

City of Valdosta

2012 Annual Report

*A City
Without
Limits...*

www.valdostacity.com

From the City Manager



It is my pleasure to present the 2012 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.

The city continued to operate in a fiscally challenged economy and continued to reduce its budget, while responsibly seeking alternate funding sources. The city was fortunate to receive nearly \$654,000 in grant funding in 2012 for public safety and neighborhood development purposes. Furthermore, city employees continued to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate economic conditions while maintaining quality services for our citizens.

The Valdosta Mayor and City Council adopted a decreased millage rate of 4.106 mills—the lowest millage rate since the year 1995 and one of the lowest in the state—despite having to maintain the same city services with a reduced budget. It is the 10th time the City of Valdosta millage has been decreased in the past 18 years—a remarkable feat given the continued economic hardships experienced by communities across our state and nation.

Downtown Valdosta property owners received an additional 5 mill decrease in their property taxes as a result of retiring the Community Improvement District (CID) tax. The CID was established in the year 2000 to contribute \$800,000 toward the Streetscape Project—the portion that downtown Valdosta property owners agreed was their collective investment of the \$12 million project that rebuilt the public infrastructure in and around 23 blocks of the downtown district. Due to private reinvestments in the downtown district, an increase in private property values over the years, and more taxes collected by the CID than originally projected, the CID was retired eight years early.

Throughout 2012, 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 Police Department outperformed state and national solvability rates for the most serious crimes, solving 100 percent of murder cases and 79 percent of aggravated assaults. The VPD also maintained its CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) accreditation while serving our community with impeccable investigative, crime-solving capabilities and an unyielding public presence. Our Fire Department maintained its ISO rating of 2—one of the highest ratings in the state—and continued to serve as the Georgia Search and Rescue Team, Task Force 2, serving all of Southwest Georgia. Both departments were resourceful with grant funding to maintain the best public safety services for citizens.

The Public Works and Utilities Departments also continued to excel. The environmental awareness and education efforts of the Public Works Department resulted in an increase in recycling participation from both residential and commercial customers, as well as the local school systems. The

recycling center reduced the amount of recyclable materials going to the landfill and is processing over 95 percent of all recyclable material coming into the recycling center. Department personnel remained committed to protecting our environment through the region's most comprehensive recycling and e-recycling programs, neighborhood clean-ups and a commitment to public education.

The Utilities Department delivered over 3.9 billion gallons of water to our customers and began construction on a 2-million gallon elevated water storage tank—the biggest in the city's history. Once complete in 2013, the tank will replace two older and much smaller storage tanks in the city and will significantly improve water quality and fire protection capabilities in the southernmost areas of the city. The Mud Creek Water Pollution Control Plant received a \$36 million facelift (entirely funded through low-interest means, including the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) to continue its mission of providing sanitary sewer services for approximately one-third of Valdosta households and industrial customers in the southeastern portion of the city. The facility utilizes the latest proven technologies to guarantee the safe, effective and efficient treatment of sewage, as well as ensuring protection of the environment.

The Engineering Department remains integrally involved in transportation projects that are underway to alleviate congestion along east-west roads. The department ensures the efficiency and the safety of our citizens and guests by maintaining 322 miles of our city streets, 126 traffic lights, 6,271 catch basins, 186 miles of storm pipes, among other services to citizens.

In 2012, the city maintained its pro-business attitude by offering an efficient permitting process, opportunities for area businesses through the Valdosta Small Emerging Business Program, and incentives and state job tax credits for qualifying businesses.

The city continued to provide citizens with information on demand through our award-winning website, quality programming on Metro Valdosta 17, timely newsletters, E-News blasts and other citizen engagement opportunities, programs and resources.

Thank you for taking the time to review the work of your local government throughout the pages of this report. Special mention is given to the 589 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 to the 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
hanson@valdostacity.com

VALDOSTA

A City Without Limits

Mission

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

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



www.valdostacity.com

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Valdosta Mayor & City Council



Mayor John Gayle
jgayle@valdostacity.com



Councilman Ben Norton
At-Large
bnorton@valdostacity.com



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



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



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



Councilman Tim Carroll
District 5
tcarroll@valdostacity.com



Councilman Joseph Vickers
District 3
jvickers@valdostacity.com

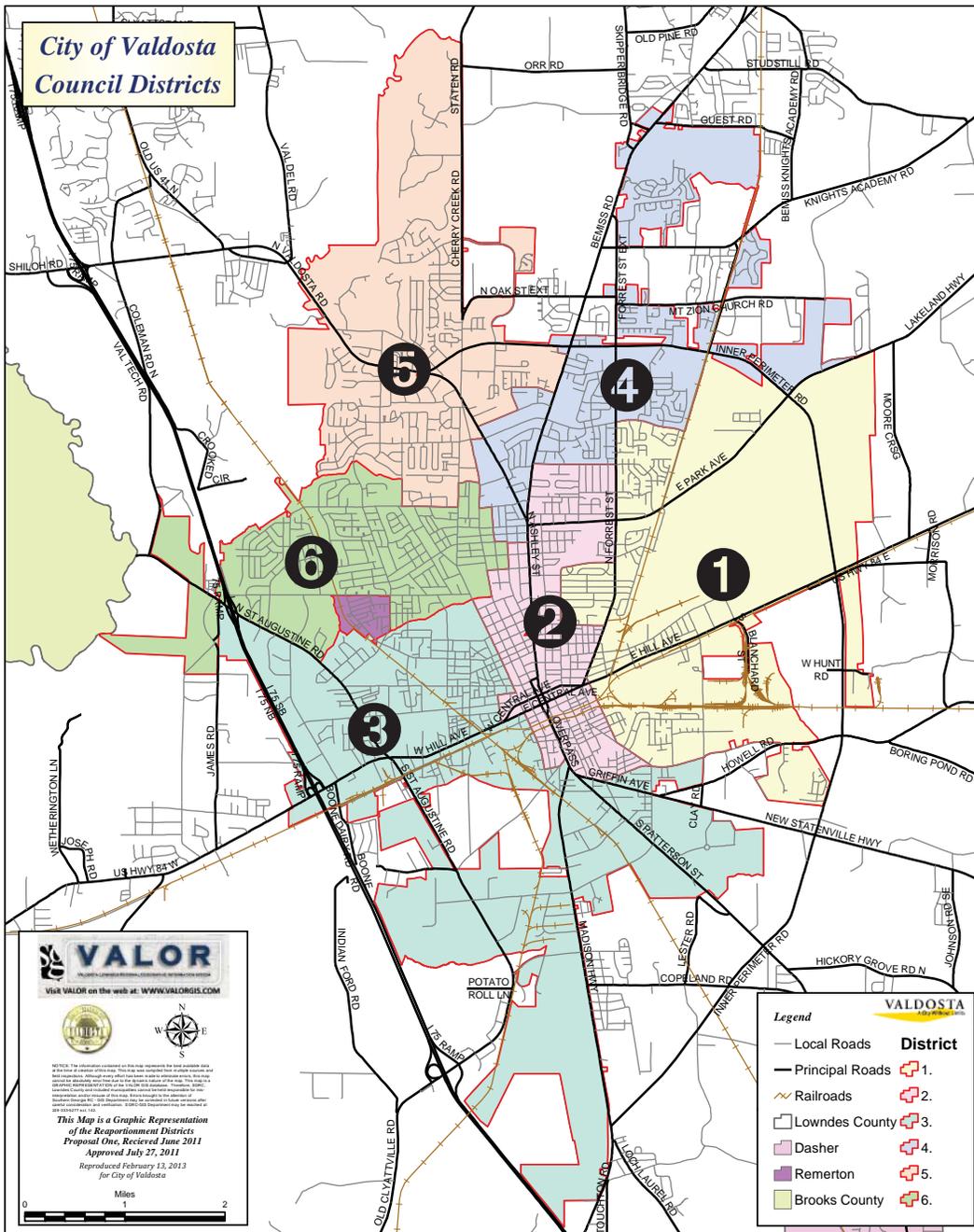


Councilman Robert Yost
District 6
ryost@valdostacity.com

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.

