events that provide positive role models and encouragement for our next generation of leaders.

Quick Facts

- ▶ The City of Valdosta Municipal Court is a full-time court.
- ▶ Court is held an average of four days a week.
- ▶ In the State of Georgia, there are over 400 municipal courts with more than 400 judges managing over 800,000 cases per year. Valdosta's Municipal Court is one of the largest.
- ▶ Over 16,520 cases were docketed in the court this year.
- ▶ Probationers completed approximately 58,667 community service hours at soup kitchens, libraries, non-profit organizations, recreational facilities and public cemeteries.
- ▶ Probationers donated approximately 21,799 pounds of food to the local food bank.
- ▶ Sentinel Offender Services supervised approximately 2,535 cases monthly (active, jail and tolled) for the court.
- ▶ The Municipal Court had approximately 72 Work Alternative Program (WAP) participants. Since the WAP implementation in June 2001, approximately 87,992 hours of work have been completed by the participants on various municipal projects in the city.



Accolades

- ▶ Ranked 24th out of 363 Metropolitan Statistical Areas, according to a groundbreaking study by the Civic Economics and the American Booksellers Association. Valdosta's ranking is based on the share of retail sales captured by our local, independent retail businesses and on years of research that demonstrates that locally-owned and independent businesses recirculate substantially more money within the local economy than do their chain competitors.
- ▶ Received the Gabe Zimmerman Award for Public Service from the National Community Development Association (NCDA), on Jan. 21, at its Legislative and Policy Conference, in Washington D.C. for its exemplary ability to secure and utilize federal and state grants that fund the city's Single Family Rehabilitation/ Reconstruction Housing Program. The Single Family Rehabilitation/ Reconstruction Housing Program assists eligible low-to-moderate income families that live within the City of Valdosta's Designated Revitalization Area (DRA) in the rehabilitation or reconstruction of their homes.
- ▶ Ranked #79 as the Best Small Places For Business And Careers, according to a recent report released by Forbes.com.
- ▶ Received national accreditation for the Valdosta Main Street Program for the 15th consecutive year.
- ▶ Grew 24.7 percent in population over the past ten years, according to the 2010 Census data released this year. The numbers account for the highest growth in Valdosta in over 40 years. In comparison, Lowndes County's population grew 10.5 percent in its unincorporated area, 18.6 percent county-wide; and the State of Georgia grew 15.5 percent.
- ▶ Received approval from the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, for the 2011 redistricting plan for its city council districts based upon the U.S. 2010 Census. The new population of 54,518 set an ideal district size of 9,086 per district, and amendments to the maps reduced the population gap between the districts so that all districts are now within five percent of the ideal district size.
- ▶ Nominated and became one of six finalists for the Friendliest Town in America in the "Best of the Road" contest, sponsored by Rand McNally and USA Today.
- ▶ Named a Tree City U.S.A. community by the National Arbor Day Foundation for the 25th consecutive year for its commitment to community forestry.
- ▶ Hosted 370 youth from around the country in late June to participate in the Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp, where campers performed basic home repairs, painting and minor construction, at no cost to elderly or disabled homeowners of 34 homes in our community
- ▶ Ranked as one of America's "Top 100 Places to Live" in 2011 for the third year. Each year, RelocateAmerica researches, identifies and shares the best communities that are well positioned for economic recovery, already experiencing strong economic recovery or have proven overall economic stability, while also considering factors such as employment, education, community leadership and overall quality of life.
- ▶ City Manager Larry Hanson was inducted to the Georgia Municipal Association's Hall of Fame in June 2011 for his outstanding service to the City of Valdosta.
- ▶ In September, the City of Valdosta, in partnership with Lowndes County and Moody Air Force Base, hosted a community-wide Tenth Anniversary of 9-11 Remembrance



Ceremony in historic downtown Valdosta, where over one thousand citizens attended to remember the lives lost and pay tribute to those who continue to guard our freedom here and abroad.

- ▶ Hosted the 2nd annual Valdosta City Government 101 orientation program, an initiative of the Mayor and Valdosta City Council to provide a program for citizen education and involvement.
- ▶ Teresa S. Bolden, Certified Municipal Clerk for the City of Valdosta, was awarded the 2011 Municipal Clerk of the Year, at the Georgia Municipal Clerks & Finance Officers Association (GMC/FOA) Conference held in February, in Athens, Ga. Bolden, who was nominated by Mayor John J. Fretti and City Manager Larry H. Hanson, was selected for the award based on her education, professional training, career experience, leadership and community activities.
- ▶ Celebrated Georgia Cities Week in April, joining cities across the state in showcasing the role city government plays in the quality of life for its citizens, with a host of public events such as: a blood drive, a customer appreciation day, a job shadow day for local high school students, a 6th-grade essay contest, a community-wide photo contest, and an employee appreciation luncheon.
- ▶ Awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 26th consecutive year by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 15th consecutive year--the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.
- ▶ Hosted two Electronic Recycling Events, in partnership with Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) and Atlanta Recycling Solutions, that helped citizens properly dispose of over 65,000 pounds of electronic waste and over 339,000 pounds since the program's inception in 2006.
- ▶ Maintained the Valdosta Fire Department's Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 2 rating, one of the highest in the state.





City Manager/Editor

Larry H. Hanson

Public Information Officer/Editor

Sementa Mathews

Layout & Design

Sementa Mathews

Noelani Mathews

Photography

Sementa Mathews

Wes Sewell

City of Valdosta Staff