

## Grant Funding Available for Home Repairs

The City of Valdosta Neighborhood Development Division will be accepting applications, through August 15, for owner-occupied home rehabilitation grants from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. Valdosta homeowners who qualify as low to moderately-low income residents (according to HUD FY 2013 Income Limits) may be eligible to use this grant funding to make much-needed home repairs.

Grants are limited to home repairs that cost under \$10,000.

**Each applicant must meet the following criteria:**

- Home must be located in the city's Designated Revitalization Area (DRA).
- Applicant must be the legal owner of record of the home.
- Applicant must provide proof of income and residency.
- Property taxes and insurance must be current.
- Repairs must improve and/or remedy unsafe living conditions (e.g. roof repairs, electrical & plumbing updates, repairs to floors/structural members, etc.).

Rehabilitation grants will be awarded to homeowners who can fulfill the 5-year affordability period necessary for residency in the home. Homeowners who are awarded a grant and do not fulfill the affordability period will be required to repay a portion of the entire grant.

For additional information, contact the Neighborhood Development Division at (229) 671-3617.

## Valdosta Water Treatment Plant Named 2013 Water Treatment Plant of the Year



In addition to the plant award, City of Valdosta Steve Parish (right) was recognized by the GAWP as one of the state's 2013 Top Water Treatment Plant Operators of the Year. Parish is congratulated above by Mud Creek Wastewater Plant Superintendent Stanley K. Martin, who serves as the GAWP District 7 Director.

The City of Valdosta Water Treatment Plant has been recognized as the 2013 Water Treatment Plant of the Year by the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP), scoring a 90% or better in all areas including well-field operations, chemical processes and documentation.

"Every day, thousands of water customers in our city turn on their faucets with little thought to the water that streams out and how it moves from its initial source through the treatment process and ultimately to our taps," said Director of Utilities Henry Hicks. "I commend Water Treatment Plant Superintendent Craig Dozier, Assistant Superintendent Jason Barnes, and the other skilled men and women responsible for bringing Valdosta water customers quality drinking water daily."

The city's water treatment plant, located on Guest Road, processes over 3.5 billion gallons of drinking water for its residential, business and industrial customers annually.

## Mayor & Council Approve Balanced Budget

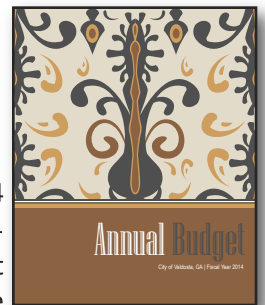
No property tax increase proposed for citizens

The Valdosta City Council approved the fiscal year 2014 budget for the City of Valdosta at the June 20 City Council meeting, after having the opportunity to hear the proposed budget at the hearings on June 11 and 12. City staff presented the council with a balanced budget, as required by the City Charter, possibly one of the most challenging and difficult budgets prepared in years.

City leaders decreased the overall city budget from \$86.2 million to \$77.3 million, a result of the completion of Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST VI) capital improvement projects and the fact that this funding source will end in December 2013. The 2014 fiscal budget represents a city operating in a fiscally responsible manner with no general obligation debt, something City Manager Larry Hanson credits to the outstanding work of the city department heads, finance director, budget staff and the entire city workforce.

The budget is balanced and includes no proposed tax increases. The City of Valdosta's millage rate of 4.106 continues to be among the lowest in state. In fact, Valdosta—Georgia's 14th largest city—has the lowest cumulative taxes of the 15 largest cities in Georgia. The last millage rate increase was in 1992 when the city's millage was raised to 6.25 mills.

Citizens may view the city's budget at [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com).