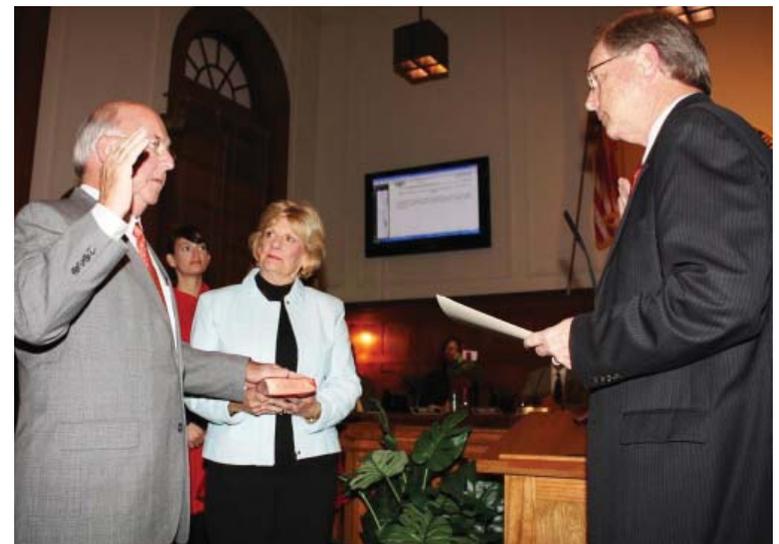
Citizens are also encouraged to visit the City of Valdosta website at www.valdostacity.com for agendas, minutes and other valuable information about our city government and services.

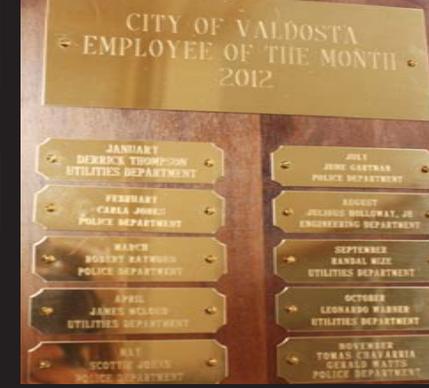
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Mayor Takes Oath of Office

Mayor John Gayle was sworn into office by Superior Court Judge Richard M. Cowart at the Jan. 5, 2012 Valdosta City Council meeting, in the presence of his wife Peggy, who held the Bible for the oath. Mayor Gayle is the 45th public servant to hold the City of Valdosta's top elected position.



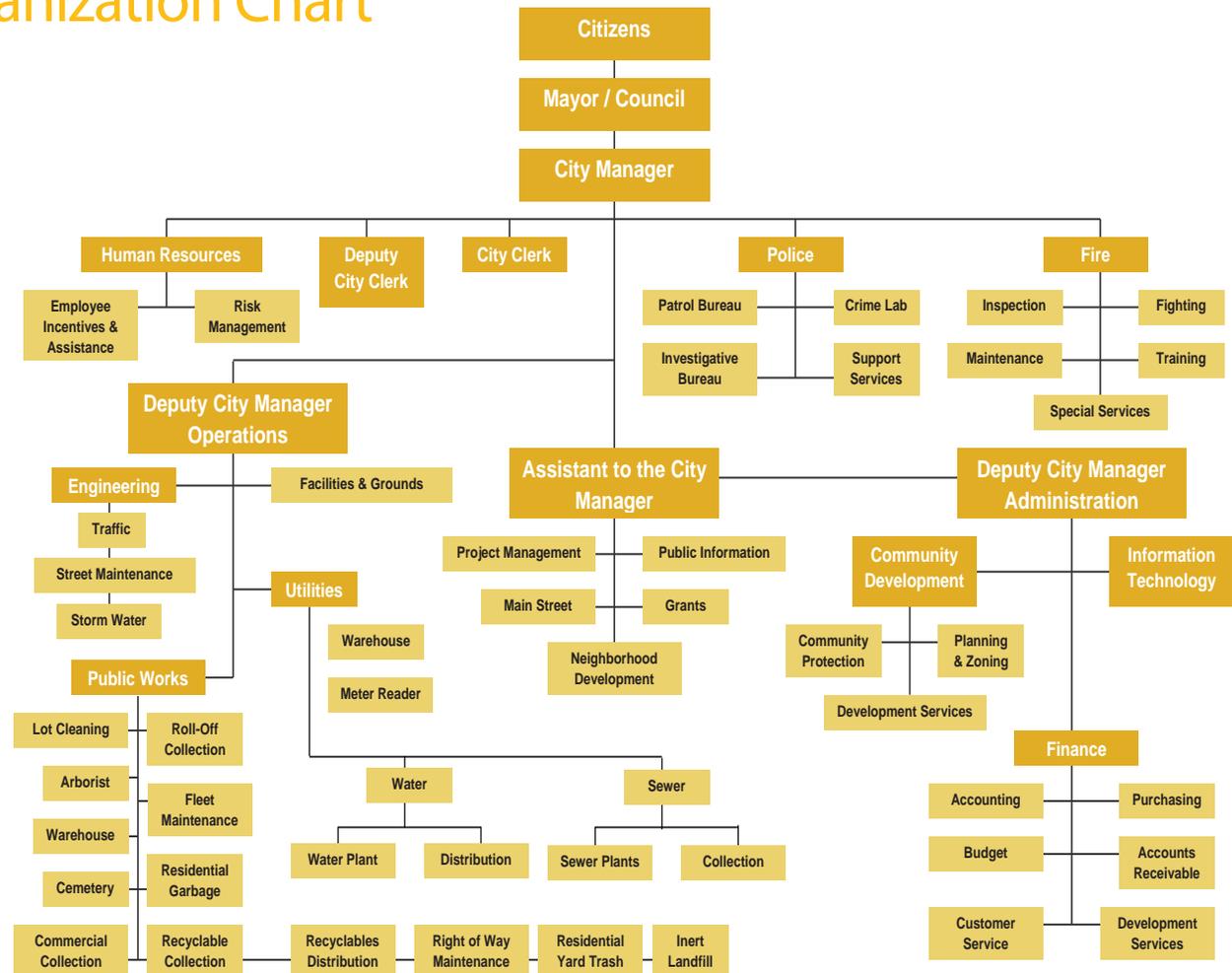


City of Valdosta Organization Chart

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. In 2012, the city also hosted the 3rd annual Valdosta City Government 101 orientation program, 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.

More information about our city government and the various opportunities to serve the community may be found by visiting www.valdostacity.com, by signing up to receive regular E-news notifications and by tuning into Metro Valdosta Channel 17 on Mediacom.





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

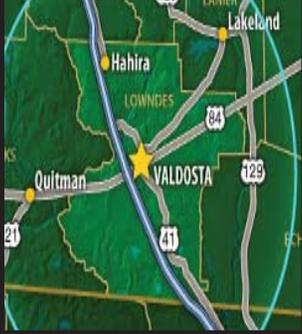
The primary function of the Deputy City Manager for Administration is to provide the City Manager with city-wide administration support. The office oversees the operations of the Finance Department, which includes the offices of Accounting, Budget, Customer Service, Accounts Receivable, and Purchasing; 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 over 55,000 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 area of 15 to 17 counties in South Georgia and North Florida.

Valdosta's Opportunity Zones (OZ) provided strong incentives for local economic development which continued to contribute to positive growth in the city's underdeveloped areas in 2012. Through the program, job tax credits are offered to new and existing 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.

In 2012, Valdosta took great strides in economic development as a result of the OZ program, as indicated by the 276 building permits issued in the various zones. The estimated value of private investments of these construction permits was over \$3.3 million. The city also issued 172 occupational licenses to businesses in the zones, which in turn created an estimated 71 new eligible jobs directly related to Valdosta's OZ opportunities.

Business and job expansions in the OZ areas continued to occur in health related fields. For example, ClientTell—a privately held appointment-reminder service within the Central Business District—expanded their headquarters for additional job creation. Continued expansion and job creation also occurred in the zone adjacent to South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC). Construction on the \$32 million Health Sciences building on Valdosta State University's North Campus (adjacent to SGMC) will allow for the creation of additional programs of study within the medical field, thus sparking additional job growth and economic development.

The city also continued efforts in the area of public-private investment and neighborhood development in the various zones through its Neighborhood Development Division using various state and federal funding and the annual Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp. A great example of this is the award-winning streambank restoration project located along a portion of Brown's Canal. This project, completed in 2012, greatly im-

proved this neighborhood within the city's Designated Revitalization Areas, enhancing both the aesthetics and safety of the streambank and adjacent homes and structures.

During 2012:

- ▶ According to a study of Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties and Regions, released in 2012 by the Georgia Department of Economic Development, traveler expenditures in Valdosta-Lowndes County were \$234.8 million, up 5.5% from the year before. Additionally, jobs in the tourism industry accounted for over \$53 million in payroll expenditures into the area economy with over 2,400 people employed in tourism related businesses. The activity also generated over \$6.8 million in local tax revenues for the area. Out of 159 counties in Georgia, Valdosta-Lowndes County ranked 21st in size but 13th in travel expenditures statewide.

