

City Beat

City Receives National Recognition for Housing Program

New Look and Delivery Saves Money

Citizens will notice a change in the look and delivery of the *City Beat* newsletter, beginning with the April-June 2011 issue. To be more resourceful, the Public Information Division will be taking advantage of a new software program that will allow the City Beat to be mailed out in the same envelope as the customer's monthly water bill.

In 2010, the city reduced the publication of the City Beat newsletter from six to four issues a year. The new software program will allow the Finance and Public Involvement Departments to mail their information out in the same envelope, saving the costs associated with printing and separate postage.

Though it may look a little different, the quarterly City Beat will continue to bring news and information about local government to Valdosta citizens. For more information or to submit news tips, contact Public Information Officer Semantha Mathews at (229) 259-3548.



www.valdostacity.com



From left: Rita Pribyl, NCDIA Immediate Past President; Robert Gehret, Jr., NCDIA Secretary/Treasurer; Barbara Ross, NCDIA Vice President; Mike Donnal, Congressman Jack Kingston's staff member; Mara Register; Lelia Allen, NCDIA President; Francie Pastor, Legislative Correspondent for Senator Johnny Isakson; Cardell Cooper, NCDIA Executive Director.

The City of Valdosta received the Gabe Zimmerman Award for Public Service from the National Community Development Association (NCDIA), on Jan. 21, at an awards ceremony in Washington D.C. Assistant to the City Manager Mara Register accepted the award on behalf of the city 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. This program has rehabilitated or reconstructed 34 homes since 2005, and currently has 11 homes that have begun the rehabilitation/reconstruction process.

Over \$2.2 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds have been awarded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD), and an additional \$513,000 in Community HOME Improvement Program (CHIP) funding has been awarded by the Department of Community Affairs, to fund the city's housing program.

The city is currently focusing on the Westside, Tom Town and Pinevale neighborhoods within the DRA. This targeted neighborhood approach is the primary reason the city received the award from NCDIA. Once a homeowner is determined eligible—based on homeownership, income criteria and the extent of rehabilitation assistance required—their homes may be rehabilitated or reconstructed utilizing CDBG and CHIP funding.

This is not the first time the City of Valdosta has been recognized for the role it plays in eliminating substandard housing and improving the quality of life for its citizens. Valdosta was designated by Habitat for Humanity International in 2001 as a 21st Century Challenge Community and set the year

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City Honored as Tree City U.S.A. Community for 25th Year



Mayor John J. Fretti accepted the Tree City U.S.A. designation from the Georgia Department of Forestry and the Arbor Day Foundation.

The City of Valdosta was honored as a Tree City U.S.A. community for its 25th consecutive year at the Feb. 18 annual Arbor Day event, held on the playground of S.L. Mason Elementary School. Valdosta was recognized as a Tree City U.S.A. community for meeting four standards including designating a Tree Commission, passing a tree care ordinance, establishing a comprehensive community forestry program, and proclaiming and hosting an Arbor Day celebration. This award further demonstrates the city's management in the planting, maintenance, and removal of trees in Valdosta's urban forest.



NCD Award Continued...

2020 as the goal for eliminating all sub-standard housing within the city limits. The city is a three-time recipient of the Magnolia Award, and a recipient of the NCD Terrence R. Duvernay Award and the NCD Audrey Nelson Community Development Achievement Award. In addition to other grant awards, the city was recently the recipient of an \$800,000 award given by the Federal

Home Loan Bank (FHLB) through the Affordable Housing Program, the largest single housing grant awarded to the city in its history.

For more information about the Single Family Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Housing Program, contact the city's Neighborhood Development Division at (229) 671-3617.

City Accepting Nominations for Valdosta Preservation Awards

The City of Valdosta is accepting nominations for the third annual Valdosta Preservation Awards to recognize the achievements of considerable historic preservation projects. These projects enhance buildings, structures, and sites that all lie in the local Valdosta Historic District.

Nominations may be submitted for the following four categories:

- Award of Outstanding Achievement**
- Award of Distinguished Merit**
- Award of Achievement for a Contributing Addition to the Community**
- Award of Stewardship**

Nominees for the first three awards must be at least 50 years old. All nominations will be reviewed by the Valdosta Preservation Committee who will decide on projects based on their contribution to restoring Valdosta's historical character.