# JOB TAX CREDITS

## For Eligible Businesses Located in City's Expanded Opportunity Zone

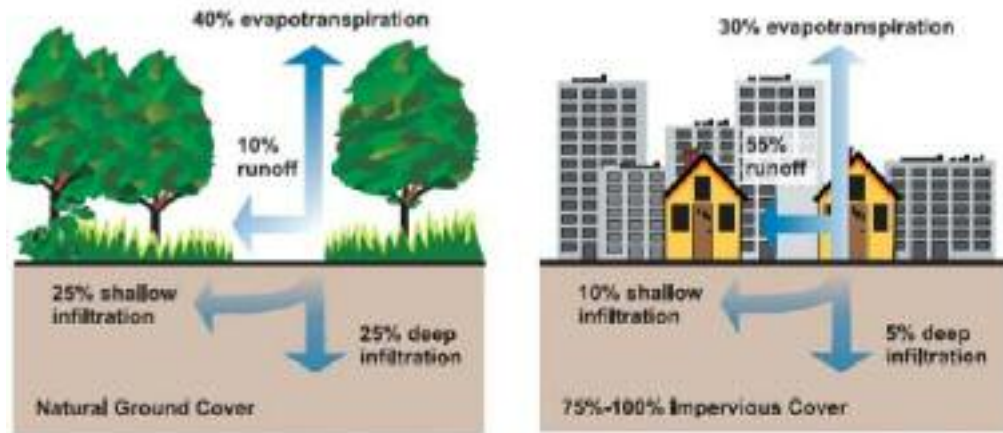
The Valdosta City Council recently approved to expand the southern boundaries of the city's Urban Redevelopment Area in order to extend Enterprise Zone and Opportunity Zone incentives to those areas. Approved by the Mayor and City Council, the expansion results in job tax credits to qualifying businesses who locate and create jobs in these designated underdeveloped "zones" of the city.

Businesses may qualify for these tax credits if they 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. Through this process, certified businesses in Valdosta may be eligible for job tax credits of \$3,500 per eligible new job created, if the business meets the minimum job creation threshold. Furthermore, qualifying businesses may also use these tax credits against 100 percent of the Georgia income tax liability and payroll withholding for as long as the City of Valdosta maintains the Opportunity Zone designation.

The City of Valdosta received its Opportunity Zone designation from DCA in 2009 to encourage businesses to look for ways to create jobs and expand their businesses in parts of the community where there is a specific need for growth. Opportunity Zones exist for a period of 10 years from the date of designation, or for the life of the city's redevelopment plan. This business incentive is also a part of the comprehensive package offered through the Main Street Program to facilitate development in the historic downtown districts. Other incentives offered through the Main Street Program include low-interest loans and historic preservation tax credits.

For more information about Opportunity Zones, contact the Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548.

### Stormwater Tip



*Did you know* that a typical city block generates more than five times as much runoff as a wooded area of the same size? Impervious areas--such as asphalt, concrete and rooftops--prevent rainwater from absorbing into the ground. As a result, this water runs off these surfaces, carrying with it contaminants that adversely affect the water quality of our streams.

Do your part and keep our waterways clean! For more information, contact the Stormwater Division at (229) 259-3530.



### 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



### City Council

- John Gayle.....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 Norton.....Councilman At Large

### Editorial Staff

- Larry H. Hanson.....City Manager
- Semantha Mathews.....Public Info. Officer

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

## City Enters Agreement with USACE for Flood Risk Management Study

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) finalized its \$150,000 agreement with the City of Valdosta, on July 15, to participate in the Planning Assistance to States program. This 50/50 cost share project will enable the USACE to conduct a flood risk management study for the confluence of the Sugar Creek and Withlacoochee River.

The flood risk management study is scheduled to be completed by November 2013 and is the first step towards identifying the causes so that short and long term plans can be developed to resolve the flooding problems in our area.

The partnership stems from a continuation of discussions that began earlier in the year focused on regional interests and on maximizing area resources. The City of Valdosta hosted a Regional Flood Preparedness meeting with the Georgia Silver Jackets on June 25 in which representatives from the cities of Moultrie, Sylvester, Tifton and Valdosta and from the counties of Lowndes and Turner attended to discuss current and future flood monitoring

and forecasting issues throughout the Little River and Withlacoochee River watersheds. These two watersheds are part of the overall Suwannee Basin that is approximately 10,000 square miles that drain into the Valdosta area and parts of northern Florida.