- ▶ According to the American Chamber of Commerce Research Association, the City of Valdosta Cost of Living Index is 92.7—compared to New York City at 217.2, San Francisco at 162.9 and Raleigh at 101.3. This index is a composite picture of the cost of grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services.

- ▶ The value of new residential single-family construction permits issued during 2012 totaled over \$3.7 million and permits for remodels, repairs or additions amounted to another \$4 million—a modest yet positive indication of continued growth in Valdosta. New commercial construction permits totaled \$61.7 million, along with \$12 million expended on permits for commercial remodels, repairs, additions and foundations—meaning more than \$73.7 million of business growth occurred in our city during 2012.

- ▶ Valdosta welcomed new construction permits for the 2-million gallon water tank on Fry Street, DuPont, Publix, Gander Mountain, Academy Sports, Drury Inn, among other projects. Remodels, repairs and expansions in 2012 included the Fairfield Inn, South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC), Georgia Power, Target, Guardian Bank, South Georgia Pecan, T-Mobile, Valdosta Mall, The Commons, CJB Industries, Boys & Girls Club, 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 22 employees. More than 40 events were hosted downtown, attracting over 100,000 visitors to the heart of our city. In its second season, our highly successful Downtown Valdosta Farm Days grew with the addition of two months and the capability to accept electronic benefits transfers. Downtown Valdosta property owners received an additional 5 mills property tax decrease as a result of retiring the Community Improvement District (CID) tax.

► With the region's highest annual economic impact of more than \$569 million, SGMC is the area's largest non-governmental employer. The 393-bed hospital system is comprised of a 288-bed main campus and three satellite campuses in North Valdosta, Lakeland and Nashville. The system employs over 3,000 employees, including a medical staff of approximately 300. Hospital services include general medicine and specialty services including comprehensive cancer care, open-heart surgery and angioplasty, surgical services, women and children's services, spine care, emergency services and inpatient rehabilitation. SGMC has the region's only stroke program and neonatal-perinatal medicine program. In 2012, SGMC completed an interior and exterior renovation of the Pearlman Cancer Center, constructed a five-story parking deck and opened a new heliport. Work continues on the new Dasher Memorial Heart Center and patient tower. The five-story, \$64 million expansion at the main campus is scheduled to open fall 2013.

► VSU served an enrollment of 12,515 students in 2012. Students represented 157 Georgia counties, 49 states and 79 countries. The regional university officially completed two buildings in 2012: the Ashley Hall restoration project, valued at \$5.5 million; and the 15,000-square-foot Bailey Science Center addition, also valued at \$5.5 million. In October, construction began on the Health Sciences Building. The project is valued at \$32 million. It is expected to create 1,190 jobs during construction, and the overall economic impact of the project is an estimated \$56 million. In 2012, VSU provided 5,055 jobs in our community, and the total annual economic impact is approximately \$451.2 million.

► Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (WGTC) served 7,501 students in academic programs, 4,247 students in continuing education programs and 2,676 students in adult basic education programs in 2012. Students who completed any one of the 24 degree programs or 43 technical certificate programs were "workforce ready" to enter into a number of in-demand professions. In 2012, WGTC was named a Top Military Friendly School by G.I. Jobs Magazine and Military Advanced Education Magazine for a second consecutive year.

► Moody Air Force Base continues to expand to meet the needs of the more than 5,500 military and civilian personnel and their family members. The base awarded \$86.4 million in contracts during the year and has an annual economic impact on Valdosta in excess of \$448 million.

► In 2012, 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 facilitated new and existing industry locations/expansions resulting in the creation of over 175 jobs, utilizing approximately 15 acres and 500,000 square feet of manufacturing/logistics operations building capacity and over \$13.5 million in projected capital investment in facility construction and operating equipment. The development and opening of three Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) certified industrial parks, consisting of approximately 350 acres of "shovel ready" industrial tracts, will serve to attract new/existing business and industry location/expansion and represents \$12.5 million in capital investment by Valdosta-Lowndes County in economic development infrastructure.

► Wild Adventures Theme Park opened the 2012 season with more than 300 updates and additions to enhance the overall guest experience, including restrooms, seating, shade and Splash Island Water Park improvements. The regional theme park employed more than 700 employees, spending approximately \$6 million in labor. The region's number one family destination attracted guests from all over the Southeast, the majority traveling from up to three hours away.

► The Valdosta Regional Airport experienced over \$1 million in airfield improvements, acquired a new Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) vehicle and broke ground on a \$2.7 million project that includes a new ARFF station. The airport hosted over 18,000 total flight operations and nearly 73,000 commercial airline passenger enplanements and deplanements.

► In 2012, the city's unemployment rate averaged around 8.5% but was consistently lower than the state's unemployment rate of nearly 9%. Furthermore, the average weekly earnings in Valdosta, according to the Department of Labor, rose from \$599 in 2011 to \$605 in 2012.

The City of 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 businesses, 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 and is comprised of the Grant Administration Division; the Public Information Division, which includes Metro Valdosta Channel 17; the Neighborhood Development Division; and the Main Street Division. The Assistant to the City Manager also assisted with a variety of special projects and city initiatives, and conducted public policy research for ordinance and program development as assigned by the City Manager.

The Grant Administration Division successfully pursued and secured \$654,000 through identification, application, and administration of grant funds from numerous state and federal agencies to support programs, equipment and staff needs in the Fire Department, Police Department, Public Involvement Department, and the Utilities Department. These funds are a vital resource implementing and supporting critical services to our citizens. The Grant Administrator was conferred the Certified Grants Management Specialist and was re-elected Secretary of the National Grants Management Association (NGMA).

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 press releases, newsletters, the city's website, the Annual Report, E-News email blast program, community videos, special events, community tours and Metro Valdosta 17, the city's Governmental Access Channel. The Public Information Division worked with department personnel to obtain current and pertinent information about city services, which was made available to our citizens and other interested individuals and groups through these communication tools. 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 Eleventh Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony, and Georgia Cities Week that included a variety of events for all of our citizens including activities for youth, adults and employees. Metro Valdosta 17 continued to produce high-quality City Focus news shows and used local and state resources to download a variety of public education and government programming, providing a solid programming schedule for viewers.

The Main Street Division, in partnership with the Central Valdosta Development Authority (CVDA) and other important stakeholders, was nationally accredited for the 17th consecutive year and continued to enhance the redevelopment of Valdosta's



“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. We are extremely grateful to the leadership of our city for their constant guidance and support of the efforts of the department.” — Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager

historic downtown district as the cultural and economic center of Greater Lowndes County. Staff worked tirelessly to give special attention to business recruitment and retention, marketing and promotions, and private rehabilitation projects. The CVDA district saw a net gain of five new businesses and 22 new jobs. The Main Street Division continued to coordinate, promote, and host numerous special events that attracted thousands of visitors to shop and dine in Downtown Valdosta. These events included the Brown Bag Lunch Concert Series, First Fridays, Art After Dark, 100 Black Men of Valdosta Annual Barbeque Cook Off, the Holiday Open House Festival and the Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade. The division also held its second season of the Downtown Valdosta Farm Days event. This event was expanded by an additional two months and EBT capabilities were also added. Due to these changes and area wide participation, Valdosta Farm Days was a huge success.

The Neighborhood Development Division 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. The services of this division provided decent and affordable housing, suitable living environments, and increased economic opportunities to citizens of low to moderate income in the City of Valdosta.

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 five city marshals and one landscape technician who support a comprehensive "property line-to-property line" enforcement concept that encompasses all code enforcement responsibilities in the city. All of the five marshals have obtained the highest Level 11 certification. The division was responsible for processing over 3,308 cases in 2012 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, providing 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 who are certified and cross-certified make up this division. 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 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 2012, as well as major amendments to the Comprehensive Plan's Future Development map and five year short-term work program. Staff also continued working on the Brownfield's Assessment Grant and implementation projects, among others.