For details about each category or for a Valdosta Preservation Awards form, visit www.valdostacity.com or contact Historic Preservation Planner Emily Foster at (229) 259-3563 or at efoster@valdostacity.com by April 1, 2011.

Government Deals at your Fingertips



The City of Valdosta is utilizing the services of **GovDeals.com**, an internet-based company much like eBay, in an effort to sell city surplus items. Registration is free for all bidders, and all necessary information is contained within the website.

Citizens may view the items for sale by the city by logging on to GovDeals.com, then clicking on "advanced search." In the drop-down menu next to "Seller Name," users can select "Valdosta, GA," and click. A display of all items for sale will appear.

Users should read the terms and conditions so they understand how the site operates and how the auction process works. For more information, contact Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent for the City of Valdosta, at (229) 259-3525.

FREE HOMEOWNERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SKILLS CLASSES

Learn how to prepare for homeownership

- Understanding Credit & Loans
- About Your Property
- Home Maintenance
- Mortgages & Legal Documents
- Money Management

- Tuesday, Apr. 5, at 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Apr. 7, at 5:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, Apr. 12, at 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Apr. 14, at 5:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Apr. 16, at 10:30 a.m.



To register call: (229) 245-1330, extension 22

Council Wrap Up

The Valdosta City Council approved a number of ordinances and resolutions, bids and contracts, and local funding requests at recent Council meetings, such as the:

- Resolution to partner with the Georgia Department of Revenue in an effort to ensure proper payment of sales tax;
- Ordinance to establish standards for outdoor watering for the City of Valdosta;
- Bids for Laboratory Information Management System Software and various equipment for the Valdosta Regional Crime Lab;
- Bid for the Pump Station Improvements Project;
- Request to authorize the Mayor to execute a Letter of Commitment and approve a Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program Agreement for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation in the Westside, Tom Town, and Pinevale neighborhoods;
- Resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency to fund the purchase of fire and arson investigation equipment and educational materials for Valdosta Fire Department's fire prevention, arson, and educational campaigns;
- Request for emergency replacement of a culvert on Country Club Drive;
- Appointments to several of the city's Boards, Commissions, Authorities and Advisory Committees; and the
- Ordinance for a 120-day moratorium on accepting applications for business licenses and other permits from Sweepstakes/Café Parlors in the City of Valdosta.

Mayor John J. Fretti delivered his 2011 State of the City Address at the Feb. 24 City Council meeting, which is re-airing on Metro Channel 17 throughout March: on Tuesday and Thursday, at 6 p.m., and on the weekends, at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The video and text versions of the speech may also be viewed on the city's web site at www.valdostacity.com.

Citizens are encouraged to attend City Council meetings. Meeting schedules, agendas and minutes are available at www.valdostacity.com or by calling (229) 259-3500.

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



Tune into Metro Valdosta Channel 17, the City's Government Access Channel, for the bi-weekly news magazine City Focus. This showcases community events, public information and City of Valdosta news. To submit a news tip, call (229) 671-3615.

Taking the First Step in Business

The City of Valdosta strives to maintain a proactive business environment and encourages new development in our community. These new businesses provide jobs, enrich the fabric of our community, and stimulate the local economy. A new link located on the City of Valdosta's website can aid anyone from the first-time entrepreneur to the seasoned developer with primary steps to building a successful business in the city limits.

Starting a business is exciting, however, it can also be challenging. From the city's homepage, citizens are guided through the primary steps to business success, which include the First Step and Pre-Application meetings, plan submittal and review, permitting, and inspection processes, obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy, and applying for a business license.

The First Step meeting was designed to be one of the "first steps" in establishing a business. Meetings are held every Thursday morning and need to be scheduled in advance. These meetings are informal discussions in a group setting and last approximately 30 minutes. They give potential developers a chance to meet with representatives from city departments such as Engineering, Fire, Inspections, Arbor Division, Planning/Zoning, Public Works, and Utilities.

Additional links provided on the city's website provide information about the City of Valdosta Land Development Regulations, Valdosta Small Emerging Business Program, Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center, and the Valdosta - Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, and more.

There's a host of information right at your fingertips. To speak with someone about establishing a business in the City of Valdosta, please contact the city's Planning and Zoning Division at (229) 259-3563 for additional information about taking that first step.