Among other information shared at the June meeting, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) /National Weather Service presented information on storm preparedness resources, rain and stream gage networks, flood categories, and monitoring programs such as Water Alerts and Water Now.

As a result of the collaboration of agencies and resources, representatives from the Georgia and Florida Silver Jackets, City of Valdosta and the Suwannee River Water Management District met in Live Oak, Fla., on July 10 to begin outlining



Stormwater Manager Emily Davenport describes to USACE officials where flood waters reached on Gornto Road during both the 2009 and 2013 flood events in the City of Valdosta.

problems and opportunities for the Suwannee Basin. On July 17, members of the USACE visited Valdosta to tour the areas in the city prone to flood events.

City leadership is committed to working with representatives from key local, state and federal agencies to address and provide solutions for the regional stormwater issue that creates flooding in our city and surrounding communities in both Georgia and Florida.

For more information, please contact the Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548.

### Conserve Water with Outdoor Water Use Schedule

The city's Outdoor Water Use Schedule allows outdoor watering for purposes of planting, growing, managing, or maintaining ground cover, trees, shrubs or other plants, before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. on odd/even days, dictated by the citizen's home address (No outdoor watering should occur during the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.):

**ODD NUMBERED ADDRESSES**

May water on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

**EVEN NUMBERED and UNNUMBERED ADDRESSES--**

May water on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday

*\*\*\* No outdoor watering for the above stated purposes will be allowed on Sundays*

All citizens are strongly encouraged to conserve and use irrigation water sparingly during the prescribed time periods. For more information, call the Utilities Department at (229) 259-3590 or visit [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com).



### Stay in the Loop

*City Focus* airs six times a day on Metro Valdosta Channel 17, at 4 a.m., 7 a.m., noon, 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. The news show can also be enjoyed anytime at [www.vimeo.com/metro17valdosta](http://www.vimeo.com/metro17valdosta) along with other informative programming.

Citizens may also sign up for the city's E-News service by visiting the city's website and selecting the type of news they want to receive on a regular basis.

[www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com)



## Enjoy Summer...But, Don't Forget the Bug Spray

In South Georgia, summer and mosquitoes go hand in hand. While the City of Valdosta is taking the necessary precautions to make sure the mosquito population is under control by spraying in public areas and on public streets, citizens play an important role by doing the following:

- Disposing of any containers around property that collect water— flower pots, bird baths, buckets, tires, etc. Standing water serves as a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and even a small container of standing water can produce hundreds of new mosquitoes each day.
- Eliminate any tall weeds or grasses around property, as these serve as “resting” places for mosquitoes.
- Organize or participate in clean-up activities to pick up garbage from parks and other public spaces. This helps reduce the number of potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Stock any ornamental ponds with mosquito-eating fish.
- Clean and chlorinate pools, outdoor spas and saunas; keep them covered when not in use.
- Clean out clogged gutters.



By following these simple recommendations, citizens will help reduce exposure to these annoying and disease-carrying insects.

Citizens should also use larvicide tablets in areas where standing water cannot be removed—ornamental ponds, creeks, etc. Larvicide does not harm pond fish. Larvicide is more effective than spraying because it kills the larvae before they have a chance to hatch. Free larvicide tablets are available to city residents at the City of Valdosta Public Works Department, located at 1017 Myrtle Street, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you must be outdoors at dawn or dusk when mosquitoes are most active, you should protect yourself by spraying insect repellent containing DEET on your body and clothing to help protect yourself against contact with mosquitoes. As an alternative to DEET, the CDC also recommends repellents that contain oil of eucalyptus or the chemical Picaridin. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully, and do not use on children or pregnant women. Also, keep in mind that if you are using sunscreen, apply the sunscreen first and then the repellent.

The city's Public Works staff will continue to monitor mosquito activity throughout the city limits and will continue to maintain its aggressive spraying and larvicide efforts to control the mosquito population. If you have any questions about mosquito control, contact the Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548 or visit the Public Works Department page at [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com).