Quick Stats

3,237	Building Inspections
2,440	Electrical Inspections
1,862	Plumbing Inspections
1,938	Mechanical Inspections
2,105	Building Permits
1,139	Electrical Permits
652	Plumbing Permits
1,418	Mechanical Permits
490	Business Licenses Processed
420	Business Applications Approved
116	HPC Applications Processed
108	Sign Permits Processed
22	Annexation, Rezoning and CUP Applications Processed
17	Administrative Variances
13	Subdivisions Processed
13	ZBOA Variances Processed

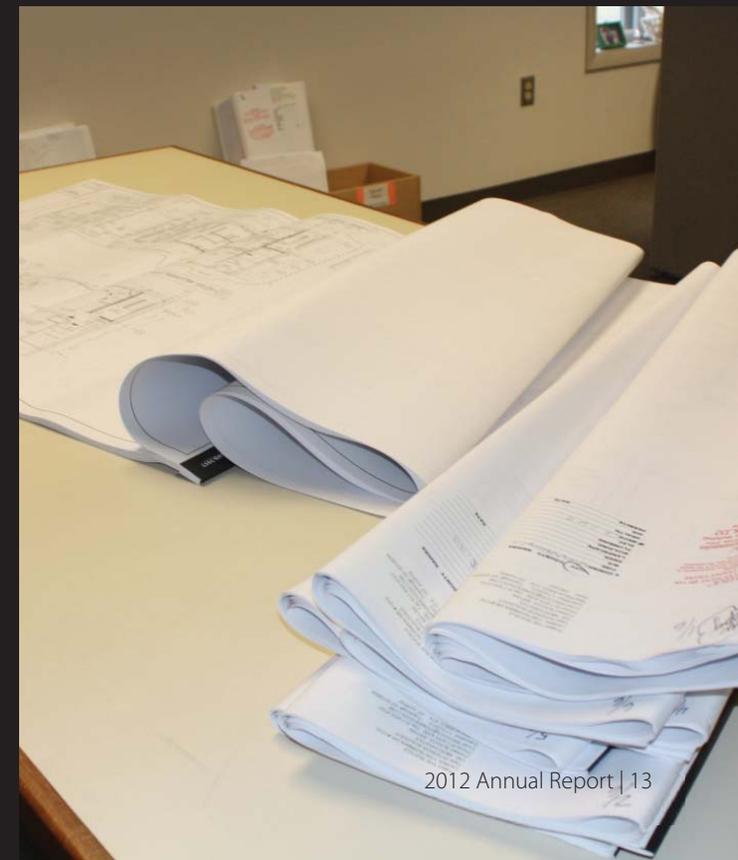
“The Community Development Department staff pledges to continue to look for ways to improve our services, during and in spite of these trying times. Our staff is dedicated to providing our construction and development community with quality customer service to insure the safety of our citizens, as well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

The Community Development Department continues to make advancements toward positive changes through advanced technology and continued relationships with local, state and national organizations within the construction industry. The department provides the necessary staff training in all divisions to achieve the proper certifications needed in their fields of responsibility.

The year 2012 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 9,477 inspections and issued over 5,314 permits. Some highlights for the year, however, included the completion of the Drury Inn project, Gander Mountain, Academy Sports Outlet, and the new SGMC Patient Tower—the large expansion to their existing facility that is currently under way.

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.



Quick Stats

Drinking Water Treated	3.9 Billion Gallons
Wastewater Treated	2.9 Billion Gallons
Water Customers Billed	20,086 Customers/Month
Sewer Customers Billed	20,100 Customers/Month



Utilities Department

Preparing for the Future

In 2012, the Utilities Department continued to build upon upgrading and improving its critical facilities and infrastructure by implementing specific strategies to rehabilitate its existing water distribution and sewer collection systems, as well as planning for future upgrades of its critical water and sewer facilities.

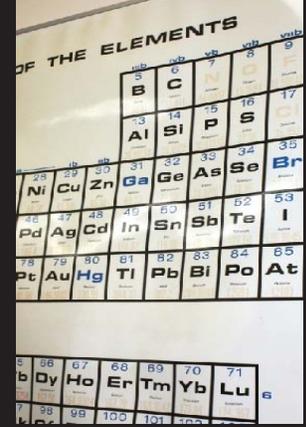
As a result of surface water intrusion into portions of the city's Water Treatment Plant's (WTP) existing well field, the department has taken a two-pronged approach to address the city's short and long-term drinking water needs, as well as ensure its long-term sustainability for a safe, high-quality water supply in the future. All existing wells are being redeveloped to eliminate surface water intrusion and two new test wells will be drilled to determine if they can be converted to production wells to increase available capacity for the next five years. In addition, a new chlorine booster pump station is under design and is scheduled for construction in early 2013 to significantly reduce the need for regular fire hydrant flushing while improving water quality in south Valdosta. A new 2-million gallon elevated water storage tank is under construction on Fry Street to replace two older and much smaller storage tanks. This work should be completed in early June 2013 and will significantly improve water quality and fire protection capabilities in the southern most areas of the city. Finally, initial planning for a second well field and water treatment plant is underway to meet the long term needs of our community.

Water and sewer construction was completed in two of the annexed islands in 2012, and the plan is for the majority of the remaining annexed islands to receive water and sewer services by the end of 2013.

One hundred percent of the design for the new Withlacoochee Wastewater Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) force main, pump station, equalization basin with a new headworks is underway and should be completed in mid 2013. Once completed, bid documents will be developed for construction of this project along with an application for GEFA funding to cover those costs. The city has also submitted an application to GEFA for funding of the relocation of the Withlacoochee WPCP.

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. Over





“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

60 seriously deteriorated sewer manholes have been replaced or rehabilitated in 2012, and an additional 30 manholes will be out for bid in early 2013. Implementation of a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) is scheduled for completion in early 2013. This will significantly 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 workload management needs.

The Mud Creek WPCP expansion and rehabilitation project was completed in 2012. The expansion will meet the sanitary sewer needs resulting from continued growth in 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 department’s highest priority is the need to rehabilitate and replace existing sewer infrastructure, where needed, 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.

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 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 rating allows for very low property insurance premiums for city residents. The department has maintained a Class 2 status for over a decade and has one of the highest ratings in the state.

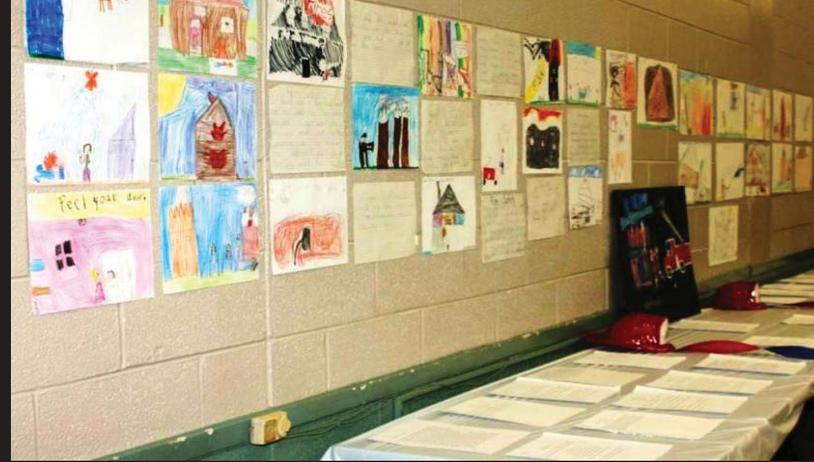
Our traditional way of responding to alarms no longer meets the needs of our customers; therefore, the department continually trains to learn new concepts to maintain the excellent customer service to both our new and existing customers. One of the adjustments made in past years involves how the department responds and handles calls for service. Adjustments made in 2012 required placing additional personnel at the fire scenes of all calls for service on the west side of Valdosta due to the rapid growth of this area. This adjustment helped the department maintain the high level of quality service all our customers deserve and expect.

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 VFD is one of four

regional Georgia Search and Rescue teams designated by the State of Georgia Governor's Office for the Southwest Georgia area. Services 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 at various times of the day and week as a hub for business, culture, education, leisure and retail.

In 2012, the VFD personnel continued to excel—both on and off duty—and 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 continued to represent Valdosta 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;" 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 4th annual Shop with a Firefighter campaign to provide underprivileged children in the Valdosta community with Christmas toys. In



“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 addition, six Valdosta City Schools students were selected as statewide winners in the Georgia State Fire Marshal's Essay Contest—the third year in a row that our local school kids have won in the statewide contest.

In 2012, the department purchased a \$20,000 Fire Safety Educational Bounce House, paid for entirely with donations from local citizens. The VFD staff will use the “hands-on classroom” to teach area children about the dangers of fire and how to prevent and survive a fire. The VFD bounce house is the first of its kind being used by a fire department in the state of Georgia.

Valdosta firefighters received a combined total of 25,000 hours of training—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—to best protect and serve the citizens of Valdosta.