City Decreases Carbon Footprint with Recycling Program

The City of Valdosta is proud to offer a single-stream recycling program, introduced to citizens in 2007 and managed by the Public Works Department. The program is one in which all recyclable materials—such as newspaper, cardboard, plastic and glass—are mixed together in the collection truck, instead of being sorted by residents into separate commodities.

Since participation requires less work by residents, perhaps the greatest advantage of the city's single-stream recycling program is that it means more recyclables are placed at the curb and more residents participate in the recycling program. The program also reduces collection costs and allows more paper grades to be collected—including junk mail, telephone books, and other residential paper. The City of Valdosta recycles over 3,000 tons of recyclable commodities each year.

Ever wonder what happens to the recycled materials once they are picked up from the curbside? All recyclable materials are brought back to the city's recycling center on Myrtle Street and compacted into bales of comingled materials, each bale weighing up to 1,700 lbs. These materials are then sold to SP Recycling Corporation or other end processors, who pick up the material from the city's center and recycle the material for domestic and export markets. The Atlanta-based company sells over 1 million tons of newspaper and 460,000 tons of other recyclables annually—all of which are kept out of the landfills and recreated into other usable items.

In addition to the single-stream recycling program, the city coordinates with Keep Lowndes Valdosta Beautiful and Atlanta Recycling Solutions to provide two community electronic recycling events per year. Last year, citi-

zens participated in recycling over 132,000 pounds of electronics—that's over 66 tons of metal, plastic, glass, computer housing and peripheral equipment that were processed and sent on to an appropriate recycling end-market by Atlanta Recycling Solutions to be manufactured into recycled content products.

According to Deputy City Manager for Operations John Whitehead, III, "The city's single-stream recycling program is a result of responsible city leadership with strong convictions in regard to current environmental issues. We continually look for ways to decrease our carbon footprint, while maintaining quality services for our citizens."

For more information about the city's recycling program, visit www.valdostacity.com/recycle or call the Public Works Department at (229) 259-3588.

13 Opportunities

For citizens who have the desire and ability to serve in local government

If you've ever wanted to get more involved in your local government, now is the time to do so. The city has 13 vacancies on eight of its boards, commissions, authorities, and advisory committees. Qualified citizens who have the desire and ability to serve in local government may obtain an application from City Clerk Teresa Bolden at City Hall or download one from www.valdostacity.com.

To be considered for appointment to the following positions, review the membership requirements and return a completed application and signed Code of Ethics form to the City Clerk at City Hall by April 27:

- Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful – 2 vacancies
- Public Art Advisory Committee – 2 vacancies
- Valdosta Housing Authority – 1 Resident Appointment by Mayor
- Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals – 3 vacancies
- V/L Construction Board of Adjustments & Appeals – 2 vacancies
- V/L Parks & Recreation Authority – 1 vacancy
- V/L Zoning Board of Adjustments & Appeals – 1 vacancy
- V/L Airport Authority – 1 vacancy

The city's appointment process ensures that all citizens have the opportunity to serve. The Mayor and City Council will evaluate the applicants and appoint individuals to the vacancies listed above at the May 5 City Council meeting. To learn more about getting involved on the city's boards, commissions, authorities, and advisory committees, contact City Clerk Teresa Bolden at (229) 259-3503 or at tbolden@valdostacity.com.

City Hosts Electronic Recycling Event, April 2

The City of Valdosta Public Works Department, in partnership with Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) and Atlanta Recycling Solutions, will host an Electronic Recycling Event on Saturday, April 2, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Mathis Auditorium, at 2300 N. Ashley Street. This event is one of two annual e-recycling events and other year-round efforts that support the city's recycling program by providing citizens with a viable solution to properly dispose of their electronics.

Citizens may drop off a number of electronic items at the event, such as cell phones, computer monitors, laptops, disk and floppy drives, test equipment, modems, circuit boards, typewriters, cables, eight-tracks, computer accessories, video machines,

stereos, video cassette recorders (VCRs), CB radios, scanners, speakers, camcorders and cameras. Televisions will be accepted at the event, but there is a \$10 charge per television to cover the costs of disassembling the televisions for the recyclable parts.

A number of volunteers will be available at Saturday's event to help remove items from citizens' vehicles. The "drive-through" feature will further make disposing of these items very convenient to participants—providing no reason for citizens to get out of their vehicles.