### Protect Yourself with DEET

DEET (chemical name, N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) is the active ingredient in many insect repellent products. In addition to its ability to repel mosquitoes, did you know that DEET can repel other potentially disease-carrying insects, such as ticks?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) receives more than 20,000 reports of Lyme disease (transmitted by deer ticks) and 100 reports of encephalitis (transmitted by mosquitoes) annually. Both of these diseases can cause serious health problems or even death in the case of encephalitis.

The CDC recommends use of insect repellents when outdoors. Here are a few other recommendations:

- Read and follow all directions and precautions on the product label.
- Do not apply over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- Do not apply to hands or near eyes and mouth of young children.
- Do not allow young children to apply this product.
- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing.

### Citizens Graduate From Gov't 101



Congratulations to the 18 graduates of the 2013 Government 101 Citizen Orientation Program, who were recognized at a May 6 graduation ceremony at City Hall: Glenn Allen, Sylvia Allen, Jerrell Anderson, Clinton Anselm, Vincent Brown, James-Rouse Carter, Jamie Christopher, Victoria Copeland, Bill Donaldson, Greg Justice, Nancy Justice, Robert Lewis, Sr., Nelita Menefee, Carl Onyeka, James Parker, Jeanne Posthumus, Victoria Sanders and Leigh Touchton.

The annual 6-week program is designed to help citizens ages 21 and older learn more about their local government.

For information on the Government 101 program or how to enroll in next year's session, call the Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548.



The City of Valdosta hosted 212 volunteers from across the country for the 2013 Southern Hospitality Workcamp, from June 23-29, during which time 18 houses were repaired in our community at no cost to the homeowners.



These “campers”--mostly youth--paid \$400 each to attend the Workcamp, in addition to the travel expenses of getting to Valdosta. Valdosta was proud to host campers from nine different states, as far away as Texas, Wisconsin and New York—which speaks volumes about the commitment of these volunteers.

Their collective labor of love, even at minimum wage, is valued at over \$61,480. In addition, these campers collected nearly 800 cans of food for our local Second Harvest Food Bank, another selfless act of kindness they shared with our community.

The city has hosted eight Southern Hospitality Workcamps; and as a result, a total of 275 homes have been repaired in Valdosta. To date, the annual event has yielded more than a \$1.5 million economic investment in our community through capital improvements to housing stock, the value of volunteer housing, their spending in our community and the value of their labor. This figure also represents the investments of the city, Lowe’s Distribution Center and Group Cares in this effort.

Workcamp is a shining example of a program that identifies needs, helps stop the deterioration of valuable housing availability, and places us closer to accomplishing our city’s goal of eliminating substandard housing by the year 2020. For more information about next year’s event, call (229) 671-3617.



## Don’t Downplay Hurricane Season

The National Hurricane Season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30 each year. Though Valdosta is more than 100 miles from the nearest shore, it is important that citizens be prepared and review hurricane emergency procedures to protect themselves and loved ones from associated wind and weather dangers.

Here are some tips to ensure the safety of citizens and their families:

- Have an emergency supply kit. A list of recommended items is available at [www.ready.ga.gov](http://www.ready.ga.gov).
- Review insurance policies to make sure you have adequate coverage.
- Trim all trees surrounding your property. Decaying limbs are easily broken during a storm and can cause serious damage to you and your home.
- Sign up for the Code Red Emergency Alert System at [www.lowndescounty.com](http://www.lowndescounty.com)

For more tips on how to prepare for hurricanes and other emergencies, visit [www.ready.ga.gov](http://www.ready.ga.gov), and for local emergency management information, contact Lowndes County Emergency Management Agency Director Ashley Tye at (229) 671-2790.