Quick Stats

- ▶ Responded to 3,120 fire alarms last year—an increase of 12.1 % over 2011.
- ▶ Average response time was 4 minutes 17 seconds—well below the national average of 6 minutes and a decrease of 8 seconds over the last two years.
- ▶ Investigated 60 fires and 13 arson cases.
- ▶ Conducted 1,450 fire inspections and 335 re-inspections of buildings and facilities.
- ▶ Reviewed over 100 plans for buildings and facilities.
- ▶ Educated 6,276 students in Fire Prevention and Safety through 566 programs.
- ▶ Installed over 160 smoke detectors.
- ▶ Serviced and inspected 2,901 city fire hydrants in preparation for the 2012 ISO evaluation.
- ▶ Pre-fire planned 2,124 city businesses for occupant load and potential fire load hazards.
- ▶ Provided 5,408 calls for special classes, presentations, CPIE programs, and other activities for 2012.
- ▶ Raised over \$10,751 for the Georgia Firefighter Burn Foundation through our annual “Fill the Boot” and Boston Butt fundraisers.
- ▶ Awarded a \$50,000 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

The Engineering Department operates three divisions. Engineering Services performs project management & inspections, development review and GIS/real property management. Traffic Management and Street Maintenance performs the operation of the Traffic Management Center, signal maintenance, signs & markings, street & sidewalk maintenance. Stormwater Utility performs stormwater maintenance and environmental services.

In 2012, 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.

The fundamental objective of the Engineering Department is to provide the community with quality service at the lowest cost to its taxpayers. Customer service is paramount.

Water and Sewer Main Extensions

- Barfield Street Watermain
- Madison Highway Phase II
- Manhole Rehab
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Corridor Phase A1

Drainage

- Ashley Street Culvert Repair
- Ashley Street Storm Pipe Repair
- Baytree Road Bridge Drainage Improvements
- Browns Canal Stream-Bank Restoration --2012 ASCE Natural Environment Project of the Year
- Freedom Park Dam Breach
- Fry Street Ditch Piping
- Lake Laurie Detention Pond
- Park Avenue Culvert Plate

Land Acquisitions Started in 2012

- Annexed Island 69A – Hickory, Harmon
- Annexed Island 77C – Chaney, Kelly, Collins
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Corridor Phase A1
- Woodrow Wilson Extension Project Right of Way
- Twin Street Easement and Right of Way

Land Acquisitions Completed

- Annexed Island 27 – Highland Heights
- Annexed Island 69B – Rose, Lankford, Parker Mathis
- Annexed Island 35B – Thea, Simpson, Betty Joe
- Annexed Island 69C – Moss Oak, Dogwood, Blitch
- Norman Drive Traffic Signal
- Fry Street Ditch Piping
- Woodrow Wilson / Gornito Road Extension Project
- Twin Street Project

Road Projects

- Brookfield Road Extension
- LMIG Paving – 13 Streets

Sidewalk Projects Completed

- E. College Street
- N. Troup Street
- Mary Street

Sidewalk Projects in Progress

- E. Brookwood Place
- Eastwind Road
- Madison Highway
- Woodlawn Drive

Sidewalk Projects in Design

- Gordon Street
- Lamar Street
- MLK Corridor
- N. Oak Street
- N. Lee Street
- Park Avenue
- River Street
- Valloton Drive
- Williams Street

Traffic Improvements

- Academy Sports at Sam's Club
- South East Elementary School (Pedestrian Crossing at Old Statenville & Ulmer)

Other

- Twin Street Sign Relocation
- Twin Street Trash Collector



“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.” — Pat Collins, P.E., Director/City Engineer

Engineering Services

Driveways Inspected	55
Land Disturbance Permits Issued	17
Soil Erosion Inspections on Permitted Sites	212
Soil Erosion Inspections on Non-Permitted Sites	20
Corrective Actions Taken on Soil Erosion	23
Pond Inspections Performed	246
Rain Events .5” or Greater	33
Rain Events Less than .5”	25
Rights-of-Way Authorization Numbers Issued	209
Certificates of Occupancy Issued	45
Asbuilts Accepted	24
NPDES, Construction and Site Plans Reviewed	62

Street and Traffic Management

Signals

Bulbs	60
Loops and Detectors (Repaired/Installed)	41
Emergency Call Out	151
Overhead Signs (Installed/Replaced)	47
Signal Head’s (Installed/Replaced)	11
LED’S (Installed)	112
Misc Equipment (Installed/Replaced)	101
Ped Light’s (Installed/Repaired)	23
Ped Lights - LED’s Replaced	12
Cameras (Installed/Replaced)	16
Banners (Installed/Removed)	21

Signs & Markings

Signs (Installed)	213
Traffic Counts	118
Stop Signs (Repaired/Upgraded)	256
Street Signs (Repaired/Upgraded)	650
Trimming of R.O.W.	1,183
Handicapped Spaces (Painted)	15
Stop Bars/Arrow (Painted)	17
Painting (Footage)	8,945
Thermo Arrow/Stop Bars	19
Over Head Signs Made	55
Reflectors Installed	29
Barricades Installed	197
Speed Hump Investigations	42
Miscellaneous Signs Upgraded to High Intensity	216

Traffic Center

Fiber Modems Replaced	27
Fiber Repairs (Test/Ends Install in Field)	3
Data Changes	75
Miscellaneous Equipment (Installed/Replaced)	19
TMC Tours	4

Streets & Sidewalks

Potholes Repaired	620
Washouts - linear foot	1,895
Trench Lines - square foot	880
Root & Base Cuts	115
Driveways Repaired	45

Edge Washouts	141
Sidewalks - linear foot	1,093
Base / Root Repair - square foot	24,358
Curb & Gutter - linear foot	434
Concrete Driveways	16
Wheelchair Ramps	11
Locations Saw Cut	488
Storm Drains Cleaned	128
Bollards Placed	24
Trip Hazards - linear foot	66
Asphalt Tons Used	294
Concrete - Cubic Yards Used	540
Millings - Tons Used	156
Fill Dirt - Tons Used	240
SOD - square foot	25

Stormwater Utility Maintenance

Storm pipe cleaned (ft)	34,910
Canals cut (ft)	531,149
Catch basins inspected	1,782
Catch basins cleaned	514
Catch basins repaired	107
Beaver dams (hrs)	881
Streets swept (miles)	1,328
Outfalls inspected	157
Rainfall (10 rain gauge average in inches)	53.85
Trees Removed	13
Dig/Grade ditches/swale	105



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 responsibilities are residential and commercial sanitation and recycling services. In recent years, the department has expanded its services to include: 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.

Heavy rains from Tropical Storm Debby and a warmer than usual spring and summer provided the necessary ingredients for high populations of mosquitoes in 2012. The City of Valdosta used every resource available to protect its citizens from the diseases that mosquitoes carry through an aggressive spraying and larvicide program. The Public Works Department operated a spraying program on a five or six day spray cycle throughout the city limits beginning in early March.

Since 2001, the city—along with Lowndes County and the South Health District—has maintained a joint mosquito surveillance program, working with Valdosta State University staff. Mosquitoes are collected with strategically located traps throughout the city limits, and then tested. This program, the only one of its type in the region, provides data on vector and virus activity to local, state and national health agencies to help public officials know if a human risk is present.

In 2012, 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



Quick Stats

17,378	Residential Sanitation Customers
1,871	Commercial and Small Business Customers
17,622	Residential and Commercial Recycling Customers
286	Miles of Right-of-Way Maintained
80	Miles of State Right-of-Way Maintained
1,141	Miles of Street Swept and Cleaned
3,892	Number of Special Pick-Ups
3,885	Tons of Recyclable Material Collected
28,554	Tons of Solid Waste Collected
9,224	Tons of Yard Trash Collected
58,551	Pounds Collected from E-Recycling Events
9,227	Tons of Yard Waste Processed for Mulch
5,368	Fleet/Maintenance Work Orders Completed
1,544	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

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 commercial 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 95 percent of all recyclable material coming into the recycling center.

In 2012, the department is also proud of the following:

- ▶ The department hosted two Electronics Recycling events with Atlanta Recycling Solutions and Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB), saving over 58,551 pounds of garbage from disposal in the landfill.
- ▶ The Arbor Division pruned over 2,522 trees and planted another 148 trees along city streets.