A number of items will not be accepted at the April 2 event—such as vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, washers, dryers, gas-powered equipment, non-electronic equipment, and other



non-recyclable items. Citizens may call the Public Works Department at (229) 671-3640 for more information.

City Partners with V.I.T.A. for Free Tax Preparation

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is providing free tax preparation to citizens in households earning \$49,000 a year or less. VITA staff helps individuals file a tax return and are trained in helping individuals apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families, as well as other tax credits.

Several federal, state and local VITA sponsors—such as the Internal Revenue Service, the Georgia Department of Human Resources, United Way, and others—are making this service possible. The free tax assistance and preparation will be offered at four Valdosta sites.



Free Tax Assistance:

Coastal Plain Area EOA, Inc.
900 S. Troup Street

Goodwill Southern Rivers
1000 N. St. Augustine Road

Lowndes Associated Ministries to People, Inc. (LAMP) 601 N. Lee Street

Coastal Plain Head Start
1613 Ulmer Ave. and 605 Hightower St.

Individuals seeking the tax assistance should bring with them:

All VITA sites will remain open through April 18, 2011.

- Driver's license or photo I.D.
- Social Security Card or Individual Tax Identification Number for all family members
- All W-2 Forms
- Spouse, if filing jointly
- Copy of prior year tax return (if applicable)
- 1099 Forms (if applicable)
- Tax economic stimulus payment from previous year, if received.

For more information, contact JaTaryia Thomas at (229) 234-2364 or at cashpcampaign@gmail.com.

Stormwater Tip



Lawn chemicals, car oils, pet waste and litter are washed into storm drains every time it rains. These drains lead directly to our local waterways untreated, impacting aquatic life and their habitats. A curb marker event is one way for community volunteer groups to make a difference in the environment by protecting our stormwater system from these pollutants. These events inform people of the direct path from the storm drain to the waterways.

If you are interested in organizing a curb marker event, contact the Stormwater Division at (229) 259-3592. Any area to be marked must be located within the City of Valdosta limits. Materials and application instructions are provided free of charge. Remember, only rain goes down the storm drain!

Photo Contest Captures "City Life"

City Life is the theme for the 3rd Annual Valdosta Photo Contest, sponsored by the City of Valdosta and the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts. Citizens are invited to submit their original photos in five categories by the May 20 deadline:

- A City at Work
- Go Green
- Live, Love, Laugh
- Hidden from Plain Sight
- Night Life

Entries may be mailed or hand-delivered to: Valdosta Photo Contest, 527 N. Patterson Street, Valdosta, Ga, 31601. All entries will be displayed in the Tillman Gallery from June 6 – Aug. 9.

People's choice voting will take place from June 6-July 13. During this time, citizens are encouraged to cast their votes for their favorite photos in the five categories, as well as Best in Show overall. An awards reception at the arts center, on Friday, July 15, will honor the photo contest winners.

To get an application form and more details, contact the Public Information Officer at (229) 259-3548, the arts center at (229) 247-ARTS, or visit www.valdostacity.com/publicinformation.

City Cleans Up

The City of Valdosta and Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) seek volunteers who want to make a difference in selected Valdosta neighborhoods during the annual Great American Clean Up, on Saturday, April 16, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. This community-wide event supports the City's anti-litter initiatives and encourages all residents to play a part in neighborhood beautification projects.

Interested individuals, civic groups, and other service-oriented organizations are encouraged to help clean up the Valdosta neighborhoods bordered by Valley, Williams, Ann and Troup Streets. Volunteers should meet at the City Hall Annex parking lot on Lee Street at 8:30 a.m. for instructions, gloves and trash bags.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact KLVB at (229) 671-3698.



City Council

- John J. Fretti.....Mayor
- James R. Wright.....Councilman, District 1
- Deidra White.....Councilwoman, District 2
- Joseph Vickers.....Councilman, District 3
- Alvin Payton, Jr.....Councilman, District 4
- Mayor Pro Tem
- Tim Carroll.....Councilman, District 5
- Robert Yost.....Councilman, District 6
- Ben H. Norton.....Councilman, At Large

Editorial Staff

- Larry H. Hanson.....City Manager
- Semetha Mathews.....Public Information Officer
- Noelani Mathews.....PIO Intern

City Beat is a bimonthly newsletter for the citizens of Valdosta and is written and published by the City of Valdosta Public Information Office. For more information, contact Semetha Mathews at (229) 259-3548.

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