## People’s Choice Photo Contest Winners Announced

Citizens gathered at the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts on July 19 for the announcement of the winners in the 5th Annual Valdosta People’s Choice Photo Contest. From June 10 through July 12, citizens were asked to visit the center’s Tillman Gallery to vote for their favorite photos. Winning photos can be viewed online at [valdostacity.com/publicinformation](http://valdostacity.com/publicinformation). Congratulations to the following:

### Best of Show

Marvin T. Smith, *Morning Flight*

### Best of Show (Youth 14 and Under)

Mackenzie Ford, *Romans 10:15*

### First Place: Moments in the City

Susan Houston, *National Day of Prayer*

### Hon. Mention: Moments in the City

Juanita Burkes, *Fountain of Life*

### First Place: Colors of the City

Jessica Coody, *Midnight Madness*

### Hon. Mention: Colors of the City

Gregory Fricker, *Looking for Love in all the Small Places*

### First Place: Heart of the City

Carolyn McMillan, *Trouble Play*

### Hon. Mention: Heart of the City

Juanita Burkes, *City Fox*

### First Place: Size of the City

Anne Herrmman, *M’erica*

### Hon. Mention: Size of the City

Marvin T. Smith, *Fish for Breakfast*

### First Place: Pace of the City

Marvin T. Smith, *New Home Construction*

### Hon. Mention: Pace of the City

Carolyn McMillan, *Saw Slinger*



## Farm Days Continues in Third Season



In its third season, Downtown Valdosta Farm Days has become a successful community event highlighting local growers and producers and drawing hundreds of citizens to find fresh, local products. Farm Days will continue to take place around the historic Lowndes County Courthouse on the first and third Saturdays, through October, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Various forms of payment are accepted at the event, such as cash, checks, credit cards and debit cards. Citizens who are participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also have the option to use their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to purchase goods at the market.

For more information, contact the Valdosta Main Street office at (229) 259-3577 or visit their website at [www.valdostamainstreet.com](http://www.valdostamainstreet.com).

## City of Valdosta Recertified as an Azalea City

The City of Valdosta was recertified in April 2013 as an Azalea City by the Azalea Society of America, a non-profit educational and scientific society dedicated to sharing and improving the knowledge of azaleas. Azalea Society of America Chairman Robert E. “Buddy” Lee presented the award to the city’s Grants Administrator Kathy Brunot, who later presented it to Mayor John Gayle at the May 9 City Council meeting.

The City of Valdosta became a certified Azalea City on March 10, 2007, for its role in promoting the appreciation of azaleas in public and private landscapes within the city limits. Citizens and businesses alike were using the fond designation many years before the official designation was received. In fact, according to Lowndes County Museum Director Donald Davis, use of the name dates back as far as the year 1947. The official City of Valdosta seal, adopted in the mid 70’s, also features the Azalea City designation.

The Azalea City program was established in 2004 to find, recognize, and certify those municipalities that promote and display azaleas in their “Azalea Cities.” Cities seeking the official designation must meet certain requirements, apply for the certification, and must renew the certification every five years. For more information on the society and the award, visit their website at [www.azaleas.org](http://www.azaleas.org).

## ROAD IMPROVEMENTS in the City

Two significant road projects are underway that, when complete, are expected to improve travel across the city:

### Gornto Road Extension Project

Motorists have most likely noticed the progress made on the Gornto Road Ext. project—which is connecting Woodrow Wilson Drive to Gornto Road to provide another east-west connector route through the city. The realignment construction to tie the new Gornto Road Extension to Woodrow Wilson Drive has begun, and approximately 500 feet of Woodrow Wilson Drive from the N. Patterson Street intersection is permanently closed to align the new road. Motorists have access to the businesses in that area until the new road is complete. The new intersection at Gornto Road Ext. and Woodrow Wilson Drive has been installed with the city’s first video detection system—a device that will identify when vehicles are present and will trigger the new signal light appropriately. The Gornto Road Ext. project is on schedule and is expected to be complete by December 2013.

### E. Hill Avenue Overpass Construction

Construction has begun on the new U.S.84/S.R. 38/West Hill Avenue railroad overpass. In collaboration with the City of Valdosta, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has designated vehicle and truck detour routes that will remain in effect until the project is complete. This DOT project is expected to be completed by December 2014.

The City of Valdosta apologizes for any inconvenience and asks for cooperation from motorists in observing all detour routes for the safety of our citizens and the workers on site. For more information on these or other road improvements, contact the Engineering Department at (229) 259-3530 or visit [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com).