▶ The City of Valdosta received the Tree City designation for the 27th 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:

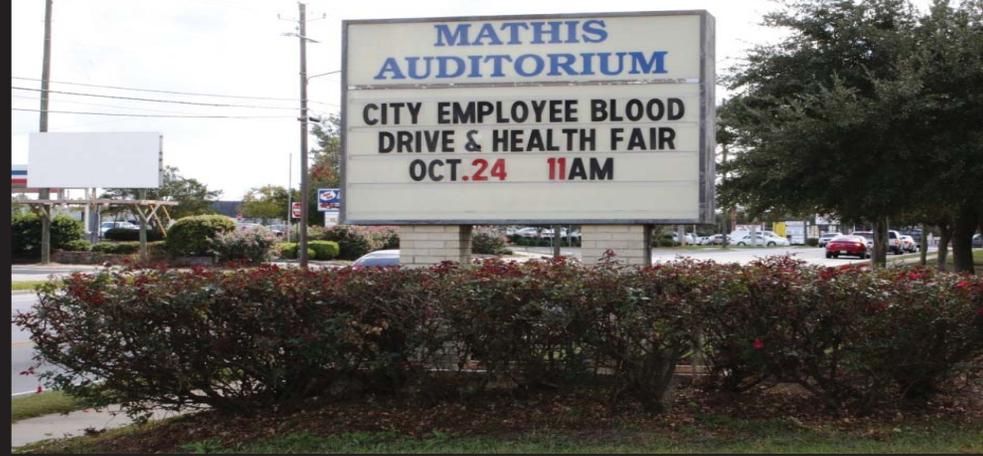
- Great American Clean-up
- Keep America Beautiful/Make a Difference Day Clean-up
- Rivers Alive
- Southern Hospitality Work Camp
- Bring One for the Chipper
- Greater Valdosta Christmas Parade

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

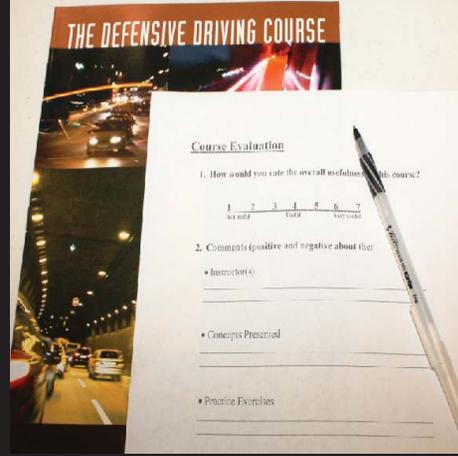
The year 2012 brought many changes, and with it many opportunities to better serve our internal and external customers.

The Human Resources Department received approximately 3,400 applications for employment and processed 45 new hires. Our recruitment efforts included participation in the Veterans' Spring Career Fair sponsored by the Georgia Department of Labor in March 2012.

The Employee Relations Committee, comprised of representatives appointed from each department within the city organization, maintained the Employee of the Month program. Each month, the Employee Relations Committee selects an employee from a pool of department nominations to receive the award. Winners are honored at the first City Council meeting of each month, have their names engraved on a plaque that 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 Employee Relations Committee is also responsible for coordinating the Employee Thanksgiving Luncheon, sponsoring the City of Valdosta Blood Drives, and providing assistance with the Annual Employee Health Fair and Georgia Cities Week Activities held at Saunders Park in April.

The city's CareHere Clinic, which serves as a primary health care center for many



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

city employees, retirees and their dependents that are enrolled in the city’s health insurance plan, continued to flourish in 2012. The total number of appointments for the year was 3,580.

In addition to providing medical care, the clinic also provides a variety of prescription medications, lab work and physicals at no cost. The CareHere Connect program is an optional program available to employees. Participants in this program may partner with a personal health coach who provides guidance with health related goals such as diabetes education and management, healthy eating, exercise and other goals.

The CareHere Clinic also served as an event sponsor for the Annual Employee Health Fair held in October at Mathis Auditorium. Over 30 local vendors participated in this year’s event, and hundreds of current and past city employees and their family members received free health screenings and a host of information.

The Safety Committee, which is comprised of appointed representatives from each city department, continued to meet monthly in 2012. Safety continued to be a top priority during the year. In addition to contributing valuable recommendations, the committee sponsors the National Safety Council Defensive Driving Course that is offered quarterly to employees who drive as a regular part of their job.

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

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

We respect the individual, and believe that individuals who are treated with respect and given responsibility respond by giving their best.

We require complete honesty and integrity in everything we do. We do the right thing.

We make commitments with care, and then live up to them. In all things, we do what we say we are going to do.

Work is an important part of life, and it should be fun and meaningful. Being a good employee does not mean stuffy and boring.

We love to compete and we believe that competition brings out the best in us.

We are frugal. We guard and conserve our resources with at least the same vigilance that we would use to guard and conserve our personal resources.

We insist on giving our best effort in everything we undertake. Furthermore, we see a huge difference between “good mistakes” (best effort, bad result) and “bad mistakes” (sloppiness or lack of effort).

Clarity in understanding our mission, our goals, and what we expect from each other is critical to our success.

We are believers in the Golden Rule. In all our dealings, we will strive to be friendly and courteous, as well as fair and compassionate.

We feel a sense of urgency on all matters related to our customers. We own problems and we are always responsive. We are customer-driven.



Police Department

Award-winning Law Enforcement

The Valdosta Police Department (VPD), consisting of 146 sworn personnel, 24 non-sworn support personnel and 13 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 (BPS), considered the backbone of the organization, works with the investigative and support bureaus to maintain a safe community. The department received 81,593 calls for service, made 21,722 total arrests (including traffic citations), issued 18,842 traffic citations, investigated 2,523 traffic accidents (including roadway and private property accidents), made 406 DUI cases and investigated over 600 cases involving domestic 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 BPS also operates a street-level crimes unit called the Power Squad, K-9 units which include an explosives detection canine, and a traffic unit which consists of officers who have specialized training in traffic enforcement and accident reconstruction.

The Bureau of Investigations (BIS) has four units within the bureau: the Person Crimes Unit, Property Crime Unit, Narcotics Unit and the Gang Unit. The BIS posted outstanding clearance rates for the year 2012 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 motor vehicle theft. During 2012, the bureau was responsible for 747 arrests with 505 felony charges and 380 misdemeanor charges. Recovered property for 2012 was valued at \$311,564 and the value of seized property was \$410,032.

In 2012, the Person Crimes Unit (PCU) investigated three homicides in the city, and within days offenders were arrested in each case. The unit currently maintains an impressive 100 percent solvability rate for all city homicides from 2009-2012.

In 2012, the unit worked with the District Attorney's Office during several prosecutions and investigations, such as: a case where two offenders were charged with perjury and influencing a witness during a shooting; a case where an offender murdered a man in

Valdosta with an assault rifle and was found guilty of murder and burglary and sentenced to life in prison plus 15 years; a plea deal where the offender who robbed the Guardian Bank in 2011 was sentenced to 27 years in prison; and a plea deal where the offender pled guilty to involuntary manslaughter and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon for a 2011 homicide. The bureau also worked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who obtained a federal indictment of a male offender who robbed the Bank of America earlier in the year.

The PCU worked diligently to solve burglaries. Because of their efforts, the department currently maintains a clearance rate of 17.82%—well above the national average clearance rate of 12.7%. The unit made 300 arrests for the year ranging from burglary to shoplifting to general theft charges. In one major case, the unit signed 15 arrest warrants for financial transaction card fraud and 10 warrants for identity theft which expanded outside the city. The unit also worked hard to reduce active caseloads to the point where each detective is under 70 active cases at any given time. This is a tremendous achievement considering detectives used to have in excess of 300 cases each. The unit recovered over one-quarter million dollars in stolen/recovered property and increased seizures by \$120,864 in 2012 compared to 2011.

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, were successful in combating gang-related crimes in the city and the surrounding areas. The Gang Unit investigated approximately 84 cases, made 23 arrests and participated in multiple community gang awareness programs.

The Narcotics Unit had a successful 2012. 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 2 guns, 57.2 grams of crack cocaine, 135.5 grams of powder cocaine, over 27,000 grams of marijuana and made 211 arrests which resulted in 249 felony charges and 132 misdemeanor charges.



"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

The Bureau of Support Services (BSS) 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 2012, the VPD training division provided over 3,496 hours of in-house training for personnel core training, in addition to over 788 hours spent orienting and training new personnel. In-house training was augmented by over 4,091 hours of off-site or adjunct training. Personnel received training in a variety of basic and advanced courses, including homicide investigation, firearms, gang schools, fingerprint identification, narcotics investigations, basic hostage negotiations, burglary suppression, DUI enforcement, traffic accident and reconstruction investigation, domestic violence issues and criminal procedure updates. School resource officers, DARE officers and truancy officers worked diligently under the BSS to provide a safe learning environment for local children. These officers also are trained to deal with and help reduce the number of truant students in our school system. The D.A.R.E officers worked throughout the year to educate school children about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the mishandling of firearms.

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. Lab personnel worked 1,260 cases—a 52% increase in workload—in 2012, compared to 828 cases last year. The lab staff, comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds, consists of a property/evidence custodian, crime scene technicians, latent print examiners, ballistic examiners, a forensic biologist, a forensic chemist and administrative personnel. The VPD is finalizing the validation of the new state-of-the-art Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) which will benefit the department with evidence management and allow law enforcement agencies to electronically submit evidence to the lab and receive lab reports via a secure online portal.

The VPD maintained its Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the State of Georgia Accreditation status, maintaining excellent files, documentation, and complete compliance with state and international law enforcement standards. The department, awarded its

third CALEA reaccreditation in 2011, 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 2012, the department received and/or maintained the following grants: the Federal Appropriation Request Grant (Congressman Jack Kingston's Office) for \$500,000; the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (HEAT) for \$28,800; the Georgia Emergency Management (GEMA) Bio-Metric Fingerprint Scanner Grant for \$21,351; the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant for \$11,533; and the GEMA Bomb Dog Continuation Grant for \$3,500. The department also continued to reap the benefits of the 2009 COPS Federal Recovery Grant. In early 2012, the department filed successfully for an extension of funding on the \$1 million grant which allowed VPD to gain seven additional patrol officers. The extension was approved and resulted in 18 additional months of salary and benefits for the seven officers.

Community policing is a concept embraced by the VPD. The department continued this program in 2012 to educate citizens and encourage community involvement in public safety issues. Multiple Neighborhood Watch groups exist in Valdosta, and citizens are continually encouraged to report anything that looks suspicious. Officers also work with area youth through the DEFY program, which provides monthly weekend activities and a two-week summer camp for at-risk youth.

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 2012, 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 2011. This is the 26th 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, 2011, for the 16th 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.

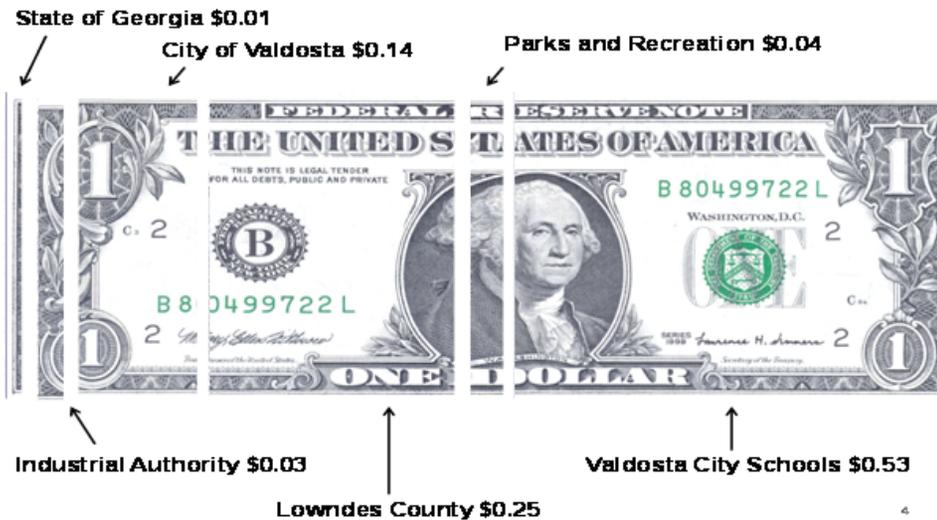
Each year, Georgia requires an annual audit of the books of accounts, financial records, and transactions of all administrative departments of the city by independent certified public accountants selected by the Mayor and City Council. The Finance Department is pleased to report that it has once again successfully completed a financial audit for the fiscal year with outstanding remarks. Furthermore, the city has no general fund debt, 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 8.3% of the funding necessary to operate the city. Although the city’s budget is approximately \$71.4 million, less than \$5.9 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.

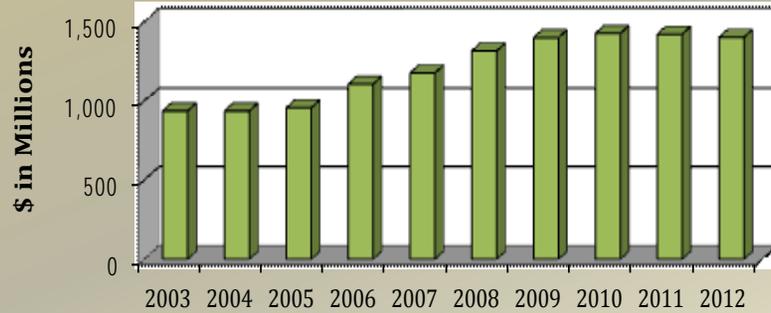


Mission

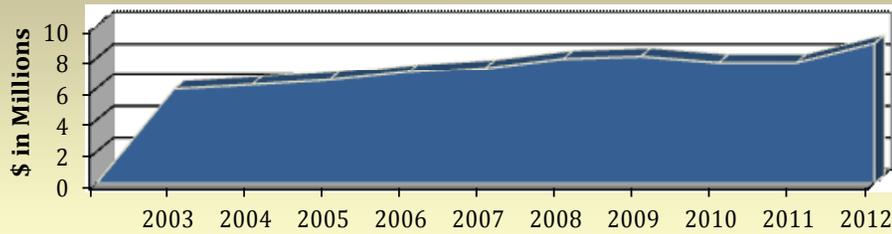
The mission of the Finance Department is to provide financial reporting and excellent customer service for all internal and external customers, while developing innovative and cost-effective ways of financing city services and facilities.



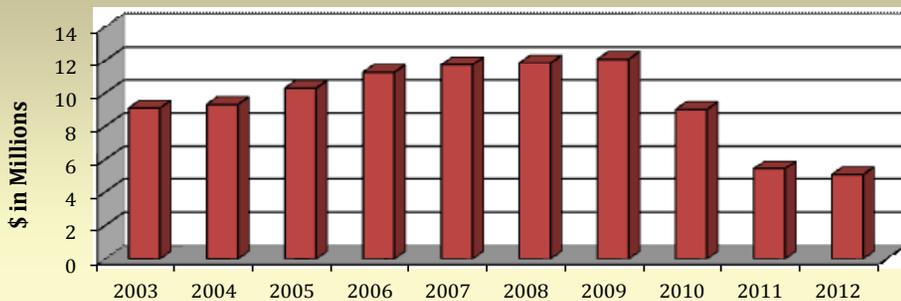
Ad-valorem Tax Base Each Fiscal Year



Growth in Business Gross Receipts Taxes



General Fund Ending Balance



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 three factors:

Ad-Valorem Tax Base – Property values represent growth in construction and development.

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.

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.

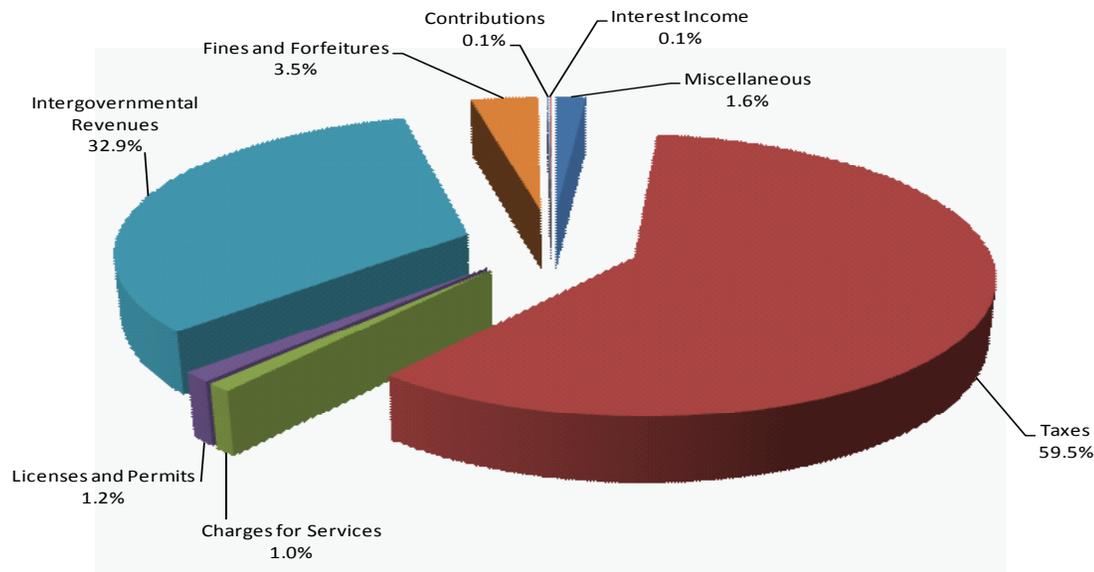
The City of Valdosta has survived the recent economic downfall significantly better than surrounding communities, the State of Georgia and the nation as a whole. The city has been able to maintain its workforce as well as provide longevity increases to employees, while other communities have implemented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

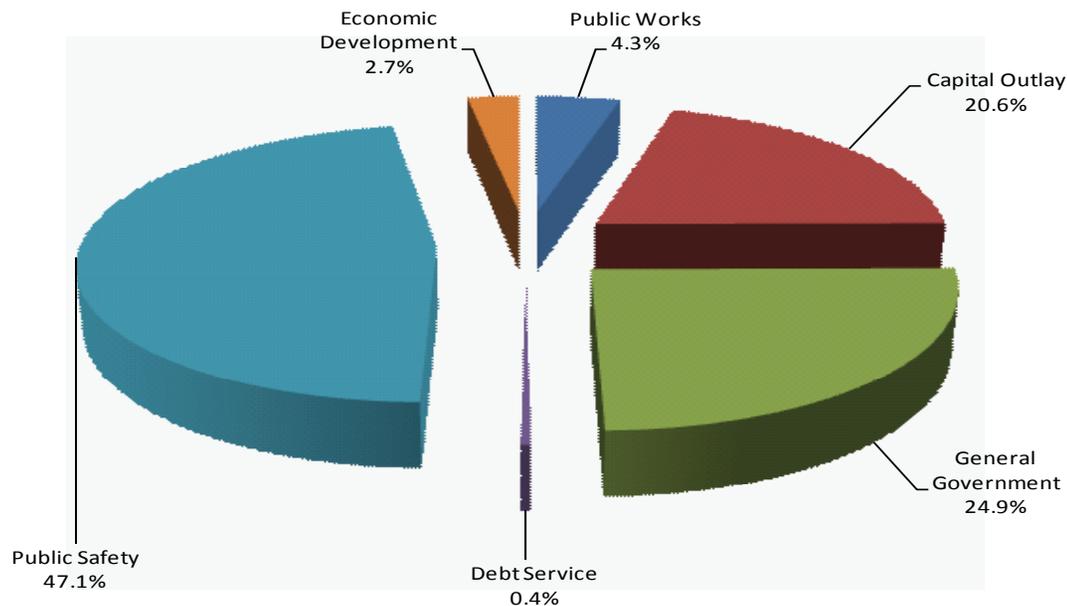
These revenue sources tend to be relatively stable; however, projections of revenue for the upcoming year are extremely conservative. The general outlook for Valdosta has improved steadily over the past 10 years and it is anticipated that growth in real estate, industry, and agricultural development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

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





Grants Awarded

The City of Valdosta pursues grant funding to supplement the city's budget during economically challenging times. All grants received have been prepared and processed through the city's Grants Administrator, who is nationally certified by both the National Grants Management Association (NGMA) and the Grant Professionals Association (GPA). Once received, the grant funds are carefully managed for their specific purposes. The city continues to use technology and equipment procured under previously-received funding to advance the programs and initiatives of the various departments.

Grants Funded Since January 1, 2012 ***

Amount of Grant

2012 JAG	\$ 23,067
CDBG	522,953
GOHS HEAT	28,800
Bullet Proof Vest	2,100
GEMA (Fire Department)	20,000
GEMA (Fire Department)	15,000
GEMA (Police Department)	3,500
Fire Prevention and Safety Grant	32,567
Historic Preservation Fund Grant	6,000
Total	\$653,987

*** 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 one 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.

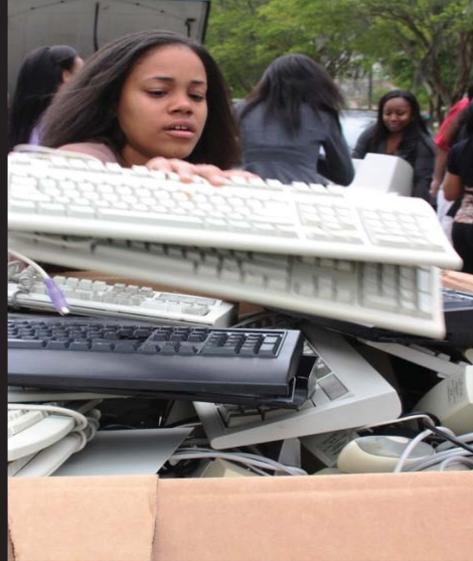
Quick Facts

- ▶ 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 16,390 cases were docketed in the court this year.
- ▶ Probationers completed approximately 47,855 community service hours at soup kitchens, libraries, non-profit organizations, recreational facilities and public cemeteries.
- ▶ Probationers donated approximately 13,880 pounds of food to the local food bank.
- ▶ Sentinel Offender Services supervised approximately 2,726 cases monthly (active, jail and tolled) for the court.
- ▶ The Municipal Court had approximately 154 Work Alternative Program (WAP) participants. Since the WAP implementation in June 2001, approximately 95,216 hours of work have been completed by the participants on various municipal projects in the city.



Accolades

- ▶ The Valdosta Mayor and City Council adopted a decreased millage rate of 4.106 mills—the lowest millage rate since the year 1995 and one of the lowest in the state—the 10th time the City of Valdosta millage has been decreased in the past 18 years.
- ▶ Hosted the state-wide Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Training in Valdosta on March 30-31, made possible by a \$6,000 Historic Preservation Fund grant and a partnership between the University of Georgia (UGA) Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the Georgia Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources, the UGA Center for Community Design and Preservation, and the Georgia Alliance for Preservation Commissions.
- ▶ Received national accreditation for the Valdosta Main Street Program for the 15th consecutive year for meeting commercial district revitalization standards set by the National Trust Main Street Center.
- ▶ Co-hosted (with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority and in partnership with the University of Georgia Center for International Trade and Security) a Chinese delegation on a tour of South Georgia Pecan and Steeda Autosports to establish relationships with local officials, provide an understanding of city government and identify trade opportunities.
- ▶ Hosted 150 youth from around the country for the Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp in June, 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 17 homes in our city. A total of 252 homes have been repaired since this annual event began in 2005.
- ▶ Hosted over 120 city and county managers from across the state for the Georgia City-County Management Association on Oct. 24-26 to discuss important issues involving the "Modern Manager".
- ▶ Named a Tree City U.S.A. by the National Arbor Day Foundation for the 27th consecutive year for the city's commitment to community forestry, the maintenance of trees around our beautiful community, and for accomplishing the four standards set forth by the Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters: designate a Tree Commission, pass a tree care ordinance, establish a comprehensive community forestry program and proclaim and host an Arbor Day celebration.
- ▶ Ranked as one of America's "Top 100 Places to Live" in 2012 for the fourth year. Each year, Relocate America 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.
- ▶ Secured nearly \$654,000 in grant funding for public safety and neighborhood development purposes.
- ▶ Hosted the 3rd 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.
- ▶ 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 27th 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 16th consecutive year—the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.

► Hosted two Electronic Recycling Events this year, in partnership with Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) and Atlanta Recycling Solutions that helped citizens properly dispose of over 58,551 pounds of electronic waste. Since the program's inception in 2006, over 400,000 pounds of electronics have been kept out of the landfill.

► Maintained the Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 2 rating for the Valdosta Fire Department, one of the highest ISO ratings in the state.

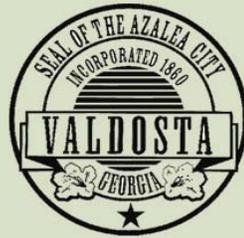
► Kenny Hughes, Water Plant Operator at Mud Creek Water Pollution Control Plant, was presented the 2012 Top Water Operator of the Year award for outstanding and innovative performance in the field of Water Plant Operations from the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP), for District 7, at the GAWP Conference in Atlanta.

► Received the Georgia Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement for Natural Environment by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) for the city's Browns Canal Restoration Project at the ASCE National President meeting.

► Celebrated Community Planning Month in October with a month-long calendar of activities that educated citizens about the vital role that professional planners have in our community.

► Held 4th Annual Valdosta Preservation Awards, recognizing significant historic preservation projects that contribute to the preservation and enhancement of buildings in the local Valdosta Historic District.





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